Ti-Han Chang

The Role of the Ecological Other in Contesting Postcolonial Identity Politics: An Interdisciplinary Study of the Postcolonial Eco-literature of J.M. Coetzee and Wu Ming-yi


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Ti-Han Chang

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Devant le jury composé de :

CHEN, Chun-yen  Associate Professor  National Taiwan University  Rapporteure
HUGGAN, Graham  Professor  University of Leeds  Rapporteur
JOUBERT, Claire  Professeur des universités  Université Paris 8  Examinatrice
NERI, Corrado  Maître de conférences HDR  Université Lyon 3  Examineur
SOLOMON, Jon  Professeur des universités  Université Lyon 3  Directeur de thèse
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General Introduction

Postcolonial Eco-Literature

This thesis focuses on the literary works of two contemporary writers, John Maxwell Coetzee (1940-, South African) and Wu Ming-yi (1971-, Taiwanese), whom it analyses as key exponents of “postcolonial eco-literature.” But what is postcolonial eco-literature? And how might we define postcolonial eco-literature? The broad, literal sense of this expression is not difficult to grasp: it is literary writing that is concerned with and addresses issues related to postcolonialism and ecology (and ultimately articulates those issues with respect to questions of aesthetics). Nonetheless, one can also understand and define postcolonial eco-literature in a more specific way. For example, it is possible to first draw attention to the definitions of postcolonial literature and ecological literature individually, and then look at what the ensemble “postcolonial eco-literature” really means. By postcolonial literature, I mean the literary writings that seek to respond to or that are in dialogue with the intellectual discourses of modern imperialism and colonialism, inasmuch as such responses or dialogues address cultural, historical, geographical, political, philosophical and aesthetic issues. The aim of postcolonial literature is therefore to identify and address the socio-political issues of a modern nation-state created after the post-war period, but in some cases it may be oriented towards articulating historical narratives or depicting colmaximislective memories. As for ecological literature, I propose to see it in contrast to Timothy Morton’s description of environmental literature. As an English professor who explores the intersection of object-oriented philosophy and ecological studies, Morton believes that “[a]rt gives what is nonconceptual an illusive appearance of form” (Ecology 24). In keeping with this, he describes the aim of environmental literature as “to encapsulate a utopian image of nature which does not really exist” (Ecology 24). Morton’s definition of environmental literature is not incorrect, however, it remains narrow and limited in some respects. I therefore propose to view ecological literature as the literary writings that portray mostly a hyperbolic dystopian version of the environment, in which authors’ dystopian imaginations are stemmed from the world that we are living in actuality. For one thing, serious environmental degradations and climate change are acknowledged in today’s world and people are more aware of the fact that our environment continues to worsen rapidly instead of recovering from its current state. For another, comparing to literary writings of nature that existed in previous centuries,
contemporary writers are more sensitive to the degraded state of our environment. In the past, writers’ depiction of nature was largely related to their aspiration of nature’s beauty and its wholesome state, for instance, nature writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau or Henry David Thoreau. For these reasons, ecological literature can be seen as writings that focus more on depiction of hyperbolic dystopian environment. The portrayals of such hyperbolic dystopian version of the environment may include various kinds of abuses of nonhuman animals, harm and pollution of nonhuman organisms or systems, or even appearances of the unusual and unpredictable natural phenomena caused by humans’ exploitation of nature and their negative effects on humans. Ecological literature thus attends to issues like whale hunting, battery farmed chickens, the destruction of the rainforest, global warming, sea-level rises, and so on and so forth... Its ultimate purpose is to serve as a reminder for further degradation that we might bring to bear on this environment.

In drawing together these definitions of postcolonial literature and eco-literature, the term “postcolonial eco-literature” designates specifically literary writings that seek to represent the dystopian image of the exploited natural environment or nonhuman entities, while, at the same time, associating and articulating these representations with the suppressions and exploitations carried out within the framework of colonialism. This is why my thesis chooses to analyse the works of Coetzee and Wu Ming-yi comparatively, the reason being that their postcolonial eco-literary writings can illuminate our philosophical thinking about the discourses with which their literary inventions both engage with and help to emerge. These two authors write from completely different postcolonial contexts and perspectives; to a certain extent, one could even claim that their writings exhibit very different ontological stances towards ecology. Yet, my aim is not to undermine one’s literary creation or philosophical thinking by reference to the other, but rather to create an espacement [spacing]¹ (in a metaphorical Derridean sense) such that their works may enter into dialogue with each other. But before we plunge directly into an analysis of their literary works, first and foremost we need to ask ourselves the question “why do we need postcolonial eco-literature?”

¹ See Leonard Lawlor’s explanation of Derrida’s idea of espacement: “When I look in the mirror, for example, it is necessary that I am “distanced” or “spaced” from the mirror. I must be distanced from myself so that I am able to be both see and seen. The space between, however, remains obstinately invisible. Remaining invisible, the space gouges out the eye, blinds it. I see myself over there in the mirror and yet, that self over there is other than me; so, I am not able to see myself as such. What Derrida is trying to demonstrate here is that this “spacing” (espacement) or blindness is essentially necessary for all forms of auto-affection, even tactile auto-affection which seems to be immediate.” Lawlor, “Jacques Derrida,” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 19 Mar. 2014, Web, 2 Oct. 2015, website accessed: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/derrida/#Bib.
To answer this question, one has to look into two different aspects of postcolonial eco-literature: the political aspect and the aesthetic aspect. Regarding the former, there is surely a need in today’s political realm to analyse both nature and nation as objects of serious concern. The reason behind such a need is that one simply cannot think of nature and nation (or imagine them) in separate terms, or take them as completely irrelevant ideas. Nature is undeniably related to nation. As Morton claims, “in the modern period, [...] [n]ature and nation are very closely intertwined” (Ecology 15). If we follow Morton’s explanation, we come to understand that: upon entering the age of modernity, we have invented the nation-state as a replacement for the traditional feudal or monarchical society.2 The nation then takes over the role and the authority, which were previously embodied by the monarchy. As a result, in today’s society, the management, the imagination and even the very conceptual definition of a specific space of nature are entirely dependent on how a nation (or several nations) regards this space, as well as how a nation politicizes it.3 In other words, part of the nation’s role is in fact to determine its occupied natural spaces by drawing geo-political boundaries, the principal aim being to maximise economic utility and ensure effective national regulation. Very often, such determination of natural spaces does not only apply to the notion of the land surface, it can even be extended to the surrounding marine or air territories. This idea is not particularly original but is less worked on in the research domain of humanities and literatures. Therefore, I wish to continue exploring the topic by specifically targeting the discussion of postcolonialism and ecology, for the former problematises essentially issues related to modern nation-states and the later problematises issues related to nature and environment.

As far as aesthetics is concerned, Morton evokes Herbert Marcuse’s idea about art and ecology, and evokes obliquely the urgent need to prioritize literature in understanding crises of today’s technological industrial world.4 Morton claims,

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3 An example would be able to justify my statement. For instance, radical ecology believes there is no real wild natural site in today’s modern society. From their point of view, in today’s world, the management of a natural space by a nation’s government is strong in their presence. To a certain extent, it is even inevitable since even the most desolate natural site(s) could be claimed and managed officially as natural parks in a country. The politicization of natural space by a nation is thus everywhere.
4 Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979): was a German-American philosopher and political theorist. Mostly known and identified as a group member of Frankfurt school. His works criticise capitalism, historical materialism, modern technology and industrialisation and entertainment culture. He argued that these are the newly created forms of social control.
Art could help ecology by modeling an environment based on love (eros) rather than death (thanatos)—as is the current technological industrial world, according to Marcuse. (Ecology 24)

As suggested, Morton shares the belief with Marcuse that contemporary technological industrial expansion would only bring about the deterioration of the environment, yet he also thinks that art can be the means that helps to shape environment with love (eros) and avoid such deterioration. According to Marcuse:

The aesthetic universe is the Lebenswelt on which the needs and faculties of freedom depend for their liberation. They cannot develop in an environment shaped by and for aggressive impulses, nor can they be envisaged as the mere effect of a new set of social institutions. They can emerge only in the collective practice of creating an environment.5 (Marcuse 31)

For Marcuse, the Lebenswelt [lifeworld] is a world composed of phenomenological experiences, as have been analysed by Husserl. But to immerse and to be involved in the aesthetic version of this lifeworld, energized faculties of freedom and liberation are required. These faculties cannot arise in an environment that is modeled by aggressive and hostile impulses, such as forces of violence or deterioration. On the contrary, these faculties would emerge in the collective practice of creating an environment, and this collective practice is art. Following Marcuse’s argument, Morton underlines the urgency of art in respect of thinking about ecology. For when art is exhibited in front of us, it intends to make us understand crises of the environment as usually resulting from aggressive impulses (the aggressive impulses are the industrial and technological inventions analysed by Marcuse). Literature, by common understanding, is a form of art. Of course, Morton does not explicitly suggest that literature is the only art which could bring forth great change in our ways of thinking ecology. As he highlights, “Ecology without Nature tries not to foster a particular form of aesthetic enjoyment” (Morton, Ecology 6). Yet from his selection of literary texts for analysis, it is evident that there is an oblique prioritisation of literature as the specific aesthetic form to approach and question the ecological crises that we witness today. Undeniably, Morton’s way of seeing art and literature as the primary agencies to resolve contemporary ecological crisis shows us the obvious link between Romantics’ conception of nature and its influence on the development of contemporary ecocriticism. In part one, I will also include a chapter, which addresses specifically the rise of Romanticism and its derived influence on the forming of ecocriticism. In this chapter, the thesis will deliver an explanation of the critique

on Romantics’ conception of “literature.” However, it will also counterargue against this critique and give its justification for aligning with Morton’s claim, for it is important to provide reasons to defend why this thesis valorises literature in approaching questions related to our ecology and environment.

Drawing a common ground from the two points that I have made so far—the significant link between nation and nature as well as literature and ecology—one understands why it is important to study postcolonialism and ecology. Furthermore, one understands why we are in need of postcolonial eco-literature. Once again, Morton’s statements summarise beautifully the reason for us to study postcolonial eco-literature: “To write about ecology is to write about society, and not simply in the weak sense that our ideas of ecology are social constructions” (Ecology 17; emphasis mine). Indeed, writing about ecology is not a description of the natural environment, but it is a writing for the environment as a whole. It hence includes articulations and problematisations of society, of the economy, of the political; and, of course, it also covers articulations and problematisations of the natural surroundings and of the artificial milieu.

J.M. Coetzee and Wu Ming-yi

There are of course many other writers than Coetzee and Wu whose literary works offer powerful philosophical analyses of the connections between postcolonialism and ecocriticism. Yet, for several reasons, I have chosen to focus on the works of these two authors. First of all, despite the fact that both authors had grown up in postcolonial states and in a postwar context, they represent two distinct postcolonial generations. They have, therefore, developed different reflections and acquired different views with regard to their socio-political environments, and these are clearly present in their artistic creations. Undertaking a comparative and interdisciplinary study of their works thus offers significant scope for understanding colonial legacies in different parts of the world as well as a better understanding of different postcolonial periods. Secondly, an interesting thing that an attentive reader would notice is Wu’s explicit reference to Coetzee’s writing. In his first postcolonial novel, Shuimian de hangxian 睡眠的航線 [Routes in a Dream] (2007), Wu quoted from Coetzee’s Waiting for the Barbarians (1980) as an epigraph to the second chapter.6 Wu’s

6 「晚上是最好的時間：有時你無法入睡時，那是因為你耳朵的頻率正好與逝者的哭聲相通。」 Wu Ming-yi, Shuimian de hangxian 睡眠的航線 [Routes in a Dream], p.71, cited from Coetzee’s Waiting for the...
citation of Coetzee immediately creates intertextuality between their works. This intertextuality indicates an essential link between the two authors and it was one of the reasons that motivated me to work on them, for I am intrigued to find out whether Coetzee has, at some level, influenced Wu’s writing. Last but not least, the main reason which made me decide to carry out research on these two authors’ works is their contrasting intellectual trajectories. J.M. Coetzee, who was born in 1940 (only a year after the Second World War began), lived his childhood when South Africa was still dominated by the influences of former British and Dutch colonial powers, despite having been granted independence. In his adult life, he witnessed a radical change in his country, particularly the country’s painful struggles to fight for democracy and to battle against racial segregation. Having lived through this political turmoil, Coetzee’s early writings focused on “present[ing] a sophisticated intellectual challenge to the particular form of colonial violence embodied in apartheid” (Head 1). This intellectual challenge to colonial violence is easily identified in his early publications such as *Dusklands* (1974), *In the Heart of the Country* (1977), *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983), and *Foe* (1986). These works have employed the writing technique of postmodern metanarratives, which aims to defy and break with the chronological and unified grand narrative that is embodied in the colonial *History*. From the 1990s onward, one notices that Coetzee’s writings undergo a major shift, for he increasingly tried to engage in discussion of animal ethics in relation to postcolonial critique. For examples, in *Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life* (1997) and *Disgrace* (1999), Coetzee inserted scenes of animal abuse which, in addition to the issues they raise with respect to animal ethics, also present an analogy with the master-salve relationships between humans-animals and colonial-colonised subjects. His later works, *The Lives of Animals* (1999) and *Elizabeth Costello* (2003) deal more straightforwardly with philosophical arguments related to animal ethics, and his critique of anthropocentrism is often credited as having made an important contribution to ecocriticism. Less explicitly, in some of Coetzee’s novels—*Waiting, Life* and *Boyhood*, for instance—readers may also notice oblique critiques or observations of colonial environmental exploitation in South Africa. With regard to the course of his writing development, it is therefore evident that Coetzee started with postcolonial writings but eventually developed his postcolonial critiques by including ethical or critical discussions related to animal and environmental issues.

*Barbarians*. Original English text: “The night is best: sometimes when you have difficulty in falling asleep it is because your ears have been reached by the cries of the dead [.]” Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, p.123.
Wu Ming-yi’s intellectual trajectory is quite different. Considered an ecological writer/activist, early publications of Wu are dominated by ecological considerations, particularly in the genre of the essay. For instance, *Midiezi* (2000), *Diedao* (2003) and *Jia li shuiban name jing* (2007) are three early collections of essays that show his attentive observations of natural environments and wildlife. Born in 1971, approximately a generation after Coetzee, Wu grew up in a different political climate. Unlike Coetzee, Wu does not belong to the postwar generation. It was rather his parents’ generation who had more directly experienced the Second World War and the difficult life that followed, both politically and economically. This does not mean, however, that Wu’s childhood and adolescence were not strongly affected by important political measures or socio-political events in Taiwan. He grew up in *Jieyan shiqi* (the period of the Order of Martial Law), during which *Meilidao shijian* (The Formosa Incident) occurred, in 1979. However, the social climate in which he grew up somehow did not allow people to be openly or directly in contact with these political events, and it also did not encourage people to remember and reflect upon the country’s colonial past. When Wu started writing in his early twenties, he was much influenced by writers of *Xiangtu Wenxue* (Taiwan nativist literature), such as 黃春明 Huang Chun-ming and 宋澤萊 Song Ze-lai. His

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7. One could of course argue that Wu’s career of being a writer did not start with these three collections of essays, but with his two earlier collections of short stories, *Benri gongxiu* (1997) and *Huye* (2003). I have deliberately chosen not to take account of these two books for two considerations make me inclined to argue that his career as a writer only really began with his collections of essays about the environment and nature. First of all, his two previous books are no longer available on the market and are little read by the public. Secondly, these two early works are better seen as collections including texts from different periods of Wu’s time as a young writer. As such, they have neither coherent themes nor comparable plots that binds the stories together. With regard to the structure of these books, they are very loose and each story stands independently. For instance, some of the stories are about Taiwanese aboriginals, some are about life in military service, some are about Taiwanese baseball culture, and so on. But one thing that readers should keep in mind is that: although it is difficult to detect a coherent theme for these two books, some of the stories did anticipate Wu’s later ecological writings. Indeed, Wu’s intention to include discussions of environmental issues in some of the stories is clearly present.

8. *Meilidao shijian* (The Formosa Incident): also known as the Kaohsiung Incident was a pro-democracy political demonstration that took place on the 10th of December of 1979 in Kaohsiung. The incident occurred when several key figures of *Formosa Magazine* and political activists who were against Kuomintang’s authoritarian regime organised a political demonstration to commemorate International Human Rights Day. At the time, Taiwan was a one-party state (ruled by the Republican Party of Kuomintang) and the government used this protest as an excuse to arrest the main leaders of the political opposition.

9. Zhao, Xiao-tong 趙曉彤, “Xingqiri wenxue Wu Ming-yi: wenxue keyi ba wushu zhineng shiwei benye 星期日文學. 吳明益：文學可以把無數職能視為本業” [Sunday Literature - Wu Ming-yi: Literature Is Able
early writings explored various themes, but a large part consisted of observations of farmers’ life and land use, or, of natural environments and wildlife. It was not until the death of Wu’s father that he began to write stories related to Taiwanese colonial history. In Wu’s memory, his father belonged to a “lost Japanese generation,” in which Taiwanese people were free from their former Japanese colonisers’ dominion, yet remained culturally “Japanese” in many respects. His father was a quiet man, “like most of the Japanese elderly,” as Wu himself put it, and he hardly ever spoke of his own past. Wu thus knew very little about his father. After his father’s death, Wu found an old photo of him, standing next to a fighter plane. In so doing, he finally started uncovering some of his father’s past, surprisingly learning that his father had volunteered to enrol in the Japanese military at the age of just thirteen. Comparing his father to himself at the same age, Wu realised that he had only worried about trivial matters. It was from that moment onward that Wu became interested in finding out more about his father’s past, which was of course intertwined with Taiwanese colonial history. It was at this point that the idea of writing his first postcolonial novel, *Shuimian*, began to emerge. Wu then started to explore this new horizon, adding in elements or discussions related to Taiwan’s colonial history. *Shuimian* is his first novel to combine ecological and postcolonial elements, which it analyses in the context of Japanese colonial history in Taiwan. Wu later published two other novels, *Tianqiao shang de moshushi* [The Magician on the Skywalk] (2011) and *Danche shiqieji* [The Stolen Bicycle] (2015). The former uses magical realism to structure individual stories which take place in the postcolonial transitional period of Taiwan. The latter ploughed further into colonial history, covering the regional history of the Second World War in Asia Pacific (Japan, China and Taiwan) and Southeast Asia (British Malaya and Burma), especially the history of Japanese imperial invasion and domination over these regions. As suggested earlier, Wu is mostly identified as an ecological writer, but it is apparent that Wu has paid significant attention to postcolonial history in his later publications. Bearing these two completely different intellectual trajectories in mind, one major challenge for this thesis is to find out: first of all, how postcolonialism and environmentalism are able to shape and affect each other reciprocally in a
literary context; and secondly, how the specific genre of postcolonial eco-literature can further influence the development of contemporary literature.

**South Africa and Taiwan**

Since the thesis targets the works of J.M. Coetzee and Wu Ming-yi, it is inevitable, in the course of analysing their literary works, also to make a thorough comparative study between South Africa and Taiwan. For their writings are, to a large extent, influenced and shaped by the historical, socio-political, cultural and linguistic backgrounds of these two countries. In the meanwhile, another important reason which prompts me to work further on the comparative study of these two postcolonial nation-states is the similarity of their postcolonial socio-political struggles. The two countries of course experienced very different colonial rules. With regard to their colonial history in the nineteenth century (which is more relevant to today’s two countries’ political setup), South Africa was mainly dominated by its Dutch and English colonisers, whereas Taiwan was subjected to the control of Japanese imperial rulers and Kuomintang 國民黨 (Nationalist Party) military powers.14

Naturally, one would consider that the countries are shaped very differently in their cultural, linguistic and socio-political aspects. But, despite these differences, if one tells the full history of their colonisation, one surprisingly finds that, in the seventeenth century, both countries were discovered by Portuguese explorers and then ruled and occupied by the Dutch.15 In a historical respect, the two modern nation-states were both implicated in the early rise of European colonisation.

14 In 1949, the Republican government of the Kuomintang 國民黨 (Nationalist Party), led by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek 蔣介石, retreated to Taiwan after several lost battles against the Communist Party in Mainland China. After the immediate takeover of Taiwan, the Kuomintang issued an authoritarian one-party state which ruled under the “Order of Martial Law” (Jieyanling 戒嚴令) for nearly forty years. This period, also known as White Terror (Baise kongbu 白色恐怖), left a strong mark on contemporary history, for it stands as one of the longest martial law periods in the world.

It would, however, be virtually impossible to cover all questions that are relevant to the pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial experiences of these two countries. This thesis thus finds it more appropriate to define and work on specific periods of time, such that the critical analyses presented are more coherent and focused. In addition, since both Coetzee and Wu were born after 1940, their literary works often draw on their own personal experiences in relation to the transitional and the postcolonial periods. The thesis therefore has a primary focus on the social and political conditions of South Africa and Taiwan of these two periods. As shown earlier, one major reason to conduct a comparative study of these two countries is their similar socio-political struggles, which can be contextualised precisely in these two historical time frames: between 1948 to the late 1980s and early 1990s (the transitional period), and then from the late 1980s and onward (the postcolonial era).

The years 1948 and 1949 both left an extraordinary mark on political history in these two respective countries. Both countries entered a postcolonial transitional period, in which their former British or Japanese colonisers no longer held the legal political power necessary to run these postcolonial nation-states. Yet, the colonial former powers were either directly affiliated to the new government or were taken as a model with regard to the establishment of the new government’s legal systems or institutions. In the immediate post-war period, South Africa introduced the legal institutionalisation of racial segregation, apartheid, which assured white supremacy in many social and political contexts for nearly half a century. Legally, laws were enforced to prohibit inter-racial marriages or pursuit of sexual relationship across racial lines. The Population Registration Act implemented in 1950 further imposed a classification of all South Africans into four different racial groups—“black,” “white,” coloured,” and “Indian”—which were generally based on their physical look, known ancestry, socioeconomic status and cultural lifestyle. The government had also designated ten bantustans (“tribal homelands”), which were intended to install non-white (and particularly the black) populations. The non-white people were then forced to leave their homes and move to these segregated neighbourhoods. Respectively, at the other end of Pacific Asia, it was in 1949 that the Republican government of the Kuomintang retreated to Taiwan. The ruling period under the “Order of Martial Law” lasted for nearly forty years and ultimately left a strong mark on contemporary history. As a consequence of the Kuomintang’s claim to be the legitimate representative of China, as well as its political and military confrontations with Communist China, the implementation of martial law became a legal way to remove Communist thinking and suppress independent activities in Taiwan during this period. Under the state of
emergency, the Kuomintang government also tried to construct and impose a unified “Chinese” political identity with respect to various different traits, including ethnicity, language, culture, and literature, all of which will be addressed in detail in this thesis.

It was in the late eighties and the early nineties that these two important political acts came to an end. In 1987, nearly four decades after the advent of Kuomintang military dictatorship, the Order of Martial Law was finally lifted and the country entered a new era of post-martial law, or an “actual” postcolonial era, in which Taiwanese people were entitled to freedom of speech and to democratic rule. The state then changed the laws and removed the bans on forming different political parties other than the Kuomintang and illegal assembly. For South Africa, it was in 1994 that the political system of racial segregation was abolished. The change was significantly marked by Nelson Mandela’s victory in the first democratic presidential election. The entire political system was then reformed and former unequal treatments to the non-white populations were in theory put to an end. Both of these postcolonial countries experienced almost half a century of traumatic transition, which encompassed calamitous racial, sexual, cultural, class and linguistic violence inherited from the colonial legacies. These events occurred over almost the same period of time in South Africa and Taiwan and thus provide an interesting socio-political background for an in-depth literary analysis of Coetzee and Wu’s writings.

**Selected Texts of Coetzee and Wu**


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16 Some of Wu’s works come with English titles provided by the author, some of them don’t (and certain among them have been translated into English or French and published in international markets). The English translated titles listed here are mostly taken from the original translated titles, but some of them are the unofficial ones I found online.
literary writings they have published in the past. The selected texts are essentially linked to the postcolonial and ecological concerns of the present thesis. Some of them may deal more directly with postcolonial issues, some may incline to elicit ecological discussions, and some others may include both dimensions. My analysis will be presented in two major parts: one focuses on the problematisation of nation-states, identity politics and their relations to postcolonial literary writings; the other focuses on debunking anthropocentric thinking, establishing anthropomorphic affective relations and their connections to ecological literary writings. Within each part, I will introduce different themes and subdivide them into chapters for detail discussion. In each chapter, I will then provide a comparative literary analysis of the selected works from Coetzee and Wu.

The backdrop underlying my overall argument consists in evaluating the constructivist epistemology and to show how nation-states, identities of subjects, ethnic origins and (national) literatures are understood in such constructivist epistemology. More importantly, I wish to show how they are put into practice in our daily reality. Whereas I intend to carry out a full literary analysis of these texts, it is nevertheless essential to substantiate the backbone of my argument with specific examples regarding the epistemological constructions of nation-states, of postcolonial identities, of ethnic origins, etc. Hence, in my literary analysis, I will not leave out the comparative analysis of: (1) the post-war regional arrangements of political powers in Asia Pacific and Africa; and (2) the postcolonial societies of Taiwan and South Africa.
Part I: A Philosophy of the Radical Ecological Other
1.1. The Ecological Other and Postcolonial Identity Politics

1.1.1. The Ethics of Alterity: The Ecological Other

As I have argued so far, there is a necessity to study postcolonial eco-literature. This new genre allows readers to reflect on literary representations of the environment, while at the same time seeing how they are connected to fundamental issues of oppression carried out by colonial regimes. Moreover, my analysis also shows that contemporary postcolonial literature, which is making important new steps towards imagining the ecological other, is also capable of bringing about a change to our understanding of “literature.” In my view, today’s postcolonial writings open up a new path for discovering and welcoming the “voices” of the ecological other. As suggested in my thesis title, the ecological other may also assist us in challenging postcolonial identity politics. Thus, in explicit terms, I propose that this new form of literary writing—which discusses the ecological other or speaks from the perspective of the ecological other—has the potential to bring about a change in the postcolonial philosophical paradigm, for taking into account nature’s role in the constitution of subjectivity has, thus far, generally been either omitted or neglected.

At first sight, the overall method that binds my arguments and examples together in different chapters and sections may seem to emphasise, or to a certain extent impose, a “messianic” deconstruction of all the “constructs”—for instance, the concepts of “literature,” “identity,” or “ethnicity,” etc.—that constitute the theoretical background of my analysis. And it is true that deconstruction plays a significant role in my argument; however, the overall objective should not be read as an attempt to demolish all possible “constructs.” On the contrary, the aim is to enable a fundamental challenge to the fixed and presupposed concepts through revealing the various ways they have been constructed.

In this specific chapter, I will briefly introduce and demonstrate the philosophical arguments that underlie the methodology of my textual analysis—most notably those that centre on the idea of a radical ecological other. These arguments are greatly in debt to the philosophical thinking of Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995) Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) and
Giorgio Agamben (1942–) as well as to contemporary eco-philosophical and eco-theoretical thinkers, such as Timothy Morton (1968–) and Steven Shaviro (1954–). In the meanwhile, other renowned scholars who have worked (or are working) in similar fields of study, such as Bruno Latour, Philippe Descola, Eduardo Kohn, and Donna Haraway are also considered. Focusing on the question of the construction of the identity of the human subject and hence the metaphysics of language, I will then explore what lies beyond such constructivism. It appears that, in philosophical interrogation, one should not simply “claim and embrace the truth” of constructivism and consider understanding it as the goal of metaphysics. Rather, one should challenge the boundary of metaphysics by proposing other radical questions and imagining what could lie beyond the simple recognition of the “constructedness” of so much of what has hitherto been considered natural. Thus, it is important to ponder various questions: while the identity of a human subject is a construct, could there be a subjectivity that arises “organically” or that is “self-constituted”? If so, in what respect(s) would this self-constituting subjectivity present itself? My answer to the first question is affirmative, yet it is only when these questions are considered at the intersection of ethics and philosophy that such self-constituting subjectivity could reveal itself. In this regard, a theory that draws attention to the ethics of and for the other—via consideration of Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida’s ethical thinking of alterity—is at the centre of my argument, for it makes it possible to respond to [donner la réponse à …] a subjectivity that is outside the human subject(s). The call for an ethics of and for the other allows an encounter with the fashioning of this self-constituting subjectivity. Agamben’s philosophy is also relevant here—notably his extensive reflection on the ontological perception of language(s) and the utility of language(s) in communication, thanks to which, he thinks, an understanding of the subjectivity of nonhuman animal other could emerge.

Here, I would like to emphasise that my argument is an extension of Levinas and Derrida’s viewpoints on ethics since their philosophies are still occasionally restrained within certain limits of the Western metaphysic traditions (even though Derrida is known for his attempt to break through that limit). For example, the “radical other,” to which they believe we should respond [donner la réponse à], is either the human being (Levinas’ visage [face])

17 Alterity: According to OED, the meaning of alterity is a state of being other or different; or, it simply means otherness. Both Levinas and Derrida have formed their philosophical thinking by addressing and examining the otherness and the state of being other. Therefore, sometimes I intend to use the word, “alterity,” interchangeably with the word “otherness.” “Alterity,” Oxford Online Dictionaries, n.d., Web, 2 Nov. 2014, website accessed: http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/fr/definition/anglais/alterity.
or a being similar in kind to the human (Derrida and Agamben’s discussions of animals). Their theories are held as the backbone of my thesis in order to further develop the concept of the ecological other. In a broad sense, by “ecological other,” I am referring to nonhuman living organisms, nonhuman natural organic entities and even objects that are made of natural material(s). In reality, if one aims to name specific examples of this “ecological other,” it can be (1) an animal or an insect, such as a cat, an elephant, a butterfly or an earthworm. It can also be (2) an organic being from nature, like an oak tree, a rose flower or a forest mushroom. Or, it can be (3) a living organism in nature that manifests a self-organising system, for instance, a river, a dessert, or an amoeba. Finally, it can also be (4) a human-made object that is principally consisted of natural elements or materials, such an iron sword or a terracotta urn. Clearly, the first category is generally referred to as “animal other,” of which Derrida and Levinas often speak. In a narrow sense, the term, “ecological other,” that is employed in this thesis (namely in chapter three) specifically designates the three latter categories. In the literary texts I choose to analyse, the ecological other comes in many forms. In some cases, it appears in the form of animals, insects, rivers or lands. In other cases, it appears as figures which undergo a transformational process from a human entity to a nonhuman one, or vice-versa. Alternatively, it could also appear as a hybrid of human and nonhuman, or even a hybrid of different nonhuman beings. The ecological other is thus more encompassing and inclusive than the others of Levinas, Derrida and Agamben, since it does not exclude natural beings other than humans and animals.

From this perspective, it is important to take into account of Timothy Morton and Steven Shaviro’s speculative realist ideas. To briefly summarise their ideas and claims: these two contemporary theorists think what really matters is the affective relations generated by or occurring between beings, regardless of whether these beings are actual living beings or physical objects. For them, beings as the other do not necessarily fall into the category of living being. The category of the other is somehow irrelevant and unimportant because the whole universe is filled with affective objects that are bound together by their effects or influences on one another. They urge us to value object-oriented ontological thinking and the affective relations that obtain between objects. Following Graham Harman’s idea claims, Shaviro affirms that an object always has some properties that are non-reducible and these
non-reducible remainders qualify the object as having intrinsic value, which ultimately proves its ontological existence.\textsuperscript{18}

Their innovating ideas of the affective relations are valuable and should be taken into serious consideration. Nonetheless, to a certain extent, the fundamental grounding of object-oriented ontological theory remains questionable.\textsuperscript{19} As stated earlier, my definition of the ecological other encompasses all nonhuman beings, but these nonhuman entities exclude synthetic or non-natural manmade artefacts. I consider that nonhuman living organisms and even some inorganic entities and objects should be qualified as ecological others, with the premise that these organisms, entities, or objects in some way remain natural. For instance, a plant or a tree (a living organism), a rock or a lump of earth (a natural inorganic entity), and a wooden chair or a metal chain (a manmade natural object) are all, in a way or another, related to nature. I do not believe that something that possesses neither bio [Greek etymology: one’s life, course of way of living] nor zoe [Greek etymology: animal life, organic life] may qualify as having affective relations. In a later section, when we discuss Shaviro’s speculative realism and Morton’s OOO theory, I will explain in more detail why I retain this position with respect to the ecological other. Last but not least, regarding the ecological other, I would like to make clear that my proposed arguments adopt the apparently impossible, nonanthropocentric perspective of the ecological other itself, that is to say, the perspectives of animals, landscapes, vegetation, ecosystem and so on and so forth. And like many other writers, philosophers and critics who work on the questions of animals and ecology, I willingly take the risk that my arguments end up being anthropomorphic. For one may only take charge of the philosophical and metaphysical questioning of a nonhuman perspective by attempting to welcome and accept an anthropomorphic attitude.

This chapter is therefore heavily theoretical, for I wish to make clear to my readers what sort of philosophical stances and theoretical approaches I intend to apply before undertaking any literary analysis. In what follows I shall try to elucidate my arguments by dividing them into three different sections. The following chapter, Chapter 1.1.2., which brings together the work of Levinas, Derrida and Agamben, aims to (1) open a debate about the possibility of an “organic” or “self-constituting” subjectivity in the metaphysical and ethical realms, as well as to (2) establish a connection between the imperative ethical response to the other and the

\textsuperscript{18} “[A]n object’s properties are always fully actual and intrinsic (rather than potential or virtual), even when they are not currently being enacted.” Requoted in Shaviro, \textit{The Universe of Things: On Speculative Realism}, pp.143-44. Cf. Harman, \textit{Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics}, p.130.

\textsuperscript{19} Cite and refer to as OOO theory on the following.
deconstruction of the anthropocentrism of Western metaphysics. In order to achieve my second aim, I will present Matthew Calarco’s analysis of Agamben’s philosophy to demonstrate how anthropocentric thinking can be deconstructed from within continental philosophy. At the same time, I include an analysis of Derrida’s notions of hospitality and undecidability, so as to show that, from an ethical perspective, we must recognise that there may be a subjectivity proper to the nonhuman ecological other. The philosophical thinking of Agamben and Derrida may eventually help us to explore different possibilities for the constitution of subjectivity that are often overlooked in traditional, anthropocentric modes of thought. In addition, this deconstructive approach not only affirms my proposition regarding the “self-constituting” nature of subjectivity, but also assists in locating the ecological other.

In Chapter 1.1.3., I intend to prolong the debate about the possibility of a “self-constituting” subjectivity in the form of ecological other. In approaching the debate, this time I will focus on metaphysical and ontological arguments articulated from the perspectives of ecocriticism, speculative realism and object-oriented ontology, and particularly the work of Shaviro and Morton. In the meanwhile, I will also explore our ethnographical and anthropological understanding of subjectivity and see how that understanding is tied to and limited by human history, primarily by looking at Eduardo Kohn’s study of the Runa Puma—an atypical tribe of human/animal beings living around the Napo River area in Ecuador’s Upper Amazon. In Kohn’s study, he audaciously challenges the anthropocentric viewpoint by criticising our arbitrary conclusion that nonhuman beings are incapable of having an access to ontology. Kohn begins with the example of Runa Puma and further extends his questioning to the ontological perception of the Amazon forest. Kohn’s challenging idea thus pushes us to further inquire the following two questions: (1) Are we able to discern the ontological existence of ecological beings (nonhuman natural beings)? (2) Are ecological beings able to “think” autonomously? It is important to make such inquires if one’s objective is to discover the ecological other and then to define its role in political, ethical and literary contexts.

Chapter 1.1.4 articulates the link between the ecological other and contemporary literature, showing that it is often postcolonial literary writings that are open to and welcome [accueillir] this ecological other. An affirmation of Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe’s idea that “literature” is an author’s self-reflexive attempt to address and react to a contemporary social and political crisis is necessary. “Literature” after the Jena group—judging by its

20 Kohn, How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology beyond the Human, p.2.
“functionality”—is considered as a means to produce and reinforce political identity. Yet, I believe that there are literatures that are able to invigorate the philosophical questioning of the other and hence make it possible also to open up literary spaces from which the “organic” and “self-constituting” subjectivity of the ecological other could also arise. In this respect, I find that contemporary postcolonial literature, which is making important steps towards imagining the ecological other, is capable of bringing about a change to our understanding of “literature.” It opens up a new path for discovering and welcoming the “voices” of the ecological other. To be more explicit, I propose that a new form of literary writing, which discusses the ecological other or speaks from the perspective of the ecological other, has the potential to bring about a change in the postcolonial philosophical paradigm, for taking into account nature’s role in the constitution of subjectivity has, thus far, either been omitted or neglected. This new literary form is especially visible in the works of the South African writer J.M. Coetzee and the Taiwanese writer Wu Ming-yi.
1.1.2. Towards a Theory of the Nonhuman Ecological Other

**Levinas: The Face(s) of Nonhuman Others?**

Levinas addresses the question of the subject and subjectivity very differently from how they have been understood in traditional Western metaphysics (which he calls ontology). Rather than attempting to affirm subjectivity through language, through being, and through time, he maintains that subjectivity is formed through subjection to the other. Levinas developed his thinking mainly through a reading of Heidegger’s concept of *Dasein* as developed in *Being and Time* and he focuses in particular on Heidegger’s analysis of the relation between *Dasein* and death. For Heidegger, *Dasein* can only be found, recognised and completed through a confrontation with death. As explained in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Death should be understood as the *telos* of the Dasein and the essential criterion that completes *Dasein*’s existence:

*Dasein*’s existence has been understood as thrown projection plus falling. The projective aspect of this phenomenon means that, at each moment of its life, *Dasein* is Being-ahead-of-itself, oriented to the realm of its possibilities, and is thus incomplete. Death completes *Dasein*’s existence. Therefore, an understanding of *Dasein*’s relation to death would make an essential contribution to our understanding of *Dasein* as a whole. (Wheeler n.p.)

However, there is of course the irresolvable dilemma that one cannot complete the understanding of *Dasein* through experiencing death, for a person can never experience his/her death. Hence, from Heidegger’s point of view, it is through encountering and experiencing the death of an other that our understanding of *Dasein* can achieve completion.21 Accepting Heidegger’s premise—that to speak of *Dasein*, one is inevitably dealing with the question of death—Levinas nevertheless breaks off with Heidegger here and criticises his philosophy via the encountering of the other. For Heidegger, the question always comes back to an authentic self—the mine-self (which means the experienced lived and owned by “me”)—even though the formulation of his argument depends on the experience of the death

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of the other.\textsuperscript{22} For Levinas, by contrast, the essential question is the irreducible relation—the face-to-face encounter with an(o)ther. Regarding the issue of subjectivity, as discussed in Totality and Infinity, Levinas maintains that responsibility for the other is the fundamental element of our subjective constitution. Or, to put it in other words, “subjectivity takes shape in and through our subjected-ness to the other.”\textsuperscript{23} As Bettina Bergo explains, Levinas’ position can be found above all in his recurring discussions of ethics in relation to the other in the chapter entitled “Otherwise Than Being” in Totality and Infinity. She further adds,

In this way, [Levinas’] effort was not to move away from traditional attempts to locate the other within subjectivity (this he agrees with), so much as his view was that subjectivity was primordially ethical and not theoretical. That is to say, our responsibility for the other was not a derivative feature of our subjectivity; instead, obligation founds our subjective being-in-the-world by giving it a meaningful direction and orientation. Levinas’ thesis “ethics as first philosophy,” then, means that the traditional philosophical pursuit of knowledge is but a secondary feature of a more basic ethical duty to the other. (Bergo n.p.; emphasis mine)

Arguing from this perspective, Levinas then develops his most famous and important concept—the face [le visage].\textsuperscript{24} The concept of the face is, however, often criticised for its anthropocentrism. Matthew Calarco explains that this criticism of Levinas arises from the

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., n.p.

\textsuperscript{23} Bergo, “Emmanuel Levinas,” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, n.p. First published on Sunday July 23\textsuperscript{rd} of 2006 and then substantially revised on Wednesday August 3\textsuperscript{rd} of 2011. Here, I am citing Bergo’s words in the first publication, which can only be found at http://www.eilatgordanlevitan.com/kovno/kovno_pages/emmanuel_Levinas.htm.

\textsuperscript{24} The “face”: As Levinas explains in his interview with Hans Joachim Lenger, the idea of the “face” came from his understanding and his criticism of Heidegger’s Dasein. Levinas points out that Heidegger’s famous explanation of Dasein in Being and Time is very much Darwinian. It evokes an every-day combating “against the others,” and it sees the history of humanity as war. For Levinas, genuine sanctity is possible for humanity. Sanctity can arise, for example, when a person is willing to die for another. This sanctity, according to Levinas, manifests itself when someone feels more strongly about the “being-towards-death-of-an-other” than about “his/her own being-towards-death.” From this position, Levinas tries to find a general phenomenological way to show this relation between the ego (le Moi) and the other. He tries to locate where this sanctity could appear or reveal itself, and this, he maintains, is in “the face of an other.” He further states that the “face” is naked in front of the other; it exposes itself to the other; and every “face” has its own importance and its own position. As Levinas explains, the “face” which is constantly exposing itself to the other interpolates a sort of strong affirmation—“I am here [je suis là],” or “I am as such [je suis celui-ci].” And this affirmation is so strong that it demands to be respected, to have its own right to “be there.” For Levinas, it is nearly as strong as the commandant of “thou shalt not kill.” Lévinas and Lenger, “Emmanuel Lévinas: visage et violence première (phénoménologie de l’éthique) une interview,” La Différence comme non-indifférence: Éthique et Altérité chez Emmanuel Levinas, pp.129-42.
most commonly accepted readings of Levinas’ theses regarding animals.\textsuperscript{25} Indeed, Levinas’ two main theses regarding animals are: (1) nonhuman animals are incapable of showing ethical responses to the other; and (2) nonhuman animals are not the sorts of beings that evoke an ethical response in human beings.\textsuperscript{26} On the basis of these claims, it is natural to arrive at the conclusion that the other to which Levinas refers is \textit{always} and \textit{only ever} a human other. Whilst these claims of Levinas at first appear dogmatically anthropocentric, Calarco argues that “the underlying logic of [Levinas’] thought permits no such anthropocentrism” (55). He asserts,

> When read rigorously, the logic of Levinas’s account of ethics does not allow for either of those two claims. In fact, […] Levinas’s ethical philosophy is, or at least should be, committed to a notion of \textit{universal ethical consideration}, that is, an agonistic form of ethical consideration that has no a priori constraints or boundaries. (Calarco 55)

The example of Bobby the dog that Calarco presents to support his argument about the common misreading of Levinas’ philosophical position appears to be rather far-fetched; nevertheless, Calarco’s claim that the underlying logic of Levinas’ philosophy would not tolerate an anthropocentrism is plausible.\textsuperscript{27} In fact, Calarco cites Levinas’s \textit{Totality and Infinity} to argue that, “[t]hrough the encounter with the face of the other, my ‘animal complacency’\textsuperscript{28} is put in check” (65). The house which was once \textit{mine} becomes a hostel and the possessions that were once held in \textit{my} hands turn into gifts.\textsuperscript{29} Levinas also raises further questions here: \textit{who} is capable of interrupting my egoism in this manner? \textit{Who} could provide this kind of shock and \textit{who} is this other?\textsuperscript{30} Calarco’s interpretation of Levinas’s responses to these


\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Ibid.}, p.55.

\textsuperscript{27} Calarco uses Levinas’ example of Bobby, the dog that stayed with and “accompanied” the imprisoned Jews in the Nazi concentration camp during World War II, as an example to show the “possibility” for an animal subjectivity of being-for-the-other. According to Calarco, Levinas himself seems to flirt with just this possibility concerning animals when reflecting on the case of Bobby. Nonetheless, the passage that Calarco cites can be simply thought of as Levinas’ romanticisation of an animal figure in his writing. For Calarco’s argument, see \textit{Ibid.}, pp.56-58. For the original text of Levinas’ reference to Bobby, see Levinas, \textit{Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism}, pp.152-53.

\textsuperscript{28} Levinas, \textit{Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority}, p.149.

\textsuperscript{29} Calarco, \textit{op.cit.}, p.65.

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Ibid.}, p.65.
questions is: this encountered other “cannot belong to any genus whatsoever, not even as broad as ‘humanity.’” It follows,

So it will not do to say simply that the Other is another human being. Levinas of course, recognises this point, and this is why his humanism is not based on a biological or anthropological concept of humanity. Of course, the Other is in fact, for Levinas, what is ordinarily called a “human” being, but human being here should be understood as denoting those entities who are incapable of being fully reduced to the Same’s projects and objective intentionality. The human, then, is an ethical concept rather than a species concept; consequently, the concept of human could—at least in principle—be extended well beyond human beings to include other kinds of beings who called my egoism into question. (Calarco 65; emphasis mine)

Calarco’s attempt to develop a Levinas-inspired ethics of the animal helps to clarify how Levinas views and defines the concepts of “human” and “humanity.” And certainly, if it is as Calarco suggests that the human is not a “species” concept but an “ethical” concept for Levinas, this radical other with which we are obliged to have an ethical engagement could undoubtedly be a nonhuman being. Nevertheless, I would disagree with Calarco’s statement that Levinas did not build his idea of humanism on an anthropological or biological grounding. In fact, it is obvious that Levinas has established most of his discourses by explicitly assuming an anthropological-theological way of thinking, providing the fact that Levinas has state that “the animal does not have a face.” It is precisely from this anthropo-theological approach that Levinas could not drop the terms of “human” or “humanity” in his arguments even though his underlying logic of ethics may well include beings other than (or outside of) humans. This also explains why Levinas keeps being referred to as a humanist, who does not address animals in his work on ethics.

By drawing attention to the ambivalent attitude that Levinas has towards the question of whether an animal (or animals) could have a “face,” Calarco establishes a second major point. In Levinas’ general understanding, animals simply do not have the capability of or the facility for showing or evoking ethical responses in the Ego in the way that other human beings do. For Levinas, not only is it the case that an animal face is less important than a human face, but it is also derivative of our encounter with the human face. As Levinas has stated, “[t]he priority here is not found in the animal, but in the human face. We understand

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31 Ibid., p.65.
32 See Levinas’ interview with Hans Joachim Lenger. It was first published in German in a review called Spuren, issue no. 13 in 1987. The French translation can be found in Lévinas and Lenger, op.cit., pp.129-43.
the animal, the face of an animal, but in accordance with Dasein.” Nonetheless, Levinas cannot be sure if animals should be entirely excluded from having this property—which, in theory, may provoke an ethical response in us. When asked directly about this, Levinas’ agnostic reply shows that the matter may be far beyond what his thinking could reach: “I cannot say at what moment you have the right to be called ‘face’. I don’t know if a snake has a face. I can’t answer that question” (“The Name” 49). In Calarco’s opinion, Levinas would undoubtedly agree with the statement—“one cannot entirely refuse the face of an animal” (68). Calarco suggests that it is this equivocation regarding animal ethics that makes Levinas’ philosophy of and for the other interesting, for one could read the above statement as potentially implying that all animals have a face, or as meaning that only certain animals possess this ethical force. Above all, Levinas does eventually recognise the complications involved in attempting to draw a clear cut philosophical distinction between our ethical duties towards humans and animals. At one point, he claims that such ethical consideration is in need of an extension to all life forms. “It is clear that, without considering animals as human beings, the ethical extends to all living beings,” says Levinas (“The Name” 50).

To draw a brief conclusion about Levinas’s thinking, he has addressed the possibility of a self-constituting subjectivity; and yet his theoretical approach in understanding self-constituting subjectivity raises an ethical dilemma when he limits his discourse to the figure of the human face. Nevertheless, as Calarco has shown, Levinas has made some attempts to think of the encountered other otherwise, so as potentially to include animal subjectivity. These attempts stand as a milestone in the development of continental philosophy because they unveil a new perspective within which his successors may work on theorising the nonhuman other.

33 Levinas, “The Paradox of Morality: An Interview with Emmanuel Levinas” (conducted by Tamra Writing, Peter Hughes, Alison Ainley), The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other. pp.168-80. Partially recited and reprinted in Peter Atterton and Matthew Calarco’s co-edited work, Animal Philosophy. See Levinas, “The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights,” Animal Philosophy: Ethics and Identify, p.49. N.B. All citations from this interview are re-quoted from the book of Animal Philosophy.

34 Calarco, op.cit., p.68.
Agamben: Border-crossing between Humans and Animals

If what we have concluded from Levinas’s argument is that a self-constituting subjectivity—which does not exclusively belong to humans—is philosophically and ethically possible, in what way and from where might we find it? To answer that question, it helps to look into the philosophy of Giorgio Agamben. In approaching this question, Agamben addresses the question of language from a metaphysical perspective. In fact, readers who are familiar with Agamben’s works know that his early philosophical discussions are largely concerned with issues surrounding language, subjectivity and the state’s biopolitical management of “bare life.” Yet, they would have also remarked that, in his recent publications, Agamben has integrated those ideas into his critique of the ontological distinction between human and animal beings. Indeed, as his philosophy develops, Agamben shows increasing interest in debunking the “anthropocentric machine,” a terminology that is evoked in Calarco’s reading of Agamben.35 The anthropocentric machine, a concept which well describes the target of Agamben’s criticism, is difficult to remove from our ontology. Initially, there are two types of philosophical questioning that Agamben puts forward to challenge our anthropocentric ontology. On the one hand, he calls into question the boundary (or as he terms it, the “caesura”) that separates and determines the beings of humans and animals in relation to the problematic concept of language. On the other, he examines Heidegger’s philosophy of animals’ “poverty in world” and argues against Heidegger’s perspective via his interpretation of animal’s “openness” to the world.

Agamben’s works problematise what we acknowledge as the general definition of the boundary between humans and animals, that is, the intellectual ability to access being and comprehend ontology. In his early works, Agamben expresses two main ideas: (1) that the intellectual comprehension of ontology is exclusively a practice of human beings, and (2) such intellectual comprehension is constituted solely by “language.” However, in the early formulation of his arguments, Agamben is more concerned with the issue of how human

35 According to Calarco, Western philosophical tradition adopts essentially an anthropological approach to invoke discourses or to construct theories; hence, he uses the term—“anthropological machine”—to describe the operational processes when concepts and theories are invented. In my opinion, the reason why the anthropological approach dominates Western philosophy is not because humans are only apt to think anthropologically but because of a strong desire for anthropocentrism that humans constantly manifest in thinking. Thus, I have modified Calarco’s term to “anthropocentric machine.” Related discussion may refer to Calarco’s argument in the chapter of “Jamming the Anthropological Machine: Agamben.” Ibid., pp.92-102.
beings utilise language to give form to their appearance or to acquire self-recognition. As he states,

All living beings are in the open: they manifest themselves and shine in their appearance. But only human beings want to take possession of this opening, to seize hold of their own appearance and their own being-manifest. Language is this appropriation, which transforms nature into face. This is why appearance becomes a problem for human beings. (Agamben, Means 9; emphasis original)

With these remarks, Agamben compares the natural dispositions of human and animal, suggesting that animals have no interest to “possess their own exposition” whereas humans constantly have such an attempt to possess or represent their exposition through language. Agamben emphasises that this difference between humans and animals is essentially tied to the conception of language. Evoking Émile Benveniste’s theory of language, Agamben argues that, in regard to human subjectivity, there exists no substantial “I” (or the self / subject) in the psychological or physical sites without the presence of language. Taking this stance as his premise, Agamben argues that subjectivity can only be acknowledged as a “reality” when it is articulated in a specific language (or in specific languages). Nevertheless, this does not imply that subjectivity does not exist when it is not articulated in a language (or in certain languages). Following this reasoning, Agamben suggests that the “caesura,” which determines the perpetual split between humans and animals, is our ontological recognition of language. In other words, we see human beings as having subjectivity because we believe that humans possess language(s), and since animals have no language we suppose they have no subjectivity. Consequently, a lack of language is often employed in Western metaphysical debates as a counter-argument to demonstrate animals’ inability to break with their environmental and instinctual milieu as well as their inability to attain finite transcendental meanings. In The Open, Agamben’s later work, which addresses the question of the being of animals, he adds a further idea: by seeing the human as the articulation and conjunction of a body and a soul, traditional (Western) metaphysics presupposes that a “caesura” exists within the human, and it is this “caesura” that separates him/her from his/her animality.

36 Agamben, Means Without Ends: Notes on Politics, p.93.
37 Calarco explains that, for Benveniste, a subject refers him/herself as an “I,” and this “I” can have a reality or can actually exist only in language. Outside of language, there is no self, no subject. Calarco also affirms that Agamben had agreed with Benveniste’s proposition. Calarco, op.cit., p.83. Cf. Benveniste, Problems in General Linguistics (1971).
39 Agamben, The Open: Man and Animal, p.16.
Seeing the concept of “caesura” as problematic, Agamben introduces the notion of infancy in order to contest it philosophically. For Agamben, an infant, before s/he is socialised, is in a state similar to an animal being. The infant has no prior knowledge allowing them to use language or to formulate discourse, and neither can s/he constitute one on her/his own. Yet, the infant is certainly already in language. It is only through a process of socialisation that s/he is instructed to acquire language and the ability to exercise it; in the meanwhile, that process of socialisation also helps her/him to acquire subjectivity. In a very obscure way, one can make an analogy that applies to animals. In my view, I consider that it is rather hard to prove that animals are completely excluded from the acquisition of a “language” (or “languages”). Examples to prove such arguments are most evident when one compares ethnographers’ studies of the Neanderthals to zoologists’ studies of chimpanzees. In scientific terminology, chimpanzees are not at all classified as homo sapiens, and Neanderthals are only recognised as “subspecies” of homo sapiens. However, for both species, there is research which shows the possibility of their acquisition of language (or, at least, a language system). Moreover, as Calarco remarks, despite the fact that Agamben has followed his predecessors (such as Heidegger and Benveniste) in assuming a break between the human and the animal with respect to language, Agamben has never claimed that animals are beings without language. Rather, Agamben thinks that animals are “in language in the same way that they are in their surrounding environment” (Calarco 84). Agamben himself has also affirmed, “[a]nimals are not in fact denied language; on the contrary, they are always and totally language… Animals do not enter language, they are already inside it” (Infancy 51-52).

Additionally, when discussing the question of ontology, Agamben attempts to paralyse the anthropocentric machine by demonstrating the “openness” of the animal being. Agamben’s early publications already reveal his interests and thoughts on language that exposes the problematic boundary which divides the animal and human beings; yet, it is in his

40 Summarising Agamben’s philosophical argument, Matthew Calarco makes it clear that Agamben has used the notion of infancy to prove that our common understanding of language-as-a property-to-only-human-beings is ontologically false. An infant is fundamentally inhabited in language but has no capability to articulate discourse; likewise, animals are very likely to be in language but without discourse. “According to Agamben, what is unique to human beings is that they are actually deprived of language (in the form of articulate speech) and are forced to receive it from outside of themselves. Infancy is the name given to this situation of human beings existing fundamentally in language but without discourse.” Calarco, op.cit., p.85, emphasis original. Cf. Giorgio Agamben, Infancy and History (1993).


42 Calarco, op.cit., p.84.
later works that he develops more fully these ideas into the notion of the “open.” In *The Open*, Agamben discusses Heidegger’s claim regarding animals’ “openness” to the world and his analysis thus sets out to question and re-examine human and animal being-in-the-world. Heidegger considers that animals are “poor in world” because they cannot understand the “as.” This expression means that animals are *physically present* in the world and can *experience* the world yet they are incapable of comprehending the world fully. That is to say, for example, a cat can hear a song sang by a human being and distinguish it from the cat’s empirical experience that it is not a person who is speaking. Yet, the cat is both incapable of understanding the meaning of the song and of telling the fundamental difference between songs and speeches. For Heidegger, this implies that the world of animals does not stand in “unconcealment” in the way it does to humans; there are no “beings” for the animal, but only triggers that occasion disinhibiting behaviour within the animal’s encircling ring. Heidegger concludes that animals’ “openness” to the world is limited and does not extend to being in relation to beings. Agamben opposes Heidegger’s claims and suggests that animals simply have no interest in constituting language(s) to articulate their comprehension of the world in the same way that they have no interest in their own images or their own subjectivities (as such, Agamben adds, animals have no politics), because they are constantly and substantially *in* the world. For Agamben, animal’s being is wide “open” *in* the world. Interestingly, in one passage, Agamben asserts that the animal is “at once open and not open” since an animal is always “open *in a nondisconcealment*.” He then proposes that it is the animal that has the ability to be fully “open” because the animal is “open” to things and beings regardless of

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44 In fact, Agamben has presented two different stances in regard to the notion of “open,” one from Rainer Maria Rilke and the other from Martin Heidegger. According to Agamben, Rilke believes that the “open” is to be seen “with all its eyes” only by the animals (*die Kreatur*). As for Heidegger, there is only man has the essential gaze to see the “open” which names the unconcealedness of beings, but not the animal. Agamben further states that Heidegger believes the animal is “poor in the world” because the animal “*does not stand within a potentiality for revelation* {rivelabilità, Offenbarkeit} of beings.” Agamben approves neither Rilke nor Heidegger’s positions. He points out that the issue is not really how animals experience or see the world; instead, the true issue lies at the heart of our problematic presupposition of this “border,” the frontier that distinguishes animals and humans as regard to their ontological comprehension of the unconcealedness of beings. Agamben, *The Open*, p. 54, 57; emphasis original. Cf. Heidegger, *The Fundamental*, p.248.


46 By using double negations to coin the word “concealment,” Agamben simply means that animals are always *open even* when they are inhibited in a concealed or enclosed environment. In other words, animals are *full of potentials* to experience and comprehend the world or even to constitute subjectivity, whether they are in a world that is concealed to them or not. The only problem is that they are inactive in their engagement to realise these potentials. This is therefore why Agamben states that they are “at once open and not open.” See Agamben, *The Open*, p.59.
whether they are revealed to their consciousness or not. Agamben’s argument eventually destabilises the meaning of the “boundary,” for being “open” is no longer an ontological state that acquires a metaphysical revelation in order to capture a thing’s essence. It is to live and embrace fully those which are not revealed and which cannot be captured. It is also why animals’ “openness” embodies this potentiality of communication. Agamben’s argument, in Calarco’s opinion, successfully creates a rupture in the anthropocentric machine that Western metaphysics embodies from its understanding of the human-animal relation.47

To summarise briefly, Agamben shows that this “border” is, effectively, both a derivative anthropocentric concept and a presupposition. For Agamben, it is only through knowing how Western metaphysics attributes language to human beings that one can understand why there is a “border” (“caesura”) between humans and animals. Equally, to debunk this attribution of the anthropocentric machine, one has to begin with acknowledging the “openness” of animals. Agamben’s argument implicitly hints that an emerging philosophy—posthumanism, which opens up a new thinking in Continental philosophy—is on the rise.48 Posthumanism will certainly bring some radical changes, and perhaps it could finally change our recognition of the “border.”


48 Posthumanism: the concept of posthumanism is very wide, and for the moment, there is not yet a coherent or precisely determined definition of the term. This is largely because the concept arises in a pluridisciplinary context, with different disciplines attempting to draw different visions of what comes “after” the humanism. One can approach the term in cognitive science, in psychoanalysis, in sociology, in medicine, in biology (genetic engineering), and so on and so forth. The present thesis employs Cary Wolfe’s definition of posthumanism since it occurs in the framework of Western metaphysics and philosophy. The following quote explains Wolfe’s interpretation of posthumanism: “posthumanism in my sense isn’t posthuman at all—in the sense of being ‘after’ our embodiment has been transcended—but is only posthumanist, in the sense that it opposes the fantasies of disembodiment and autonomy, inherited from humanism itself. […] My sense of posthumanism is thus analogous to Jean-François Lyotard’s paradoxical rendering of the postmodern: it comes both before and after humanism: before in the sense that it names the embodiment and embeddedness of the human being in not just its biological but also its technological word, the prosthetic coevolution of the human animal with the technicity of tools and external archival mechanism (such as language and culture) of which Bernard Stiegler probably remains our most compelling and ambitious theorist—and all of which comes before that historically specific thing called ‘the human’ that Foucault’s archaeology excavates.” Wolfe, “Introduction,” What is Posthumanism?, p.xv. Cf. Stiegler, Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus (1998).
Derrida: The Passion for the Nonhuman Ecological Other

The argument developed and presented so far may be summarised as follows: Levinas show that self-constituting subjectivity is metaphysically and ethically possible to be found outside of human beings. And, according to Agamben, this self-constituting nonhuman subjectivity is mostly manifested in the form of animals. Agamben shows that it is through crossing the “human-animal” border that we can finally recognise this nonhuman self-constituting subjectivity. Agamben’s overall argument is sound, yet his thinking regarding this issue remains closed in a framework focusing only on beings that to some extent resemble humans (i.e., animals). Derrida, however, has taken a much more complex view on this issue. Many commentators, such as Paul Hegarty and Matthew Calarco, have understood that Derrida’s approach to the question of the other is similar to Agamben’s because he addresses the question(s) of the animal. Nonetheless, as Cary Wolfe points out: the deepest logic of Derrida’s investigation of “the question of animals” is not necessarily an attempt to challenge the boundary between humans and animals but also between the living or organic and the mechanical or technical. That said, Derrida also emphasises that the “animal question” is not the only question, for it is part of the larger question of the “entire field of the living, or rather the life/death relation” (Derrida and Roudinesco, “Violence” 63). For Wolfe, it is even part of the larger question of how we understand posthumanism.

To understand how Derrida’s philosophy explores this wider field of inquiry, one has to look at three topics that are tightly linked to the idea of the other: (1) deconstruction; (2) the concept of hospitality; and (3) undecidability. From these topics, we are able to see why Derrida’s philosophy suggests valorising a nonhuman other and providing it an ethico-

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49 As explained in the previous chapter, “ecological other” that is evoked and employed in this thesis designates beings that are neither human nor constructed by humans. In a phenomenological sense, the ecological other encompasses all nonhuman beings in nature, and to a certain extent, it could even include human-made artefacts that are based on natural materials. Hence, an ecological other can refer to an animal, an insect, an organic being from nature, a living organism that manifests its own self-organising system, or an object that is made of natural substances. In the literary texts I choose to analyse, the ecological other comes in many forms. In some cases, it appears in the form of animals, insects, forests or lands. In other cases, it appears as figures which undergo a transformational process from a human entity to a nonhuman one. To a certain extent, it may even appear as a hybrid of human and nonhuman or a hybrid of different nonhuman beings.

50 Wolfe, op.cit., p.xviii.

51 Ibid., p.xxii.
political stance. As we go along, we will be able to acknowledge how an ecological other involves an embodied form or nonhuman thinking.

As commonly known, Derridean deconstruction started with targeting an ontological and metaphysical debate about the *logos* (i.e. speech or reason). However, his idea of deconstruction was never limited *only* to philosophical discussions about language. On the contrary, it is essentially related to other fields of inquiry such as ethics, law, society and politics. As Drucilla Cornell explains, “[deconstruction is] a utopian ethics that gestures toward the other of any community or system.”

In his work in this area, Derrida proves that *logos* can be deconstructed in regard to the other, and that this deconstruction of *logos* can further be applied to thinking about justice. As Calarco affirms:

> For Derrida, deconstruction *(if it exists, as he always adds)* is justice, understood as a passion for the impossible and a relation with an alterity that remains irreducibly Other. On this line of thought, even though discourses *about* the Other (moral, legal, political, etc.) will always remain deconstructible, the passion for the Other is not. (133-34; emphasis original)

Hence, we see that passion for the other is one of the key elements that is inherent to deconstruction. This passion can ultimately be explained and exemplified in Derrida’s concept of hospitality.

When Derrida first addresses the concept of hospitality, he begins by speaking of the foreigner and addressing the question of the foreigner. For Derrida, hospitality is the very...

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53 For Derrida, a foreigner is not a person who, in literal sense, is kept abroad or outside a society (or a family or a city). Rather, a foreigner is to be defined in relation to the law. A foreigner could very well be inside the society (or the city or the family), but it is her/his status of being (and remaining) foreign and of needing to be offered “hospitality” that makes her/him a foreigner. It is the law that regulates and determines her/his “foreignness.” Derrida offers Oedipus as an example. When Oedipus committed the crime of killing his father and marrying his mother, he became a foreigner “at home” (in his own house, in the royal family and in Greek society). Thus, we understand that it is not one’s being-in-a-foreign-place that makes oneself a foreigner, but it is via law that Oedipus is determined to be a foreigner. At one point, Derrida states: “the foreigner, the xenos, is not simply the absolute other, the barbarian, the savage absolutely excluded and heterogeneous. […] Benveniste emphasises that ‘the same institution exists in the Greek world under another name: xenos indicates relations of the same type between men linked by a pact which implies precise obligations also extending to their descendants. […] This pact, this contract of hospitality that links to the foreigner and which reciprocally links the foreigner, it’s a question of knowing whether it counts beyond the individual and if it also extends to the family, to the generation, to the genealogy. It is not, here, although the things are connected, a question of the classical problem of the right to nationality or citizenship as a birthright— in some places linked to the land and in others to blood. […] [I]t is not only a question of the citizenship offered to someone who had none previously, but of the right granted to the foreigner as such, to
first and the most fundamental gesture called forth in the encounter with a foreigner (and in a similar way, one can say the same of any encounter with the other). Or even more strongly asserted: “[h]ospitality is due to the foreigner” (Derrida and Dufourmantelle, Of Hospitality 73). Such hospitality has often remained, as Derrida points out, “conditional.” But, it is the “unconditional” aspect of hospitality that Derrida pays particular attention to and thus introduces into philosophical discussion. According to Derrida, “unconditional” hospitality can never be attained or achieved easily. More precisely, it is almost impossible for an “unconditional” hospitality to be realised in practice. At one point, Derrida claims:

An unconditional hospitality is, to be sure, practically impossible to live: one cannot in any case, and by definition, organise it. Whatever happens, happens, whatever comes, comes, and that, in the end, is the only event worthy of this name. And I well recognise that this concept of pure hospitality can have no legal or political status. No state can write it into its laws. But without at least the thought of this pure and unconditional hospitality, of hospitality itself, we would have no concept of hospitality in general and would not even be able to determine any rules for conditional hospitality (with its rituals, its legal status, its norms, its national or international conventions). (Borradori and Derrida 129; emphasis mine)

This statement was made in an interview in regard to the September 11th event only few weeks after the attack occurred. The statements outline the importance of giving thought to this pure hospitality, which is “unconditional.” It may be true that there will never exist an “unconditional” hospitality. Yet, if we had not tried to imagine it or to think about it, there would not even be any concept of hospitality in general. In addition, Mary-Jane Rubenstein, the author of Strange Wander, also suggests:

Derrida recognises that even if ‘there is such a thing,’ the ‘unconditional hospitality’ imagined in these thought experiments could never become, for example, state policy. He admits that an ethic of welcoming anything and everything that arrives is a ‘hyperbolic’ one, exceeding even the most liberal of ‘juridico-political’ configurations. It is precisely this hyperbolic excess, however, that makes it necessary to keep a state’s conditional regulations and laws in constant tension with the ‘unconditional principles’ upon which they are ostensibly based. (141-42)

Rubenstein’s comment focuses on the hyperbolic excess of an ethics that helps keep the state’s conditional regulations in tension with the unconditional principles. My interest lies

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the foreigner remaining a foreigner, and to his or her relatives, to the family, to the descendants.” Derrida and Dufourmantell, “Foreigner Question: Coming from Abroad / from the Foreigner,” Of Hospitality, pp.3-73. (N.B. Derrida’s response is printed only on odd pages; on even pages, it is the “Invitation” by Anne Dufourmantelle; quotations of Derrida can be found on p.21, 23, emphasis original.)

54 Ibid., p.73.
rather in the importance of *that which* this hyperbolic ethic welcomes. It welcomes *anything* and *everything*. It is from this “welcoming *anything* and *everything*” that we realise Derrida’s conception of the other and the foreigner cannot be exclusively applied to human beings. Rather, this welcoming should be applied also to nonhuman others. It is often argued that this nonhuman other, to which Derrida constantly tries to extend the notion of hospitality, is the figure of the animal. This is supported by the following statements Derrida makes in *The Animal that Therefore I am*:

> In calling up still more of my recent animal texts, or those of yesteryear, [...] I therefore admit to my old obsession with a personal and somewhat paradisical bestiary. It came to the fore very early: *the crazy project of constituting everything thought or written within a zoosphere, the dream of an absolute hospitality* and an infinite appropriation. (37; emphasis mine)

Nevertheless, if one reads carefully Rubenstein’s remark that “the very gesture of opening thinking out to impossibility is *already* a gesture of radical hospitality toward the unexpected and indeterminable,” one can argue that the “unexpected and indeterminable” does not necessarily *only* refer to the nonhuman “animal” other.55 In fact, it is more plausible that Derrida’s “unconditional” hospitality encompasses thinking in view of the nonhuman ecological other, for this nonhuman ecological other remains always foreign to the tradition of continental philosophy, and hence, “unexpected and indeterminable.”

Finally, it is in Derrida’s philosophical notion of “undecidability” that a nonhuman ecological other comes into being. Yet in order to understand from where and in what context such an ecological other arises, we must go back to address the question of subjectivity in relation to the notion of “undecidability.” That is to say, we should ask “who or what” would come *after* (or *before*) the decision. 56 Derrida’s undecidability is not indecision. Undecidability, as Rubenstein remarks, “refers to the situation that gives rise to any decision that can be called a decision” (Rubenstein 145). It is when one finds oneself thrown into a position in which s/he *cannot* decide and *does not know how to decide*.57 She then underlines

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56 See Derrida and Nancy’s discussion on the question of “who comes after the subject?” Nancy criticises Derrida for having intentionally gotten around the question of “who comes *after* the subject” by means of a reversed questioning: “who comes *before* the subject?” Derrida agrees with Nancy’s criticism but justifies himself by saying that the “*before*” he refers to does not retain any chronological, logical or ontologico-transcendental meaning because he wishes to resist any traditional schema of ontologico-transcendental questions. Derrida, “‘Eating Well’ or the Calculation of the Subject: An Interview with Jacques Derrida,” *Who Comes After the Subject?*, p.107.

that this is why undecidability remains “indeterminate.” As Rubenstein emphasises, “it is from this undecidability that I must decide: it is from this impossibility that decision becomes possible” (145). For Derrida, undecidability ultimately still requires and assumes “[a] decisive or deciding moment of responsibility [that] supposes a leap by which an act takes off.” For this reason, even certain sympathetic readers of Derrida may have difficulty accepting his notion of undecidability. Rubenstein further explains: this “leap” between calculation and the incalculable and between undecidability and decidability is essential to making a decision. Evoking a sense of immediacy, this “leap” can also be described as an “instance of madness.” In fact, it is this “leap” (this particular moment of engaging an act of decision) that draws our attention to the onto-philosophical questioning of subjectivity in relation to undecidability. The following paragraphs will first show how subjectivity comes to its existence in relation with undecidability. Then, it will further demonstrate how nonhuman ecological other can compel us to confront undecidability.

For Rubenstein, to understand Derrida’s undecidability, one cannot avoid asking “just who or what it is that makes this mad leap” (147; emphasis mine). Hence, the subheading of her analysis evokes the question in a Nancean manner: “[so], Who Comes After the Decision?” This question is thoroughly treated in her work in two main ways: (1) Ernesto Laclau’s theoretical interpretation and adaption of Derrida’s notions of deconstruction and undecidability; and (2) Derrida’s own responses to the question of “who comes after the decision?” From his reading of Derrida, Laclau draws attention to what happens “between” decidability and the decision. Arguing from a political-theoretical point of view, Laclau recognises the necessity of deconstruction. For Laclau, Derridean deconstruction has always been (and it should continue to be) indispensable for democratic political theory. As Rubenstein points out, Laclau welcomes the destructuring operation of deconstruction (in a

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58 Ibid., p.145.
60 “It is this very leap into unknowability that prompts Richard Kearney to supplement undecidability with a more decidable ‘ethics of judgment,’ and this same moment that provokes countless interlocutors to ask Derrida how decision can possibly be made there where a decision cannot be made.” Ibid., p.146.
61 Ibid., p.146.
63 The title of this passage is “Much Madness Is Divines Sense (or Who Comes After the Decision?)”, Rubenstein confirms that she re-employs Nancy’s book’s title “Who Comes After the Subject” as an inspiration of this title of her chapter. See footnote no.51 in Rubenstein, op.cit. p.226.
64 Ibid., p.148.
similar sense to what Nancy would call its “unworking”). Nevertheless, for Laclau, the gesture that comes later to affirm a single and concrete decision—which moves away from the unworking back to the work—is more important than the deconstruction. As Rubenstein explains:

Laclau thus suggests a necessary [...] supplement to deconstructive expansiveness: a certain contraction that would move from the destructured “field of undecidability” back to a single, concrete decision: from working back to the work. This supplement is what Laclau understands by “hegemony,” that is, the consolidation and self-grounding of that which lacks any necessary identity to begin with. For Laclau, deconstruction unworks all essentiality and then hegemony repositions it as (re-)constructed, so that “deconstruction and hegemony are two essential dimensions of a single theoretico-practical operation”.

From the above passage, one learns that Laclau emphasises the constructive nature of the decision in contrast to Derrida’s deconstructive focus on undecidability. For Laclau, there is a “space” that stands between undecidability and the actual decision; and in that “space,” there arises the self-positing subject. To be more accurate, this self-fashioning, as he has once stated, is the instant of the decision. In the end, no matter how hard we try to deny it, for Laclau, there is still always a self-positing subject who makes (or to an extent, imposes) a decision. Laclau further states that this self-positing subject evoked by Derrida’s notion of undecidability is implicitly hegemonic. Rubenstein underlines that, to an extent, one can say that Laclau’s “deconstructive” hegemony has not differentiated itself much from the classical sense of hegemonic hegemony, for in both accounts there is a self-constituted subject which takes up a decision.

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65 Ibid., p.148.
66 Ibid., p.148.
68 According to Rubenstein’s analysis, Laclau has affirmed this statement explicitly in the 1993 conference on “Deconstruction and Pragmatism.” Rubenstein, op.cit., p.149.
69 However, one should notice that Rubenstein has emphasised the fact that Laclau’s hegemonic subject does not just appear out of nowhere, and neither does it simply emerge out of undecidability. On the contrary, this hegemonic subject forms itself in the transition “between” undecidability and decision by first pretending to be a subject. As Laclau has claimed, “the impossibility of a free, substantial subject, of a consciousness identical to itself which is the causa sui, does not eliminate its need, but just relocates the chooser in the aporetical situation of having to act as if he were a subject, without being endowed with any of the means of a fully fledged subjectivity.” Ibid., p.149. Cf. Laclau, “Deconstruction, Pragmatism, Hegemony,” Deconstruction and Pragmatism: Critchley, Derrida, Laclau, and Rorty, p.56.
70 Rubenstein op.cit. p.150.
Surprisingly, in Derrida’s responses to a number of other papers on the question of deconstruction’s relation to pragmatism, he has approved and agreed with Laclau’s approach in adapting his notion of undecidability to theorectico-practical operation. “I am completely in agreement with everything Ernesto Laclau has said on the question of hegemony and power,” Derrida affirms (“Remarks” 83). Although it seems very un-Derridean for Derrida to state his “complete agreement” with Laclau’s thesis, Derrida recognises the need to make compromises when the question of the subject arises, particularly in a context of theories-confronting-politico-pragmatism. Derrida then says: “the question here is whether it is through the decision that one becomes a subject who decides something” (”Remark” 84). Interestingly, Derrida’s response to that question is neither a full negation nor a complete affirmation of Laclau’s self-positing subject which arises from hegemony. Rather, Derrida goes further to complicate this issue and explains that whether a subject could arise through the trajectory of undecidability to a decision or not, the question needs to be answered and examined in a perspective of one’s responsibility to the other. As Rubenstein elucidates Derrida’s idea: one’s boundless responsibility for the inappropriable and singular other holds him/her hostage to the other who interrupts him/her essentially; and therefore, this boundless responsibility holds him/her in undecidability.71 This is a prominent issue when Derrida rethinks “the irreconcilable conflict between any one obligation and [one’s] boundless responsibility for every other inappropriable and singular other.”72 Rubenstein continues:

[I]n any event, from this condition of being bound to those who make me as not-me, “I” obviously cannot be the one who makes a decision for I am infinitely not “I.” The decider can therefore only be the other to whom I am infinitely sub-j ected. (151)

That said, ultimately, Derrida recognises this “one” who decides is “the other in me” (Derrida, Adieu 23). Hence, if it is true, as Laclau has suggested, that there is a hegemony which can give rise to something, it is the other rather than a “self-posing subject” that ultimately makes the decision.

In addition, according to this view, we acknowledge this particular moment of “madness” that we have just characteised—the “I” is put into a paradoxical position where it is held to be responsible for a decision that it could not have made. Derrida rhetorically calls this paradox—this impossible confrontation of “the other-in-me”—a “passive” decision.

71 Ibid., p.151.
Would one have to show hospitality to be the impossible itself—that is, to what the good sense of all philosophy can only exclude as madness or nonsense: a passive decision, an originally affect decision? Such an undesirable guest […] signifies in me the other who decides and rends. The passive decision, condition of the event, is always in me, structurally, another event, a rending decision as the decision of the other. Of the absolute other in me, the other as the absolute that decides on me in me. […] In me. I decide, I make up my mind in all sovereignty—this would mean: the other than myself, the me as other and other than myself, he makes or I make an exception of the same. This normal exception, the supposed norm of all decision, exonerates from no responsibility. Responsible for myself before the other, I am first of all and also responsible for the other before the other (Derrida, The Politics 68-9; emphasis original).

As stated, this passive decision—which is taken by the absolute other that always exists in me and manifests itself in me—is, in the end, my responsibility as well. Even though it is this “other-in-me” who has taken the decision, “I” cannot be exonerated from responsibility. “I” am always in condition of being responsible for the other before the other.

Following this logic, we know that the “passive decision” cannot escape from invoking an “other”; what’s more, it is certainly the “other” but not the “self” that is invoked. But, what sort of “other” does Derrida mean (or imply) in this context? If we return to Derrida’s discussion and criticism of Heidegger’s understanding of Dasein, we learn that it is a “nonhuman ecological other” that Derrida has in mind when he speaks of the other invoked by this passive decision. In his interview with Jean-Luc Nancy regarding the question of subjectivity, Derrida responds to the question—of “who comes after/before subject?”—by criticising Heidegger’s understanding of Dasein. For Derrida, not only is Heidegger’s definition of Dasein—its capacity to comprehend the meaning of “as such”—anthropocentric, but it also completely eliminates the possibility to apprehend subjectivity outside of a relational context to humans. Derrida thus addresses the nonhuman other from the analogical viewpoint of animals, but one understands very quickly that his implicit emphasis is on something even beyond the animal other.

In insisting on the as such, I am pointing from afar to the inevitable return of a distinction between the human relation to self, that is to say, that of an entity capable of conscience, of language, of a relation to death as such, etc., and a nonhuman relation to self, incapable of the phenomenological as such—and once again we are back to the question of the animal. The distinction between the animal (which has no or is not a Dasein) and man has nowhere been more radical nor more rigorous than in Heidegger. The animal will never be either a subject or a Dasein. It doesn’t have an unconscious either (Freud), nor a rapport to the other as other, no more than there is an animal face (Levinas). It is from the standpoint of Dasein that Heidegger defines the humanity of man (Derrida, “Eating” 105; emphasis original).
Derrida claims that he himself rarely speaks of the “subject” or of “subjectivity.” He finds that even if we try to “[locate] difference, inadequation, the dehiscence within auto-affection” in our discourse of the “subject” or “subjectivity,” we still cannot avoid linking subjectivity to man. He adds, “[e]ven if it acknowledges that the “animal” is capable of auto-affection (etc.), this discourse nevertheless does not grant it subjectivity” (Derrida, “‘Eating’” 105). That is to say, one cannot avoid thinking of it without relating it to a human agent. Reasoning in this manner, it is implied that even on those occasions when we speak of the other, the agency might still require an affirmation of the “subject” or of “subjectivity” that is essentially related to the human. Therefore, the only way to radicalise and mobilise this absolute-other-that-is-inside-of-me is by thinking in terms of nonhuman relations, which is impossible to imagine in an orthodox phenomenological way of thinking. Accurately speaking, one should start with imagining a “subjectivity” that is completely nonhuman, to an extent that both animal and ecological beings are included. This is exactly how Derrida replies to Nancy’s critical questioning in their exchange of opinions about “subjectivity”:

J-LN: When you decided not to limit a potential “subjectivity” to man, why do you then limit yourself simply to the animal?

JD: Nothing should be excluded. I said “animal” for the sake of convenience and to use a reference that is as classical as it is dogmatic. The difference between “animal” and “vegetal” also remains problematic (“Eating” 106).

Like Derrida said, “nothing should be excluded.” The imagining of subjectivity of a nonhuman other must go beyond what we have already constituted (and continue to imagine) for the “animal” and extend to what is yet to be thought of as the subjectivity of the “vegetal,” of the “ecological” and of the “non-living” other.74

To conclude, this “other-in-me” has to be an ethical one due to the fact that we are conditioned to speak of it and address it in relation to ethics and to responsibility. Existence of the “I-as-not-I” is first and foremost a responsibility for the other before the other. Moreover, this “other-in-me” should be a nonhuman one, since the human other does not often escape from a process of identification, and hence is always desiring a “subject” or supposing a “self” in his/her otherness. Last but not least, this “other-in-me” may also be an ecological one because the imagining of subjectivity of a nonhuman other needs to break free from the classical and dogmatic references, as well as from the restraints and limitations that these

73 Derrida, “‘Eating,’” p.105.
74 Ibid., p.106.
references may have confined it to. It is therefore only by thinking in relation to the ecological dimension that the Derridean “other-in-me” is possible.
1.1.3. Beyond an Anthropocentric Understanding of Subjectivity and Ontology

**Morton and Shaviro: Ecocritique, Objected-Oriented Ontology, and Speculative Realism**

As noted earlier, this chapter aims to extend the debate regarding the possibility of a “self-constituting” subjectivity that would take the form of an ecological other. To locate this ecological other, one needs to first look into Timothy Morton’s overall discussion of ecocritique. From Morton’s discussion, we discover that the ecological other in fact dwells in the development and application of a new ecocritique. This subsection thus begins with Timothy Morton’s thorough analysis of ecocriticism. And later, it brings in a brief discussion of object-oriented ontology and speculative realism, showing that this ecological other we find is able to “self-constitute” its subjectivity.

In regard to ecocriticism, Timothy Morton expresses in *Ecology without Nature* his desire to bring forth a new kind of ecocritique, that is, a new way to define and conceive “nature” and “environment.” As he states in his introduction, he finds that conventional ecocriticism is limited in thematic discussions that address only animals, vegetation, weather and climate change, etc. He therefore propose to carry out close-readings of specific texts and writers (or even composers and artists)—focusing in particular on their aesthetic dimensions—that lend themselves to an analysis in terms of space and time (global, local, cosmopolitan, regional…). Yet, the aesthetics evoked in Morton’s analysed texts or works is not a “typical” one, for it goes against the traditional aesthetics sought in nature by the

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75 For Morton, this new kind of ecocritique is “a theory of ecological criticism.” And he claims, “[a] theory of ecological criticism means at least two things. [...] On one hand, [it] provides a set of theoretical tools for ecological criticism. ‘A theory of ecological criticism’ is an ecocritical theory. On the other hand, the study accounts for the qualities of existing ecocriticism, placing them in context and taking account of their paradoxes, dilemmas, and shortcomings. ‘A theory of ecological criticism’ is a theoretical reflection upon ecocriticism: to criticise the ecocritic.” That said, what differentiates Morton’s approach from others is that he chooses to criticise the theoretical paradigm of mainstream contemporary ecocriticism. As Morton explains, “Ecology without Nature [...] hesitates between two poles. It wavers both inside and outside ecocriticism. It supports the study of literature and the environment. It is wholeheartedly ecological in its political and philosophical orientation. [...] It does not mean to undermine ecocriticism entirely. It does not mean to suggest that there is nothing ‘out there.’ But *Ecology without Nature* does challenge the assumptions that ground ecocriticism.” Morton, *Ecology*, pp.8-9.
Romantics. Morton, as Chris Coughran points out, considers that the way that “nature” was defined by the European Romantics remains a fanciful notion, and it clings to a conservative environmental aesthetics which reinforces the distinctions between “positive” and “negative” elements of our surrounding environments.\(^\text{76}\) Ultimately, it produces a kind of nature writing that Morton believes “often excludes th[e] negative ambience. When it does include it, it distinguishes it from the positive ambient of rustling tress or quiet ripples on a lake” (Ecology 124). Morton thus tries to show that a new kind of ecocritique can be stemmed from an unconventional aesthetics of “poetic ambience,” which no longer excludes the negative elements.\(^\text{77}\) In so doing, Morton suggests that we should be in search of new meanings or definitions for the words “environment” and “nature.”\(^\text{78}\) He emphasises at the beginning of the book—that the “nature” is not in fact what we usually think it is; the idea of “nature” needs to be rethought. According to Morton, the conventional aesthetics that is established in the Romantic period continues to influence how we imagine, typify and give forms of ideas to [begin to construct an image för] “nature” today. However, as he argues, we should look into literary and musical works which accommodate negative element, such as “ambient poetic,” which is usually disqualified by the ideological aesthetics of the Romantics. Morton thus make further elaboration by introducing the examples of Thoreau (the most prominent figure of the Romantic Movement in American) and John Cage (a contemporary experimental musician), stating how Cage was inspired by Thoreau and thus offers the negative ambience with a positive outlook in his composition of music. As Coughran summarises of Morton’s examples,

> Thoreau [welcomes the] reception of the ambient sounds of the “iron horse” (the railway locomotive), [and] telegraph wires howling in the wind […]. John Cage, an avid reader of Thoreau’s “nature writing” who harboured a similar positive attitude toward “negative ambience”: the sound of radios, for example, which he personally detested but aesthetically embraced. (124).

Although Morton’s focus is mainly on aesthetics (and his chosen texts are mostly from the literature of the Romantic period), he does not forget to outline the importance of the political aspect of the texts he studies. Morton stresses that the last part of his book focuses on the politicization of environmental questions that we pose, regarding their aesthetics


\(^{77}\) Ibid., pp.123-24.

\(^{78}\) Morton, op.cit., pp.1.
dimensions in historical and ideological contexts. While asking what kind of political or social thinking/making/doing it is really possible to realise, Morton tries to explore an alternative artistic stand one may take on environmental issues. Once again, as Coughran points out, Morton’s theory of “ecomimesis,” which puts forward a radical ecological kitsch, asserts a new political approach in relation to the aesthetic aspect of nature and ecology.\(^7\)

What Morton aims to achieve via his theory of ecomimesis is to call our attention to “sheer negativity” (Ecology 150). In Morton’s view, this “sheer negativity” can be inscribed in radical eco-kitsch art. As Morton defines, “[k]itsch is based on the idea that nature can be copied, and thus on the notion of ecomimesis. […] Kitsch is the object of disgust” (Ecology 152). What Morton means by radical eco-kitsch art is ecological art which underlines “the sliminess but not the sacred” or “the taboo substance of life” (Ecology 159). Morton further explains, we can see this radical eco-kitsch art in Kristeva’s term—that it highlights the “abject, the qualities of the world we slough off in order to maintain subjects and objects” (Ecology 159). Ultimately, this eco-kitsch art will give rise to political acts, for it brings forward our awareness to the “underside of ecomimesis.” Morton states,

> Ecological art is duty bound to hold the slimy in view. This involves invoking the underside of ecomimesis, the pulsing, shifting qualities of ambient poetics, rather than trying to make pretty or sublime pictures of nature. (Ecology 159-60)

In concrete terms, Morton considers that radical eco-kitsch art embodies a demonstration of this “sliminess,” and it give rise to ecological politics that takes into account pollution, miasma or decayed things. For instance, it may include the leaking of radioactive waste from the nuclear bomb factory or plutonium toxic chemical release.\(^8\) For Morton, “[e]cological politics is bound up with what to do with pollution, miasma, slime: things that glisten schlup, and decay” (Ecology 159).

Indeed, this new ecocritique Morton suggests looks into both the aesthetic and the political. But how does Morton’s new ecocritique relate to our search of the ecological other? For one, it highlights the possibility of giving new definitions to “nature” and “environment” by pushing the limits of our thinking outside the thematic categories of animals, vegetation, weather, etc. Hence, it aligns with my attempt to define the ecological other by searching for a category (or categories) that goes beyond our ability to imagine nonhuman others. For

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7\(^7\) Coughran, *op.cit.*, p.124-25.

8\(^8\) Morton, *Ecology*, p.159.
another, Morton invokes Derrida’s philosophy of deconstruction as his key method or strategy for searching out what lies beyond these conventional categories. He states,

Ecology without Nature is inspired by the way in which deconstruction searches out, with ruthless and brilliant intensity, points of contradiction and deep hesitation in systems of meaning. [...] Just as Derrida explains how difféance at once underlies and undermines logocentrism, I assert that the rhetorical strategies of nature writing undermine what one could call ecologocentrism. (Morton, Ecology 6)

Undermining ecologocentrism is part of the challenging and critical thinking in Morton’s philosophy, yet he wants his readers to acknowledge that at no point does he intend to put forward a nihilist postmodernist claim that there should be no ecology at all.81 To an extent, Morton even borrows Derrida’s political concept of—“democracy to come [la démocratie à-venir]—to describe that his work is about an “ecology to come.”82 In this respect, the position that is taken on in this thesis is mostly in agreement with Morton’s view, for the thesis is likewise tied to the Derridean deconstruction, especially in the way that it tries to problematise the question between the subject and the other, and ultimately, the ecological other. Therefore, the thesis agrees with Morton’s proposition that developing and applying a new ecocritique is necessary, for it is where the ecological other may dwell.

OOO, which rejects the privilege of human existence over that of nonhuman objects, may likewise be useful to the argument of the present thesis regarding the self-constituting subjectivity of the ecological other.83 Graham Harman is the first person to have explored the field of metaphysical thinking in terms of objects and tried to develop his concepts into OOO. In more specific terms, object-oriented ontologists are oppose to the anthropocentric viewpoint that derives from Kant’s Copernican Revolution—in which objects exist inasmuch as they conform to the mind of the subject(s), in which case they are products of human cognition.84 Differing from Kant, object-oriented ontologists maintain that it is possible for objects to exist completely independent from human perception.85 In addition, they also consider that objects are not ontologically exhausted by their relations with humans or other

81 Ibid., p.6.
82 Ibid., p.6.
85 Harman, op.cit., p.16.
objects. It is why object-oriented ontologists mainly work on relations, for they believe that all relations—whether it is a relation between human(s) and human(s), human(s) and nonhuman(s) (including objects and non-objects), or nonhuman(s) and nonhuman(s)—exist on an equal footing. Morton, in that sense, is much inspired by Harman’s thinking and has tried to follow the trajectory of OOO and explore the causality from that perspective. Morton maintains that every relation, even relations between nonhuman objects themselves, is possible. Most importantly, he reckons that there is an aesthetic dimension in that relation, and the aesthetics is the causality that makes this relation happen. Morton asserts strongly that: “causality is wholly an aesthetic phenomenon” (Realist 19). He adds,

Aesthetic events are not limited to interactions between humans or between humans and painted canvases or between humans and sentences in dramas. They happen when a saw bites into a fresh piece of plywood. They happen when a worm oozes out of some wet soil. They happen when a massive object emits gravity waves. When you make or study art you are not exploring some kind of candy on the surface of a machine. You are making or studying causality. The aesthetic dimension is the causal dimension. (Morton, Realist 19-20; emphasis original)

In short, Morton’s OOO proposes that, in understanding ontological existence, the anthropocentric position should be removed. He highlights, in fact, it is the affective relations (or the “causal” or the “aesthetic” relations that Morton would term) that should be prioritized in order to comprehend such existence. In that sense, Morton suggests that ontological existence is not exclusively reserved to humans but to all sorts of nonhuman others, including animals, organic beings or even inorganic objects. In this respect, my argument of an ontological existence of the ecological other rejoins Morton’s reasoning.

Steven Shaviro’s theory of speculative realism also joins Morton and Harman’s views regarding the possibility to develop the ontology of objects. Object-orient ontology is often considered as a subcategory of speculative realism, a recently established school of continental philosophy that takes up a position of metaphysical realism against the dominant forms of post-Kantian philosophy. Speculative realism disagrees and criticises how post-

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86 Ibid., p.16.
89 “The name ‘speculative realism’ was first introduced in 2007 to describe the work of four philosophers: Quentin Meillassoux, Graham Harman, Ray Brassier, and Iain Hamilton Grant. Other thinkers who might be added to the group include Levi Bryant, Ian Bogost, Timothy Morton, Eugene Thacker, and Bend Woodard. All these thinkers in fact disagree strongly among themselves […] on a number of fundamental issues […]. But they are united—as the name indicates—by a common commitment, shared with Whitehead, to
Kantian philosophy has reduced philosophical enquiry to a correlation between thought and being. Instead of directly considering what speculative realism is or what doctrines or methodologies it adopts, my aim here is to draw attention to Steven Shaviro’s analysis of speculative realism and the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947). In so doing, I will be able to show how my argument shares with Shaviro’s claim that anthropocentrism has long been assumed and embodied in modern Western rationality:

[The Universe of Things] takes a new look at the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) in the light of a number of recent developments in continental philosophy that can be grouped under the rubrics of “speculative realism” and to a lesser extent “new materialism.” […] The biggest reason for looking at the resonances and connections between these two bodies of thought is this: Whitehead and the speculative realists alike question the anthropocentrism that has so long been a key assumption of modern Western rationality. Such a questioning is urgently needed at a time when we face the prospect of ecological catastrophe[,] (Shaviro 1; emphasis mine)

In this respect, Shaviro’s claim is certainly noteworthy. It is true that (as Shaviro has pointed out) most Western philosophy since Descartes and Kant has highlighted and reinforced the “bifurcation of nature” because it centres on the question of cognition. For Shaviro, modern Western philosophy “privileges epistemology at the expense of ontology” (3). For instance, the Cartesian cogito, the Kantian transcendental deduction, and the phenomenological method of Husserl and others all depends on and are subordinate to the question “what is known to our way of knowing?” (Shaviro 3; emphasis original) Shaviro therefore borrows Whitehead’s proposition—which is opposed to this philosophical tradition—to argue that “things experienced are to be distinguished from our knowledge of them. So far as there is dependence, the things pave the way for the cognition, rather than vice versa…. ” What Whitehead really means, according to Shaviro’s reading, is that the question of how we know (the epistemology) can never come first. Instead, our way of knowing things is itself a consequence of the independent existence of things. More radically, Shaviro proposes, how we know is in fact a product of how things actually are or what they do. For Whitehead

metaphysical speculation and to a robust ontological realism. […] As Lee Braver demonstrates in detail, phenomenology, structuralism, and most subsequent schools of twentieth-century continental philosophy assume one version or another of the antirealist, Kantian claim that ‘phenomena depend upon the mind to exist’. It is this assumption, above all, that speculative realism seeks to overturn.” Shaviro, The Universe, p.5. Cf. Braver, A Thing of This World: A History of Continental Anti-Realism, p.39.

91 Shaviro, op.cit., p.3.
93 Shaviro, op.cit., p.3, emphasis mine.
and for Shaviro, it is therefore important to cease this prioritisation of epistemology because we should not subordinate things to our experiences of them.94

Another critical argument that Shaviro brings to our attention from his reading of Whitehead’s philosophy is that: each particle of being (i.e., each “actual entity” or “actual occasion” or process of becoming in Whitehead’s terms) has the ability to transcend all the rest, and in the meanwhile, all these “occasions” or “entities” belong together.95 It is in view of this, then, that Shaviro claims that Whitehead’s view of the world combines two main elements:

On the one hand, “the ultimate metaphysical truth is atomism”; each entity is different, and separate, form all the others. But on the other hand, these ultimate atoms are “drops of experience, complex and interdependent.” That is to say, they are active and articulated processes—experience, or moments of feeling—rather than simple, self-identical substances. In this way, being is subordinated to becoming; yet becoming is not an uninterrupted, universal flux, but a multiplicity of discrete “occasions.” (3-4; emphasis mine)96

This view of the world is widely articulated and recognised in the current evolution of continental philosophy. For example, in the sixties, Gilbert Simondon similarly argued that “being is subordinated to becoming.”97 I suggest that in adopting this alternative perspective shared by Whitehead, Shaviro and Simondon, we are be able to open our mind to rethinking the subjectivity of nonhuman entities, which thus far remains outside our epistemology-centred philosophies. Simondon’s ontology may be described as follows: each individual subject should be thought of as an effect of individuation.98 Simondon thinks that how individuals come to be may be traced to the ancient philosophy of hylomorphism (the doctrine that physical objects result from the combination of matter and form) and substantialism (the doctrine that behind phenomena there are substantial realities). He argues that instead of thinking the individual ontologically one should begin by questioning it ontogenetically, by

94 Ibid., p.3.
95 Ibid., p.3.
96 Cf. Whitehead, Process and Reality, p.18, 35. In order to outline his point, Shaviro also adds the following commentary: “I do not come to know a world of things outside myself. Rather, I discover—which is to say, I feel—that I myself, together with things that go beyond my knowledge of them, are all alike inhabitants of a common world.” Shaviro, op.cit., p.3, emphasis original.
97 Gilbert Simondon (1924-1989): a twentieth century French philosopher who is known for his theory of individuation. His theory is largely influenced by the thinking of Gilles Deleuze and Bernard Stiegler.
which he means to think it in terms of both technology and philosophy. This leads to the claim that to understand the Being of individuals is to think through relations, where the relation is not to be understood as something that obtains between an object and a subject, but rather as reality itself. Hence, for Simondon, the individual subject is a result of this process of individuation but not the cause.\(^9\) And this also explains Simondon’s conclusions that every individual is more than one and being is in excess of itself.\(^10\) In addition, Simondon suggests that we should even think of the individual atom as a never-ending process of individuation.\(^11\) In this respect, Being is itself a process of becoming because any individual atom is submitted to this never-ending process of individuation. Although Shaviro and Whitehead do not approach the question of Being in exactly the same way as Simondon, they all share the same view of “Being is subordinated to becoming”; and, by becoming, they mean a kind of never-ending, intermittent and multiple directional individuation. From such reasoning, one can see why their arguments have made significant challenges to our way of imagining the ontology of nonhuman beings. For example, if we come to address the particles or the atoms of a lizard, a tree or a stone, they are all subject to becoming and individuation.

For Shaviro, our denying of this ontology or our dismissal of the subjectivity of nonhuman entities occurs mainly because of our traditional anthropocentric ways of thinking and, above all, our focus on epistemology. This is why Shaviro thinks that Whitehead’s argument could be an inspirational source for other contemporary philosophers working on ontogenesis and metaphysics. For both philosophers, it is not impossible to break free from this post-Kantian tradition and its implicit thesis of what Whitehead calls the “bifurcation of nature.” Whitehead holds the view that we do actually and directly encounter things other than ourselves since “an actual entity is present in other actual entities.”\(^12\) As for Shaviro, he follows Whitehead’s assertion and further proposes:

> Things are never just passive or inert; they have powers, by virtue of which they are able to affect things other than themselves. Things move us, or force us to feel them, and by this very fact they elude the correlational schemas in which we would wish to contain them.\(^13\) (8; emphasis mine)

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\(^9\) Combes, *op.cit.*, p.2.


\(^11\) See the example of crystallization explained in Combes, *op.cit.*, pp.9-18.


Eventually, Shaviro offers us a different look at the ontology of things, which can be called an “affective relation.” Reaching to the end of his introduction, Shaviro concludes by saying, “[i]n appreciating the powers and sufficiencies even of a stone, Whitehead steers Western philosophy away from its inveterate anthropocentrism” (8). It is true that the powers and sufficiencies of a nonhuman entity exist, and it is even truer that we encounter them on a daily basis without acknowledging them. I hence suggest in the next section we look into Eduardo Kohn’s *How Forests Think* to supplementing Shaviro’s idea with more concrete examples.

**Kohn: Can Ecological Beings Think?**

This particular section takes up Eduardo Kohn’s alternative approach of “anthropology beyond the human” in order to push the limits of anthropocentric ways of thinking regarding the subjectivity of nonhuman living beings. Kohn’s initial strategy is to account for the semiotic work of the nineteenth-century philosopher, Charles S. Peirce’s, as well as Terrence Deacon’s creative application of Peirce’s semiotics to biology in order to question and problematise our human understanding of—or assumptions about—the linguistic system, and thereafter deconstruct our anthropocentric perspective, according to which nonhuman beings are denied ontology and subjectivity. With his analysis of Peircean and Deaconian semiotic and symbolic systems, Kohn forces us to acknowledge the *un*-anthropocentric fact that both human and nonhuman beings live and share the sphere of signs. In Kohn’s view, it is not only human beings know how to represent the world, but also other nonhuman life-forms has the ability to represent the world. To do so, Kohn argues at the beginning of *How Forests Think* that “[human beings] conflate representation with language in the sense that we tend to think of how representation works in terms of our assumptions about how human language works” (8). For Kohn, representation is one thing, human language is another; nonhuman beings may not have total access to how human language functions, but that does not necessarily mean that they are excluded from the realm of representation. Kohn stresses,

Because linguistic representation is based on signs that are conventional, systemically related to one another, and “arbitrarily” related to their objects of reference, we tend to assume that all representational processes have their properties. (8)

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Kohn then provides the example of symbols in contrast with Peirce’s semiotic terms—icon and index—to explain that not all linguistic representations have these kinds of properties. He states,

But symbols, those kinds of signs that are based on convention (like the English word dog), which are distinctively human representational forms, and whose properties make human language possible, actually emerge from and relate to other modalities of representation. In Peirce’s terminology these other modalities (in broad terms) are either “iconic” (involving signs that share likeness with the things they represent) or “indexical” (involving signs that are in some way affected by or otherwise correlated with those things they represent). (8)

With Kohn’s analysis, we learn that symbols in fact exist only in human language and are used exclusively as human representational forms. Nevertheless, as he underlines, the symbol is not the sole modality of representation; there are of course other modalities of representation—in Pericean linguistic vocabulary, these are the “iconic” and the “indexical.”

He further explains, whether one is a symbolic creature or not, he/she/it all shares these different modalities, and they share the same bio-semiosis.

In addition to being symbolic creatures we humans share these other semiotic modalities with the rest of nonhuman biological life. These nonsymbolic representational modalities pervade the living world—human and nonhuman—and have underexplored properties that are quite distinct from those that make human language special.106 (Kohn 8; emphasis mine)

To Kohn’s mind, even though nonhuman beings do not have the same way of applying linguistic understanding as human beings, it does not mean that we do not share a nonsymbolic representational sphere altogether (which is still within the same semiotic system). Kohn makes a strong claim by saying, “[w]hat we share with nonhuman living creatures, then, is not our embodiment, as certain strains of phenomenological approaches would hold, but the fact that we all live with and through signs” (9; emphasis mine). He continues to write,

We are using signs as “canes” [of the Sphinx’s riddle] that represent parts of the world to us in some way or another. In doing so, signs make us what we are. […]

This way of understanding semiosis can help us move beyond a dualistic approach to anthropology, in which humans are portrayed as separate from the worlds they represent, toward a monistic one, in which how humans represent jaguars and how jaguars represent

humans can be understood as integral, though not interchangeable, parts of a signal, open-ended story.107 (Kohn 9; emphasis mine)

To synthesise Kohn’s overall argument, he works on linguistic understanding of how human and nonhuman beings interpret, represent and apply signs, symbols, indexicals and icons. And then, he argues that nonhuman organic livings share the same semiosis as human beings, in which case nonhuman organic livings also have the capacity to “think,” for they are able to use signs. This is why, in the end, he concludes that even forests are able to “think.” My idea—of asking whether or not ecological beings have subjectivity themselves or the ability to access ontology—derives from Kohn’s proposition (though I do not align entirely with his argument). In the first place, Kohn declares that while writing How Forests Think, he attempts to contribute to the posthuman critiques of the ways in which we have treated humans as exceptional (i.e., humans are fundamentally separated from the rest of the world) by developing a more vigorous analytic for understanding human relations to nonhuman beings.108 He also emphasises that he is swayed by Donna Haraway’s conviction that a new kind of understanding can be discovered or established by our everyday engagements with other kinds of creatures.109 He therefore tries to develop his analysis by reflecting on what it might mean to say that forests think.110 The attempt of this thesis, however, differs slightly from Kohn’s: instead of asking what it might mean to say that forests think, I choose to focus on questioning nonhuman natural beings’ possibility to acquire subjectivity. Nevertheless, Kohn’s “anthropological” analysis remains relevant because his work draws upon the same philosophical questioning that I wish to put forward in my thesis, not to mention that his study of Runa Puma well exemplifies my theoretical analysis of the Agambenian thinking of language and “caesura.”111 In the first chapter, “The Open Whole,” Kohn attempts to rethink human language and its relationship to those other forms of representation we share with nonhuman beings by studying the Runa Puma’s semiotic system.112

Kohn’s “anthropological” study draws attention to the atypical human/animal tribe of Runa Puma. Kohn explains that in Quichua (the language that is employed in Avila, the

107 Stories about jaguar’s representation of humans and Sphinx’s riddle please refer to Kohn’s explanation in the same book from page 1-3 and 5-6.

108 Kohn, op.cit., p.7.

109 Ibid., p.7.

110 Ibid., p.7.

111 See pervious chapter 1.1.2. for my discussion on Agamben’s philosophy.

112 Kohn, op.cit., p.15, emphasis mine.
village where Kohn had undertaken his anthropological research) *Runa* means “person” (literarily, a “human person,” which sometimes implies that s/he is Christian and “civilised”) and *puma* means “predator” or “jaguar.” What fascinates Kohn about this tribe of Runa Puma (and also what makes it so different from other tribes) is not simply their semiotic system, but the fact that these Runa Puma consider and believe that nonhuman beings have their own *selves* as well as the *ability to perceive*. As Kohn paraphrases his friend’s words at the very beginning of the book:

If, Juanicu was saying, a jaguar sees you as a being capable of looking back—a self like himself, a *you*—he’ll leave you alone. But if he should come to see you as prey—an *it*—you may well become dead meat [...] So as not to become meat we must return the jaguar’s gaze. But in this encounter we do not remain unchanged. We become something new, a new kind of “we” perhaps, aligned somehow with that predator who regards us as a predator and not, fortunately, as dead meat.” (1-2; emphasis original)

Immediately, Kohn draws our attention to the jaguar’s gaze, rather than to a human’s gaze. Contrary to our usual anthropocentric way of perceiving the world, Kohn highlights the subjectivity of the jaguar in these Runa Puma’s non-anthropocentric way of thinking. The subjectivity is established in communication with one’s returning of a gaze, whether this exchanges of gaze occurs to a Runa Puma, a puma or a “real” runa. In this encounter of gaze, the self can never remain the same as before but is determined to experience a process of becoming. The most crucial thing to be highlighted in this context is what Kohn has asserted, “[h]ow other kinds of beings see us matters” (1). This explains why these Runa Puma are “beings who can see themselves being seen by jaguars as fellow predators, and who also sometimes see other humans the way jaguars do, namely, as prey” (Kohn 2). With this particular example, Kohn audaciously challenges the anthropocentrism we usually adopt. What I share with Kohn is the same opinion that humans often *arbitrary*ly conclude that nonhuman beings are incapable of having ontological perceptions or subjectivity. Such “arbitrariness” comes from what Kohn has suggested earlier—our equation of the operation of representation with the working of human language.

In the first chapter, Kohn thus studies the tribe of Runa Puma exclusively in linguistic terms. He aims at constituting “a sort of ethnography of signs beyond the human” (Kohn 15). He undertakes ethnographic expedition in the tribe and studies how humans and nonhumans (including tribesmen, tribeswomen, Runa Puma, woolly monkey, squirrels, etc.) use signs that


are not necessarily symbolic, and he shows why these signs cannot be fully circumscribed by the symbolic.\textsuperscript{115} Kohn insists,

[This] forces us to rethink our assumptions about a foundational anthropological concept: context. The goal is to defamiliarize the conventional sign by revealing how it is just one of several semiotic modalities and then to explore the very different nonsymoblic properties of those other semiotic forms that are usually occluded by and collapsed into the symbolic in anthropological analysis. (15; emphasis mine)

Kohn argues that although many contemporary scholars have devoted their works to study nonhuman beings, their approaches have often insisted on overcoming “the familiar Cartesian divide between the symbolic realm of human meanings and the meaningless realm of objects either by mixing the two […] or by reducing one of these poles to the other” (15), which Kohn sees as unnecessary. On the contrary, Kohn proposes to explore different types of nonsymbolic properties of other sorts of semiotic forms. He points out that the recognition of a completely different representational process, which functions differently from human language, is something unique, and in a sense, it is even synonymous with \textit{life}.\textsuperscript{116} Kohn reminds us that, if we look at the bigger picture, the distinct human ways of being in the world are only part of that \textit{life}. He states, “life allows us to situate distinctively human ways of being in the world as both emergent from and in continuity with a broader living semiotic realm” (Kohn 16). Hence, Kohn concludes, it is not only true that “we are […] open to the emerging worlds around us” (15) but also that “‘[w]e’ are not the only kind of \textit{we}” (16; emphasis original).

At the core of Kohn’s argument in regard to his studied examples in Avila, it is important for us to recognise that, first and foremost, \textit{signs are alive}. Kohn calls them, the living signs. He claims,

[S]igns are more than things. They don’t squarely reside in sounds, events or words. Nor are they exactly in bodies or even minds. They can’t be precisely located in this way because they are ongoing relational processes. (Kohn 33)

Regarding these statements, one notices that Kohn’s view is in fact quite close to Derrida’s philosophy and Shaviro’s speculative realism; and to an extent, it can even be seen as the extrapolation of their thinking. On one hand, it is close to Derrida’s philosophy because it resonates with Derrida’s notion of \textit{differance} \cite{Derrida1978}. Derrida replaces the \textit{e} with an \textit{a}

\textsuperscript{115} \textit{Ibid.}, p.15.
\textsuperscript{116} \textit{Ibid.}, pp.15-16, emphasis mine.
in the word “difference” because he attempts to define differance in a way that has been compared with negative theology. According to Derrida,

[O]ne should have noted that differance is not, does not exist, is not a presented-being ([on]), whatever it may be; and we must also be aware of what it is not, that is to say everything; and as a consequence, it neither has an existence nor an essence. It does not fall into any category of being, whether it is present or absent.117

In a similar vein, Kohn does not think that signs are confined and limited to their sonic or imaginal representations nor do they reside only in events. It is difficult to locate signs because signs—as Derrida uses differance to prove—escape from fixation. Signs are, in a Derridean metaphor, “what they are not”; therefore, signs are always en dehors [outside] of what we think or assume they would be. They are thus everything. On the other hand, one notices also that Kohn’s statements have something in common with what Shaviro tries to show from his speculative realist point of view. If we take Kohn’s claim that “signs are alive” as true and consider signs as living realities, then we would see that Kohn is in alignment with Shaviro’s position of “being is in subordination to becoming.” The only difference between them is their wordings: Kohn prefers to use the term “an ongoing relational process” in place of the word “becoming.” But their ideas remain interchangeable. Kohn reasons as such—that he sees signs are alive and are in an ongoing relational process—because he understands that signs can produce effects. For Kohn, there is no doubt that they are constantly in an affective relation with other beings. He states,

A sign has an effect, and this, precisely, is what an interpretant is. It is the “proper significate effect that the sign produces” […] Signs don’t come from the mind. Rather, it is the other way around. What we call mind, or self, is a product of semiosis.118 (Kohn 33-34)

Aligning with Derrida and Shaviro’s positions, Kohn names several examples of signs he has studied in his un-anthropocentric ethnography as a means to prove that signs are not only alive, but they are also able to escape from fixation. Based on that premise, he argues that both human beings and nonhuman ecological beings are involved in the system of living

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117 I have translated the text from French to English myself. Please note that the emphasis in italics and in bold type are presented in the original French text as follows: « Déjà il a fallu marquer que la différance n’est pas, n’existe pas, n’est pas un étant-présent ([on]), quel qu’il soit ; et nous serons amenés à marquer aussi tout ce qu’elle n’est pas, c’est-à-dire tout ; et par conséquent qu’elle n’a ni existence ni essence. Elle ne relève d’aucune catégorie de l’étant, qu’il soit présent ou absent. » Derrida, “La Différance,” Conférence de la Société française de philosophie, 27 Jan. 1968, Web, 12 Mar. 2011, webiste accessed: http://www.jacquesderrida.com.ar/index.htm.

118 Re-quoted from Peirce, Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce, p.421.
signs. Ultimately, his argument regarding the ecological other’s use of living signs is able to unveil the subjectivity of nonhuman ecological beings. The concrete examples of “signs/words” he offers are the following: “causanguichu,” “tsupu,” “tata,” “pu oh,” and “teeye.” Each is related to some particular event experienced by Kohn where these signs occurred. Following Peirce’s linguistic model, Kohn draws our attention to three different classifications of signs according to their functions: iconic, indexical, and symbolic. An articulated sign can either embody one of the named functions, or, in some cases, it can also manifest different functions simultaneously. Among these examples, “causanguichu” is the easiest one for humans to comprehend, for it remains in the category of symbolic. “Ca\textsuperscript{119}\textsuperscript{sanguichu},” literally meaning “are you still alive?” in Quichua, is used on those occasions when a person encounters someone after a long while. But to understand why the Runa Puma tribal people greet each other in such way, or, to feel what “causanguichu” really implies, one needs to enter the symbolic realm of Quichua; in other words, in a particular system of human language. Kohn asserts,

We know what a word like “causanguichu” means by virtue of the ways in which it is inextricably embedded, through a dense historically contingent tangle of grammatical and syntactic relations, with other such words in that uniquely human system of communication we call language. (28)

To know the real meaning of “causanguichu,” one has to learn the conventions and other symbolic signs that are embedded and inter-related in the particular semiotic system of Quichua. As Kohn notes, a sign operating its symbolic functions always requires conventions because it is systematically related to other symbols.

“Tsupu” and “tata” are signs that can be classified as “icons.” Unlike “causanguichu,” one does not need to learn Quichua to know what “tsupu” or “tata” means. “Tsupu” and “tata” re-present, says Kohn. That is to say: they “re”-present something that is not in immediate presence in front of us when we come across these two signs. Like hundreds of

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{119}In the academic discussion, Kohn can be easily criticised in that his selection of examples is relatively personal. Nevertheless, at one point, Kohn justifies his choice of biosemiotic examples from the tropical Latin American tribe by pointing out that life in the tropics amplifies those human/nonhuman semiotic selves to an extreme, yet it does not mean that in other semiotic systems, we would not be able to find other plausible examples. Cf. Kohn, op.cit., p.62.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{120}Ibid., pp.28-33, 51.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{121}Ibid., p.28.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{122}Ibid., p.32.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{123}Ibid., p.30.}
other lowland Quichua “words,” they are the “sign vehicles” that “sonically convey an image of how an action unfolds the world” (Kohn 31). “Tsupu” (sometimes pronounces as tsupuuu) “refers to an entity as it makes contact with and then penetrates a body of water” (Kohn 27). One can imagine a big heavy stone heaved into a pond or a stream. In Kohn’s personal experience, he saw a wounded pig run away from the hunt and then dive in to a little river. The sound created by the wounded animal at the moment when it plunged into the water is described as “tsupu.” Kohn admits that most people (unless they speak lowland Ecuadorian Quichua) will not immediately recognise the conjured image which “tsupu” brings forth. Nonetheless, he says, “[o]nce I tell people what tsupu means, they often experience a sudden feel for the meaning: ‘Oh, of course, tsupu!’” (Kohn 27). Kohn highlights, it is possible to feel tsupu: “Feeling tsupu ‘in itself, regardless of anything else,’ can tell us something important about the nature of language and its unexpected openings toward the world ‘itself’” (29; emphasis original). Kohn does not avoid using the word “feel;” rather, he underscores the word when it comes to describe scientific understanding of the semiotic system. We therefore know that Kohn is implicitly close to the principal of object-oriented philosophy. For instance, Graham Harman, the first person to define object-oriented philosophy, has praised Alfred North Whitehead’s attitude of not shying away from using words such as “thought” or “feeling” to refer to the inner life of an object. “Tata,” on the other hand, “is an image of chopping: tap tap” (Kohn 30). Kohn explains, that in much the same way as “tsupu,” “tata” is an image that sounds like what it means. Kohn emphasises that this kind of “word”—although they are about something not immediately present (the articulated “words” re-create an image through how it is sonically presented)—is in some way “in and of” the world. Yet, one would hardly notice this quality of a sign since one ponders only on the use of the sign and sees it as radically cut off from the world. He recalls,

Sitting back in a dark corner of a thatched roof house listening to Maxi [Kohn’s friend] talk about the forest is not the same as having been present to that pig plunging into water. Isn’t this “radical discontinuity” with the world another important hallmark of signs? Insofar as signs do not provide any sort of immediate, absolute, or certain purchase on the entities they represent, it certainly is. But the fact that signs are always mediate does not mean that they also necessarily exist in some separate domain inside (human)

124 Ibid., p.27.
126 Kohn, op.cit., p.30.
127 Ibid., p.30.
minds and cut off from the entities they stand for. [...] They are not just about the world. They are also in important ways in it. (Kohn 30; emphasis mine)

“Pu oh,” another example of Kohn’s, falls into the category of both icon and indexical. On one occasion, when Kohn, Hilario (his friend) and Lucio (Hilario’s son) came across a lost female woolly monkey perching on the canopy, Hilario decided to make a nearby palm tree fall down in order to startle the monkey into movement so that his son could shoot her with a rifle. “Pu oh” refers to the process by which a (palm) tree falls. Kohn explains that, exactly as they had expected, the sound of “pu oh” (i.e., the palm tree crashing) gave the monkey a terrible fright and made her jump out from her perch. Kohn explains that “pu oh” is a sign which comes to be, in Peircean terms, “something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity,” only that the “somebody” in this circumstance is not a human but a monkey. Kohn urges us to recognise that it is not only humans who are capable of interpreting signs. Obviously, in such event, the palm tree crashing down stands for something to the monkey. Indeed, “pu oh” shares the same iconic quality as “tsupu” or “tata” because it is in itself like its object (i.e. it gives an imagery “re-presentation” through sonic articulation). But unfortunately, Kohn adds, the iconic quality emerges at the moment when “it functions as an image when we fail to notice the differences between it and the event that it represents” (31). Nevertheless, Kohn then states that iconic function is not the most essential function of this particular sign. Rather, we should pay more attention to another capacity of this particular sign when it comes to signify something for the female monkey, namely its indexical function. As an index, “pu oh” forces the monkey to notice what has just happened to her nearby environment (regardless of the fact that she has fully understood the meaning of what just happened or not). To explain this indexical function, Kohn clarifies the idea in comparison to icons:

Whereas icons involve not noticing, indices focus the attention. If icons are what they are “in themselves” regardless of the existence of the entity they represent, indices involve facts “themselves.” Whether or not someone was there to hear it, whether or not the monkey, or anyone else for that matter, took this occurrence to be significant, the palm, itself, still came crashing down. (Kohn 32; emphasis mine)

128 Ibid., p.31.
129 Ibid., p.31.
131 Kohn, op.cit., p.31.
132 Ibid., p.31.
133 Ibid., p.32.
In other words, different from icons, indices do not simply bring forth the resemblance they share with objects, an index represents “by virtue of real connections to [the objects].”\textsuperscript{134} In that sense, indices thus require \textit{something more} than mechanical efficiency, or so to say, \textit{something more} than simply representing the objects.\textsuperscript{135} In Kohn’s opinion, that “something more” is paradoxically “something less”—that is, an \textit{absence}. Returning again to the example of “\textit{pu oh}” to explain this absence: when “\textit{pu oh}” (as an index) is noticed by the monkey, it compels her (as an interpreter of “\textit{pu oh}”) to draw the links between some event and another potential one that has not yet occurred.

A monkey takes the moving perch, as sign, to be connected to something else, for which it stands. It is connected to something dangerously different from her present sense of security. […] Something is about to happen, and [the monkey] had better do something about it. \textit{Indices provide information about such absent futures}. They encourage us to make a connection between what is happening and what might potentially happen. (Kohn 33; emphasis mine)

“\textit{Teye}” is the last example that Kohn gives in order to show us how these absent futures or these potentials are called forth. “\textit{Teye},” like other signs given above, is an image in sound.\textsuperscript{136} “It is iconic of a gun successfully firing and hitting its target” (Kohn 36). What slightly differentiates “\textit{teyee}” from the other signs—“\textit{tsupu},” “\textit{tata}” and “\textit{pu oh}”—is that the actual articulation of “\textit{teyee}” plays an influential role with respect to the “conjured” image to which it corresponds.

The mouth that pronounces it is like a flask that assumes the various shapes of a firing gun. First the tongue taps on the palette to produce the stopped consonant the way a hammer strikes a firing cap. Then the mouth opens ever wider as it pronounces the expanding elongated vowel, they way lead shot, propelled by the explosion of powder ignited by the cap, sprays out of the barrel. […] The shape of the mouth effectively eliminates all the many other sounds that could have been made as breath is voiced. (Kohn 36)

Kohn argues that the result of this vocal articulation is that the pronounced word has a sound that “fits” the objects it represents because there are many other sounds excluded from such pronunciation.\textsuperscript{137} He calls that “a second absence” constituted by the object that is not


\textsuperscript{135} Kohn, \textit{op.cit.}, p.32.

\textsuperscript{136} \textit{Ibid.}, p.36.

\textsuperscript{137} \textit{Ibid.}, p.36.
physically present.\textsuperscript{138} Nonetheless, Kohn emphasises, it is the absence that is called from the future most significant in this sign. “Teeye” exemplifies a representation of a future brought into the present in the hope that this not-yet will affect the present.\textsuperscript{139} Kohn cites the example of Lucio’s firing his gun as evidence of this “absence.” He says that Lucio would naturally want his gun to fire beautifully and successfully, “teeye”, the moment when the trigger is pulled. At that precise moment, Lucio “imported this simulation into the present from the possible world that he hopes will come to be” (Kohn 36-7). This future possible, which orients Lucio toward making all the efforts and taking all the steps needed to be in order to realise that possibility, is in Kohn’s term “a constitutive absence” (37). Kohn concludes, what “teeye” really is has to be determined by all those things that “teeye” is not.\textsuperscript{140} Kohn sees that all signs “traffic in the future” in the same manner that “teeye” traffics in the future, and “[t]hey all call to act in the present through an absent but re-present future that, by virtue of this call, can then come to affect the present” (37).

To sum up, Kohn employs Peirce’s non-anthropocentric and agonistic treatment of signs to demonstrate that in Quicha, the mother tongue of \textit{Runa Puma}, embodies many other signs that have language like properties, notably iconic, indexical and symbolic signs. What makes Kohn’s argument original and distinct from other mainstream linguistic understanding of the ontology or subjectivity of beings is that: (1) He believes signs are not exclusively reserved for or used by humans. Nonhuman beings can also be the interpreters of signs. (2) He considers that signs are alive because they undergo an ongoing relational process. In contrast to Saussure’ views and theoretical interpretations of signs, Kohn sees himself aligning with Peirce definitions of signs, adopting a non-anthropocentric reading of signs and non-anthropocentric understanding of beings. Kohn’s example of the “language” of \textit{Runa Puma} allows him to further extend his questioning of the ontological perception of the Amazonian forest. From the implication that is laid out in the constitutive semiotic which Kohn has argued for so far, he believes that “[a]ll life is semiotic and all semiosis is alive” (16). Moreover, he adds, “[i]n important ways, then, \textit{life and thought are one and the same: life thinks; thoughts are alive}” (Kohn 16; emphasis mine). For Kohn, to think and appreciate life and thought in this manner is bound to change our ways of thinking about “selves.” How these “selves” emerge, dissolve, or evolve into another kind of \textit{we} is what Kohn finds most

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., p.36.
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., p.36.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., p.37.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., p.28.
fascinating in the complex web of relations in the tropical Amazonian forest. He says: this is the “ecology of selves” (Kohn 16). Indeed, Kohn’s argument and ethnographic analysis help us to acknowledge and decipher a biosemiotic world that remains excluded from our cognition. It is in this biosemiotic dimension that we come to understand that ecological others (the nonhuman animals or natural beings) can be perceived ontologically, and are capable of having feelings, communications, and thus also subjectivities.

142 Ibid., p.16.
1.1.4. From Romanticism to Ecocriticism

As explained earlier, this chapter aims at articulating the link between the ecological other and contemporary literature, showing that it is often postcolonial literature that welcomes this ecological other. To draw discussion of this link, it is inevitable to look into the relation between two important literary movements, Romanticism and ecocriticism. Only by looking into their relation and their evolution in a historical literary context, one can justify the need to employ an ecocritical approach to study postcolonial literature, and furthermore unveil the ecological other. To do this effectively, it was necessary to look into the historical development of ecocriticism, which is tied to the Romantic movement that occurred in different parts of Europe in the nineteenth century. This section begins by considering the approximate moment when the idea of “literature” first emerged before going on to analyse the links between Romanticism and ecocriticism. Gwennaël Gaffric, a graduate from my home research institute, IETT, as well as a researcher of Taiwanese environmental literature and a specialist of Wu Ming-yi’s works, has looked into this latter issue in his thesis. Although Gaffric has already addressed the links between Romanticism and ecocriticism, he did so in order to explain Wu Ming-yi’s nature writing, a specific type of literary genre on which his thesis focussed. Unlike Gaffric’s analysis, my thesis discusses the ties between nineteenth century Romanticism and contemporary ecocriticism in relation to a specifically postcolonial context. The objective of this section is to provide a full account of how literature, at the time of Romanticism, establish itself as way of thinking with a distinct way of apprehending the essence of human subjectivity and thus presented itself as the response to the crisis of that epoch. It follows this with an explanation of how the philosophical aspects of the Romantic movement directly influenced the rise of ecocriticism, particularly in relation to postcolonial environments. Lastly, it makes clear why the role of “literature” continues to play a significant part in postcolonial ecocriticism.

The Fundamental Idea of Literature

Before we go further into the discussion of this link between Romanticism and ecocriticism, we must first return to the fundamental idea of literature and try to clarify its meaning. My intention to address such idea is similar to what Nicholas Brown urges us to
ponder on “what we mean by ‘literature’ in the first place” (12; emphasis mine). Brown’s problematisation of the fundamental idea of “literature” is important to my thesis since he asks the critical question of—“where the concept of ‘literature’ comes from?” before getting to know how literature is linked to modernism and to postcolonial constructivism. We should thus follow Brown’s footstep and pursue the question of how literature is considered or perceived today when comparing to other periods of time in the history, i.e. what sort of “role” does literature occupy for us contemporaries. And certainly, to answer that question, one should look into both the historical and philosophical aspects of “literature.” Providing Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe’s insight in their co-authored work, The Literary Absolute, Brown explains that the “literature” with which we are familiar as an idea is in fact a creation of the nineteenth century.

It is often said that “literature” in its current sense, with all the privilege and ontological weight it now enjoys or is burdened with, is not much older than the nineteenth century. [...] Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe [...] place the emergence of the modern concept of literature somewhat earlier, almost exactly at the turn of the nineteenth century. That literature as we know it is invented in the nineteenth century does not mean that literary tradition begins then. (Brown 12-13)

Indeed, Brown agrees with Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy’s idea that the romantic perception of literature, which arose at the turn of the nineteenth century, is the reason why our understanding of “literature” has changed so massively. Brown further states that he also shares the two philosophers’ point of view—that it is the occurrence of a “retroactive invention of a literary tradition” which made literature become “literature.”

In The Literary Absolute, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy give a thorough account of the historical arising of German Romanticism and its correlation to the emergence of “literature.” For them, the definition and the concept of “literature” began with the rising of German Romantic movement:

143 One should note that Brown has given such statement in a context to articulate the relation between modernism and African literature. The original quote in a complete sentence is: “[w]hat do modernism and African literature have to do with each other? The obvious answer—both are literature—tells us nothing until we reconsider what we mean by ‘literature’ in the first place.” Brown, Utopian Generations: the Political Horizon of Twentieth-Century Literature, p.12.

144 Cf. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, Literature Absolute, p.37.

145 Although Brown believes that it is the occurrence of a “retroactive invention of a literary tradition” which made literature become “literature,” one should note that Brown never denies the fact that the literary traditions have always been present. Ibid., p.13.
It is to this early or “first” romanticism, which first constituted “romanticism,” and determined not only the possibility of a “romanticism” in general, but also the course that literary history (and history as such) would follow from the romantic moment on—it is to this “early romanticism” that [Athenaeum] is devoted. (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1; emphasis original)

The critical moment when “literature is regarded as ‘literature,’” according to Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, began when the Schlegel brothers\textsuperscript{146} founded the intellectual circle at Jena and started publishing a journal under the title of the Athenaeum between 1797 and 1804.\textsuperscript{147} The formation of the Jena group, which promoted Romanticism, was intended to be the philosophical response to the contemporary crisis.\textsuperscript{148} As suggested, the Jena intellectuals intended to evoke the philosophical response to the contemporary crisis, this ultimately implies there must have been a central question of philosophy they wish to deal with. In fact, the central question of philosophy, which had been broached by different philosophers from different eras, is the question of freedom. In philosophy, there is a desire to find a way to ground freedom in a faculty that is common to all humans, which is then agreed to be called Reason. Hence, the inquiry into the limits of Reason is motivated by the search for a reliable ground for freedom. Yet, one knows that the primary quality associated with freedom—creation—is not immediately associated with reason. Therefore, creation needs to be viewed as something that is integral to reason, but whose form of expression does not have to be simply logical. This central question of freedom, which is assumed to be the power to create, appeals to the Jena philosophers. Hence, a new domain of practices (associated with the rise of the bourgeoisie), of which now we call “literature,” is eventually coined as a generic term

\textsuperscript{146} “Let us, then, call this romanticism the Athenaeum. Its initiators, as everyone knows, are the two Schlegel brothers: August Wilhelm and Friedrich. They are philologists and have already made names for themselves in classical research. […] In many ways, however, they are neither simply “future academics” nor pure philologists. First of all, both August and Friedrich (the latter no doubt more than the former) have explicit ambitions as writers. It is not by chance that they frequent Weimar. They are also paying close attention to the movement which, in the ‘aftermath of Kant,’ is beginning to overtake German philosophy and will soon give birth to speculative Idealism. […] Finally, they are perceived as politically ‘advance’ (which during this period means ‘revolutionary,’ ‘republican,’ or Jacobin’). […] But above all, they are involved in the ‘literary’ and social circles of Berlin.” Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, op.cit., p.7.


\textsuperscript{148} According to Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy’s analysis, the early romanticism was obviously linked to the general crisis of the late eighteenth century. They remind us that Germany at that time was suffering from an economic crisis and profound social problems and that the entire society was facing continual revolts. Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe describe this as a “social and moral crisis of a bourgeoisie.” In their view, this early development of romanticism was a response to precisely this crisis. They explain, “[the Schlegels’] project was not to open up a crisis in literature, but a general crisis and critique (social, moral, religious, political: all of these aspects are found in the \textit{Fragments}) for which literature or literary theory will be the privileged locus of expression.” Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, op.cit., p.5.
by the Jena romantics. It seems as if “literature” is the only domain in which the question of creation is posed, that “literature” articulates the problem of creative freedom in a way that no other art matches. “Literature” is regarded as the first technology that creates a world-image, precisely because it enables a full-fledged mental image that goes far more beyond the plastic and visual arts. Literature excels at producing an image that is much more “rich-in-world” than even painting can provide. This explains why “literature,” in an epistemological perspective, is regarded as a domain in which the essential freedom of the Subject is most clearly perceivable. Naturally, in the view of the Jena romantics, “literature” should be the place where the philosophical project is not simply explained, but actually realised. Such reasoning thus makes known to us why is “(romantic) literature” so highly valued and why was the establishment of this intellectual circle so important to the literary history. Brown further adds, Romanticism was therefore to be an ever-present aspect of all attempts to respond to crisis—that is to say, of what we had perceived as crisis in the past and equally of what we perceive or will perceive as crisis in the present and the future. In short, Romanticism is the constant attempt to give response to the contemporary crisis in general.

When Athenaeum began as a philosophical/intellectual movement, the editorial focus was more about Antiquity, especially the poetry of Antiquity. Moreover, the Schlegel brothers’ early works had a tendency to discover new meanings in Antiquity. This reworking of Antiquity was accompanied by certain constructive approaches, and “the project is to make (or remake, in the modern mode) the great classical work that the period lacks” (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 10). The constructive method that follows Antiquity, however, raised the question of imitation. The Schlegel brothers then realised that they had to go beyond Antiquity. Hence, the principle of the romantics was to produce and create something new. In addition to that, it was in the process of production itself that the

149 “What is at stake here is not simply German romanticism or even romanticism in the sense of a literary period or a closed set of texts. Rather, romanticism is “our naiveté,” the very ground of postromantic thought, even as its later mutations— modernism and postmodernism—continue to define themselves against it.” Brown, op.cit., p.13.

150 Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, op.cit., p.10.

151 Ibid., p.10.

152 Ibid., p.10.

153 Moreover, readers should acknowledge the idea that Schlegel brothers tried to articulate had later on become the foundation of the modern politics. In Lacoue-Labarthe’s book, Heidegger, Politics and Art, he speaks of the German Nazi’s political ideology in order to demonstrate how the principle of the romantics of producing or creating something new became crucial to the party’s politics. “Germany” (when it was still not unified at that time) was in an attempt to actualize the “invention of Greece” or so to say, the “invention of tradition.”
Schlegel brothers saw Romanticism as having a meaning. At the beginning, they did not know how to term this concept of “production,” but eventually they agreed to call it “literature.”

This amounts, in the end, to performing the “synthesis” of the Ancient and the Modern. […] The goal is to construct, to produce, to effectuate what even at the origin of history was already thought of as a lost and forever inaccessible “Golden Age.” […] This is the reason romanticism implies something entirely new, the production of something entirely new. The romantics never really succeed in naming this something: they speak of poetry, of the work, of the novel, or… of romanticism. In the end, they decided to call it—all things considered—literature. (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 10-11; emphasis original)

Moreover, the concept of autopoiesis, self-production, became very important to grasp the meaning of “literature” that the Jena romantics defined. Since the Jena intellectuals considered that “literature” should be the place where philosophical project actually realised, they then took that idea as a principle guideline for the organisation of modern society, which is based on the freedom of Reason rather than religion and/or the power of kings. The reason why “auto-poietic” was called upon here is because in order to be “free” it is assumed that a subject needs to be autonomous. What that really means, in the post-Kantian thinking, is that Reason is capable of providing its own justification, what people call a ground. Kant attempts to ground reason in the epistemological constraints of experience. This leads him to conclude that there are transcendental structures that shape perception in an a priori way, making perception possible, but also limiting strictly what can be perceived. Therefore, one can conclude that Kant really subordinates epistemology to ontology. But all that is because self-justification is required in order to assure the freedom of Reason. Evidently, this is why Schlegel brothers’ works underline that the understanding of the very essence of “literature” is autopoiesis, for autopoiesis enables a subject’s freedom of Reason and affirms the a priori

“National Socialism fits into the agonal history of Germany, the best known thematization of which is that found in the second of Nietzsche’s Untimely Meditations. When in 1933 he called upon Germany to recommence the Greek beginning, Heidegger was basing himself upon such an agonistic interpretation of history (in Sein und Zeit he had in fact explicitly related this to Nietzsche). […] The agonistic (and consequently mimetic) rivalry with the Ancient World obviously does not only apply to Germany alone. It is one of the general foundations of the modern political sphere, being quite simply the invention of the Modern itself, i.e., of what appears in the era of the deligitimation of Christian theocracies. Since the Renaissance, Europe as a whole has been prey to the Ancient and it is imitatio which governs the construction of the Modern. What distinguishes Germany, however, is the fact that […] the German imitatio is seeking in Greece [as] the model—and therefore the possibility—of a pure emergence, of a pure originality: a model of self-formation.” Lacoue-Labarthe, Heidegger, Politics and Art, pp.78-79.

transcendental “truth” that shapes our perception. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy explain: poeisy, in which the literary thing produces the truth of production in itself, already implies that literature by itself is the truth. Or, at the very least, it stands for a universality which appears to be “always true.” This “truth,” with an inherent universalistic character, ascribes a self-producing and reproducing process, and henceforth auto-validating itself as theory. This is why Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy have remarked that autopoiesis is theory itself as literature. Or even better paraphrased, autopoiesis is literature producing itself as it produces its own theory.

**Ecocriticism: A Derivation of Romanticism**

The objective of German Romanticism, which has the earliest origin of all Romantic movements in Europe, was to respond to the contemporary crisis—i.e. the economic and social problems of the time—by focusing on the philosophical question of freedom. As explained earlier, Jena intellectuals undertook an inquiry into the limits of Reason in philosophy. Only by inquiring into the limits of Reason, they thought, would one be able to grasp the human essence. Since the primary quality in humans associated with freedom is creativity, forms of creation thus affirm the essence of the (human) subject. “Literature,” as Jena Romantics saw it, is the only domain in which the question of creation is posed. “Literature,” for the Jena Romantics, articulates the problem of creative freedom in a way that no other art does. Besides, “literature” was regarded as the first technology that creates a world-image because it allows a full-fledged mental image that, as such, goes further than the plastic and visual arts. “Literature” therefore confirms the freedom of the Subject.

Admittedly, Romanticism founded in Germany by the Jena group was intended as a major literary and intellectual movement, but it then spread to different parts of Europe where it was often interpreted somewhat differently. The Romantic movement reached its peak in the period dating approximately from 1800 to 1850. It highlighted the individual’s intense emotions or feelings, seeing them as an authentic source of aesthetic experience. Today, we see Romanticism mainly as a reaction to industrial modernisation which began in the late eighteenth century, the aristocratic social and political norms derived from the Age of

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155 Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, op.cit., p.10.
156 Ibid., p.12.
157 Ibid., p.12.
Enlightenment, and the scientific rationalisation of nature.\textsuperscript{158} Romanticism reacted to all of this partly because contemporary humans began to recognise, through empirical experiences, the possible destruction of their natural environments, and partly due to their unknown fear about cultural and moral changes that could be brought by urbanization and industrialism.

The links between Romanticism and ecocriticism become apparent when one enquires into their historical and philosophical aspects. As shown in many studies, Romanticism has directly influenced the rise of ecocriticism. For instance, in “Romanticism and Ecocriticism,” Kate Rigby points out that the pioneering ecocritical studies done by Karl Kroeber and Jonathan Bate in the 1970s and 1990s already outlined the ecological dimension of the romantic understanding of the natural world and humanity’s place within it; she further adds that, over time, ecocritical studies “continued and deepened this broadly sympathetic exploration of ‘romantic ecology’” (62). Moreover, as Kevin Hutchings and many other scholars have acknowledged, the Romanticism that thrived during the British Romantic period stands as the most direct influence behind the emergence of ecocriticism.\textsuperscript{159} Although ecocriticism stemmed from British Romanticism and maintains most of its traits, the objective of ecocriticism differs greatly from that of the British Romanticism. Clearly, the environmental crisis of the twentieth and twenty-first century is very different from the crisis identified by the Romantics in the nineteenth century. In the nineteenth century, the crisis was mostly related to economic and social problems, and responses to this crisis were mostly given or thought through by the intellectuals. The entire movement was closely tied to the rise of the bourgeoisie, and it was considered as the reaction of the bourgeoisie. In the twentieth and twenty-first century, the contemporary crisis is experienced and seen differently. Climate change on local and global scales, as well as significant environmental degradation related to that change, are recognised as the crisis of the century and it affect all people—albeit sometimes despite in a state of conscious denial of their existence. These experiences are much more intense and aggravated compared to what people observed in the nineteenth century. For instance, severe meteorological phenomena that stand in a direct or indirect relation to climate change, such as hurricanes, intense rainstorms, landslides, heat waves, or prolonged droughts, are an increasingly regular experience in day-to-day life. Recent scientific studies have shown that both the frequency and severity of these phenomena have

\textsuperscript{158} Rigby, “Romanticism and Ecocriticism,” The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism, p.62.

significantly increased over the last few decades, mostly caused by human-induced climate change.\textsuperscript{160} Today’s crisis is therefore a “crisis of the people” and everyone is solicited to respond to it. The crisis is no longer limited to the reactions of the bourgeoisie or the intellectuals.

Ecocriticism is philosophically important because it maintains certain features of Romanticism, as founded by the Jena group.\textsuperscript{161} Like Romanticism, ecocriticism maintains an objective to respond to the contemporary crisis by emphasising the role of “literature.” As Hutchings points out,

As a field of literary inquiry, ecological criticism – or “ecocriticism,” as it is now commonly known – investigates literature in relation to the histories of ecological or environmentalist thought, ethics, and activism. One of ecocriticism’s basic premises is that literature both reflects and helps to shape human responses to the natural environment. (172; emphasis mine)

Hutchings further refers to the view of Lawrence Buell, who sees literary texts functioning as “acts of environmental imagination.” For Buell, literature may enable an individual to care for the physical world, “making that world ‘feel more or less precious or endangered or disposable’”\textsuperscript{162} (Hutchings 172). Hutching thus claims that “Romanticism has provided much fertile ground for ecocritical theory and practice,” since it values the non-human world most highly.\textsuperscript{163}

Certain features, we may conclude, are shared between Romanticism and ecocriticism. Nevertheless, it is important to discern the difference between Romanticism and ecocriticism, particularly in respect to their different approach and their understanding of subjectivity. As argued above, in the nineteenth century, the critical question that concerned the Romantics was the freedom of a human Subject. Yet, ecocriticism and contemporary philosophy call this inquiry into question. First of all, ecological criticism tries to reposition itself in its thinking of


\textsuperscript{161}“As Buell notes, however, our present-day interest in ecocriticism is at least partly the product of a longer history predating both modern and Romantic contexts.” Hutchings, \textit{op.cit.}, p.173. Cf. Buell, \textit{The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination}, p.2.

\textsuperscript{162}Hutchings re-quoted from Buell. Cf. Buell, \textit{Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture and Environment in the U.S. and Beyond}, p.2.

\textsuperscript{163}Hutchings, \textit{op.cit.}, p.172-73.
the human Subject. Moreover, since ecocriticism values nonhuman beings, the definition of a Subject thus inevitably confronts a new challenge. The following paragraphs address these two aspects of ecocriticism and elaborate the reasoning behind these claims.

Most ecocritics would agree that what determines the human Subject today is no longer the essential quality of “freedom,” but what this “freedom” can produce when it is performed collectively. In order to discuss this issue, it is helpful to draw on the ecocritical reading of subject formation in the postcolonial epoch put forward by Dipesh Chakrabarty, a world-famous historian and postcolonial theorist. Though Chakrabarty was never recognised as an ecocritic and though he has never directly posed the question of the “freedom” of the subject, he offers an insightful analysis of the formation of the human Subject with respect to the contemporary postcolonial condition and globalisation. In addition to that, his ecocritical reading of postcolonial subject formation also concerns problematic aspect of the human Subject when regarded collectively. Chakrabarty questions the very idea of the human Subject and how it is constructed, particularly in a globalised context that confronts the crisis of climate change. Contextualising his argument with a postcolonial backdrop, Chakrabarty summarises different theoretical approaches to subject formation in the postcolonial era. According to Chakrabarty, there are mainly two types of human Subject formation discussed in postcolonial discourse: the first sees the subject “in the image of the autonomous right-bearing person,” which is what Franz Fanon proposed. As Chakrabarty notes, “[for] Fanon, […] [b]ecoming human was for us a matter of becoming a subject” (4). The second views the subject in “the figure of the human glimpsed through the critique of the subject,” which unveils a deconstructive approach to subjectivity. Chakrabarty reckons that these two types of subject formation turn out to be only competing with each other, and he sees the need to move through the contradictory figures of human subjectivity, given that we now live in an era where globalisation and climate change is at stake. Taking into account all kinds of problems that may arise from our current conditions of globalisation and climate change, Chakrabarty proposes that we seek to move beyond these two views of human figures and contemplate the human Subject differently. As he notes, “[global warming] calls us to visions of the human that neither rights talk nor the critique of the subject ever contemplated” (Chakrabarty 9).


165 Ibid., pp.4-5.
As pointed out earlier, though Chakrabarty is not acknowledged as an ecocritic, he does put forward an ecocritical reading concerning the definition of the human subject. His argument has opened the door for scholars to initiate related research about climate change or environmental crisis in the fields of the humanities and social sciences. The crucial moment, for Chakrabarty, where the definition of human Subject is brought into the spotlight and placed under scrutiny in our era, is in the 2007 Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which disclosed the severe problems related to global warming and climate change. Chakrabarty draws our attention to the notion of the Anthropocene, a term coined by the Dutch Nobel Prize-winning atmospheric chemist, Paul J. Crutzen. According to Crutzen’s theory, the total effect of human behaviours and activities has such a great influence on the earth in recent centuries that it has given rise to a new geological epoch. Chakrabarty then writes,

Anthropocene, the era when humans act as a geological force on the planet, changing its climate for millennia to come. [...] Climate scientists raise a problem of scale for the humane imagination, though they do not usually think through the humanistic implication of their own claim, that, unlike the changes in climate this planet has seen in the past, the current warming is anthropogenic in nature. Humans, collectively, now have an agency in determining the climate of the planet as a whole[.] (2, 9; emphasis mine)

Chakrabarty reckons that the notion of the Anthropocene and the collective agency of humanity radically challenge the way that the human Subject is perceived. This collective agency which is able to determine the climate as a whole qualifies the geophysical force of human’s collective mode of existence. Chakrabarty further cites the research of David Archer, a socially concerned paleoclimatologist, arguing that the understanding of the human Subject should not be restricted to our limited understanding of a relatively short time-span and should not be confined only to the realm of ontology. Chakrabarty highlights, humans’ ontic belonging should be taken into account in the way we perceive the subject.

We write of pasts through the mediation of the experience of humans of the past. We can send humans, or even artificial eyes, to outer space, the poles, the top of Mount Everest,

166 Ibid., p.9.
169 “David Archer’s book The Long Thaw […] [argues] [h]uman beings cannot really imagine beyond a couple of generations before and after their own time[,] ‘The rules of economics which govern much of our behavior,’ he writes, ‘tend to limit our focus to even shorter time frames[,] […] I find it remarkable as a historian that Archer, a socially concerned paleoclimatologist, should be asking us to extend to the future the faculty of understanding that historians routinely extend to humans of the recorded past.” Ibid., p.12.
to Mars and the Moon and vicariously experience that which is not directly available to us. We can also—through art and fiction—extend our understanding to those who in future may suffer the impact of the geophysical force that is the human. But we cannot ever experience ourselves as a geophysical force—though we now know that this is one of the modes of our collective existence. […] This nonhuman, force-like mode existence of the human tells us that we are no longer simply a form of life that is endowed with a sense of ontology. Humans have a sense of ontic belonging. (Chakrabarty 12-13; emphasis original)

Chakrabarty reminds us that, in the past, this nonhuman geophysical mode of “human” existence was never taken into consideration when the question of the subject was concerned because it is a progressive and cumulative phenomenon that has only been discovered in recent decades. “[I]n the rhetoric of climate scientists[,] [m]an was an experimenter on a geophysical scale in the 1950s; by the 1990s, he was a geophysical force himself” (Chakrabarty 11). Now we have confronted the significant geophysical impact of our collective agency, he argues that it is not only necessary to contemplate the challenging question of human Subject with a double figure of the human—the human-human and the nonhuman-human—, but it is also important to submit this subject/object relationship to a new analysis. To cite Chakrabarty once more,

Here the picture of human is how social scientists have always imagined humans to be: a purposeful biological entity with the capacity to degrade natural environment. But what happens when we say humans are acting like a geophysical force? We then liken humans to some nonhuman, nonliving agency. That is why I say the science of anthropogenic global warming has doubled the figure of the human— you have to think of the two figures of the human simultaneously: the human-human and the nonhuman-human. And that is where some challenges lies for the postcolonial scholar in the humanities. (11; emphasis mine)

In this passage, Chakrabarty’s conclusion is particularly noteworthy. His emphasis on ecocritical reading reminds us that, in postcolonial studies, one has to take on this challenge to look beyond the current understanding of the subject. Above all, his ecocritical reading helps to stimulate other scholars’ thinking about the figure of Subject, especially in different humanities disciplines (i.e., philosophy, political theory, cultural studies, etc.).

Following the logic of his argument, one thus sees the need to expand the view of the subject. This expansion of the idea of the subject also calls for an investigation of our relationship with nonhuman beings or entities, including animals, nonhuman organisms, objects, ecosystems, etc. As Hutchings mentions in his article, “ecological criticism purports to speak not on behalf of a human constituency, but on behalf of non-human organisms and the biological processes that sustain them” (174). From an ecocritical perspective, there are
already quite a few scholars or philosophers who have engaged themselves in this challenge. To name a few key figures, Matthew Calarco, Donna Haraway, Brian Massumi, Jane Bennett, Steven Shaviro, Levi Bryant, and Eduardo Kohn, have all put forward philosophical, theoretical, political, ethical or aesthetic approaches to exploring different understandings of the subjectivity of nonhumans. With regard to the question of animals’ subjectivity, Calarco focuses on a possible linguistic border-crossing between the subjectivity of humans and nonhuman animals, while Massumi tackles the questions of animal subjectivity from the perspective of animals’ aesthetic expressions. Haraway contributes specifically to both studies of human machine and human-animal relations. Her works further raise interesting debates in primatology, philosophy and developmental biology. Bennett’s “vital materialism” considers ontological ideas about the relationship between humans and things. She argues that things such as edibles, commodities, storms, or metals behave themselves as actants (a term borrowed from Bruno Latour) or quasi agents since they have their own trajectories and potentialities. Bryant articulates an object-oriented philosophy called “Onticology,” which regards an entity as anything that produces differences, including signs, animals, plants, etc. Some of these approaches have been or will be discussed thoroughly in this thesis.

Returning to Chakrabarty’s conclusion, one understands that when he asks postcolonial scholars to rethink the human Subject, he is actually suggesting that ecocritical approach or ecocriticism should be brought into postcolonial studies. As Chakrabarty observes, and as many other literature scholars who work in this domain confirm, for the moment there is still a lack of interdisciplinary research at the crossroads of postcolonialism and ecocriticism. Chakrabarty’s suggestion thus affirms the important role of literature and it shows the necessity of analysing this role in postcolonial ecocriticism. Similarly, as Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley remark, the role of literature is essential because it is in literature that we may discover potential answers helping us to respond to the contemporary crisis of climate change and global warming.

It has been over a decade since the New York Times declared the “Greening of the Humanities,” a remarkable shift that highlights the role of literature in mediating environmental knowledge and in articulating a poetics of place in the alienating wake of globalization. This change has revitalized the humanities, offering a methodology for

170 For example, Anthony Vital has mentioned that Graham Huggan, one of the most renowned English professors who works in the field of postcolonial ecocriticism, has commented on the lack of dialogue between postcolonial critics and ecocritics. For Huggan, there are some “overlapping fields” in which that this kind of dialogue might usefully take place. Vital, “Towards and African Ecocriticism: Postcolonialism, Ecology and Life & Times of Michael K,” Research in African Literatures 39.1 (2008): 88.
thinking through the complexity of environmental histories and imagining new direction for our ecological futures. (DeLoughrey and Handley 9)

With these remarks, one understands that the development of an interdisciplinary study of postcolonial ecocriticism is indispensable. Such interdisciplinary study offers new perspectives on environmental changes, showing that contemporary postcolonial environments are deeply entwined with colonial narratives and the history of globalisation. The narratives and aesthetic forms embodied in literature are able to contextualise our collective geophysical force, and further help us understand the impact of this force on our environments. Last but not least, postcolonial ecocriticism is often seen in conjunction with political ecology and environmental justice. These two fields of studies constantly enrich and stimulate new approaches and thoughts in postcolonial ecocriticism, and vice versa.
Part II: Postcolonial Literature and Identity Politics
2.1. The Production of Literature

2.1.1. Literature in Postcolonial Regions and Countries

This chapter studies how literature is produced in the colonial and/or postcolonial context of different regions and countries, notably in East Asia (Taiwan) and Africa (South Africa). It analyses how the concept of “literature” is constructed and perceived in these regions and countries, as well as how this same concept is put into practice, that is to say, how literature is actually produced. Focusing on Coetzee and Wu’s writings, it will be shown how the concept of “literature” actually affects the production of literature in postcolonial Taiwan and South Africa.

In the final chapter of part I, I examined Nicholas Brown’s understanding of the concept of “literature” along with Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy’s analysis on the Jena romantics. According to Brown, “a veritable romantic unconsciousness is discernable today, in most of the central motifs of our ‘modernity.’”171 This unconsciousness has a long history that can be traced back to the German Romantics. In order to demonstrate the influence of this romantic unconsciousness in the following section, I will first evoke Goethe’s concept of World Literature and its influence on modern literature’s development. I shall then draw attention to Peter Button’s specific examples from twentieth-century modern Chinese literature to analyse the formation of a modern subjectivity in literature. In so doing, it becomes clear how modern Chinese literature is involved in creating the identity of a modern subject and how Taiwanese literature is also thereafter affected by this creative process.

East Asia: Taiwan

To understand the production of literature in Taiwan—that is to say, the relation between the modern subject, literature and literary institution—, it is necessary to discuss the development of the literary tradition in China during the initial period of communism (the period of the May Fourth movement). The Chinese literary tradition of this period, which focussed on acquiring and exemplifying the “national character” (i.e. *guominxing* 國民性), had a crucial effect on the production of literature both in China and Taiwan. To some, the link between the development of the Chinese literary tradition and Taiwanese literature is not necessarily evident. Nevertheless, to answer the question of why the two are closely bound together, one should first begin by inquiring into the meaning of “national character” (*guominxing*)—that is, from where this notion of *guominxing* arises and how it is defined. According to Button, modern Chinese literature published in the early twentieth century in Mainland China followed the logic of the “rhetoric of exemplarity” and gave rise to a tradition according to which all literary works must be the embodiment of the concept of “national character.”

This rhetoric of exemplarity, a notion that Button draws from Marc Redfield, is, Button thinks, found in “aesthetic narratives of racial, sexual, class identities and differences” constructed by post-Enlightenment Western cultures. Whether it is the spirit of the entire book or the depiction of certain characters in the book, the “national character” expresses a uniformed characteristic of the collective in a nation-state and must be the highest principle guiding the creation of the literary work. It is, however, important to note that on Button’s analysis Chinese literature does not begin with the question of Chinese national character, but rather with the question: “what is the essence of the human being?” Like the construction of any other national literature, Chinese literature doesn’t begin with the question, “what is Chinese?” Instead, it begins with the question of the essence of the human being and it answers this question in exactly the terms that have characetrised all modern thought: *the essence of the human being is freedom*. One should nevertheless be aware of the fact that Chinese literature did not try to pose this question in the wake of the French Revolution, but in relation to China’s semi-feudal and semi-colonial status. And it happens

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174 Ibid., pp.xi-xii.
that the modern answer to this question (i.e. the essence of the human being as freedom) found its most persuasive answer within the context of the nation-state. As partially addressed in chapter 1.1.4., there are a number of forces working to make the nation-state the default milieu for addressing the question (for example, education, ethnolinguistic production, ethnic production and literature production, etc.), and many of these forces do not, in fact, have freedom as their central concern. This is why Button stresses that the circulation of literary forms and concepts is much more important than their origin.

Let us now come back to the concept of “national character” (guominxing) as it was constructed in China during the modern period. Mao Dun 茅盾, a twentieth-century Chinese novelist and cultural critic, believed that a literary work could be considered a “truly creative art” only when it exemplifies the guominxing. As a result of this perspective, he held in high regard The True Story of Ah Q 阿 Q正傳 (1921), written by Lu Xun 魯迅. In Mao Dun’s opinion, the Chinese guominxng—the key to which is left-wing proletarianism—evoked in Lu Xun’s work was essential to create “true art.” Mao Dun further claimed that Lu Xun’s work typifies the Chinese guomingxing and that it should thus be considered as the “standard” of true art. Other modern literature in China, Mao Dun thought, should follow Lu Xun’s writings if it wishes to be admitted into the category of Weltliteratur (World Literature), thus epitomising the value of universality characteristic of Weltliteratur.

175 Mao Dun 茅盾 (1896-1981): was also a journalist; and from 1949 to 1965, he was the Minister of Culture in China.
176 Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881-1936): his real name is Zhou Shuren 周樹人, but he is better known under his pen name, Lu Xun. Lu Xun is a modern Chinese writer as well as one of the most important leading figures in the promotion of the contemporary literary movement in China. The True Story of Ah Q 阿 Q正傳 is Lu Xun’s most widely-received episodic novella. First published in 1921, it was later included in his first short story collection, Call to Arms 呼喊, in 1923. The story is widely held to be the masterpiece of modern Chinese literature because it stands as the first piece of work that fully uses vernacular Chinese after the May 4th Movement. Mao Dun, Mao Dun Wenyi Zalunji—Shangji 茅盾文艺杂论集—上集. p.21.
177 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe introduced the concept of Weltliteratur (World Literature). Goethe was genuinely fascinated by the idea of World Literature because of its capacity to circulate and receive literary works internationally. In his exchanges with Johann Peter Eckermann, his disciple, Goethe expressed his enthusiasm for reading novels and poetry translated from Chinese, Persian or Serbian languages as well as his excitement of seeing his works translated into other languages. Goethe believes that universality can be discerned by studying the literatures produced by different nations. Moreover, Goethe calls this universality “poetry” and he considered it to be a shared possession of mankind. “I [Goethe] am more and more convinced that poetry is the universal possession of mankind, revealing itself everywhere and at all times in hundreds and hundreds of men. […] I therefore like to look about me in foreign nations, and advise everyone to do the same.” Moorhead, ed. Conversations of Goethe with Eckermann, p.165.
178 Button, op.cit., p.2.
Returning to Button’s analysis, we discover the link between the *guominxing* and the rhetoric of exemplarity embedded in the concept of World Literature. According to Button, Lu Xun was celebrated as an important literary figure and his works were recognised as “true art” because he was the first person to use the term *dianxing* to describe “exemplarity.” For Mao Dun, not only has Lu Xun successfully translated and defined “exemplarity,” but he has also adapted the concept to articulate the Chinese *guominxing* in his literary works. Button further highlights the fact that Lu Xun believed that only when *guominxing* is realised and mobilised in literature that a “brighter Chinese future” can arrive and the proletarian revolution be truly successful. According to Button, Mao Dun and Lu Xun’s interest in national character is “fully inscribed within this logic of exemplarity” and, as such, is clearly derived from Goethe’s concept of *Weltliteratur*.

Two key points can be inferred from Button’s analysis: first, the notion of *Dianxing* (the “exemplarity” or the “type”) is part of the whole philosophical project whose key question is “what is the essence of the human being?” To speak about an essence necessarily leads, at least during the period of history in question, to the notion of an exemplary type. *Dianxing* is thus not only essential for the development of modern Chinese literature but also has a significant impact on how modern Chinese literature is to be perceived aesthetically, whether in academic institutions in China or in Western institutions dedicated to the study of Chinese literature. Second, the newly-defined Chinese *guominxing* (i.e. the proletarian national character) is indispensable for *dianxing* and the “true art work” to be produced. As Button emphasises, “[t]he modern fate of true art in China […] first found itself […] tightly bound to the stakes of national character discourse” (6). This principle of establishing a literary canon, which constructs a national character, remains inherent in modern Chinese literary production. As Button further notes, forty years after Mao Dun celebrated Lu Xun’s efforts to configure a proletarian national character in modern Chinese literary writings, the anti-communist Yale-educated New Critic, Hsia Chih-tsing 夏志清 (1921-2013), tried to achieve the same objective, the only difference being that he had modified this principle in line with a different political ideal. In Hsia Chih-tsing’s *History of Modern Chinese Fiction*,

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179 Ibid., p.2.
180 Ibid., pp.1-2.
181 Ibid., p.1.
182 Ibid., pp.2-3.
183 Ibid., pp.3-4.
he also defines a certain Chinese literary canon that he considers to represent the “true art.” His selection is, however, very different from Mao Dun’s. Button outlines, “[f]or both Mao Dun and then later Hsia Chih-tsing, [the canons derive their] significance from the aspirations toward the universality Weltliteratur affirms” (4). Especially in the academia of the United States, Hsia Chih-tsing’s work has become one of most renowned references for the study of Chinese literature. In fact, Hsia Chih-tsing’s designation of Chinese canonical works has not only impacted the academic study of Chinese literature within the States, but it has also had a domino effect on other academic institutions in China, Taiwan and other Occidental countries. The highly regarded concept of literary “exemplarity” has become the norm and a major concern for writers to create a “true work of art.” Ultimately, exemplarity is also the foundation of Taiwanese literary production.

But in what exact way(s) is the literary production in Taiwan (the Republic of China) linked to the modelling of guomingsxing and the establishment of the modern Chinese literary canon? My analysis takes a particular interest in the period of Kuomintang party-state annexation, because it is from this period that we find the modelling of a colonial specificity in Taiwan that exemplifies a fundamental contrast with respect to the modelling of guomingsxing in China. In Taiwan, where the political situation was very different from that of Communist China, ethnic and/or class character was strongly promoted by KMT propaganda. To an extent, one may even argue that in order to create its own colonial specificity, the KMT tried preventing the construction of national character (mainly because the “real” nation for the KMT was located elsewhere, i.e. in the mainland China, instead of Taiwan). In fact, what the KMT hoped to achieve was to construct a colonial discourse that would enable a distinction between the coloniser (the privileged waishengren 外省人184) and the colonised (Taiwan populations). The ethnic and/or class character articulated in KMT’s political ideology was thus very different from that of Communist China. After the Kuomintang acquired the sovereignty of the island in 1949, political manipulation had a major impact on the country’s literary production. An obscure literary phenomenon—a denial of its immediate

184 Waishengren 外省人 designates those who arrived in Taiwan with the Kuomintang government after losing the battle to the Communist China in 1949. The term is often seen in contrast to benshengren 本省人, which designates those who had already established communities in Taiwan before the Kuomintang’s arrival. It mostly refers to the communities of Minnan 闽南 (also called Hoklo 福佬 or Hokkien 福建) and Haka 客家 speakers, as well as other aboriginal populations. The definitions of these two terms are often considered problematical; and they often raise questions about their political legitimacy because the terms are defined in relation to each other. Here, it is not my intention to launch a formal argument in justifying the usage of the terms; I will apply the commonly used definitions of the terms despite the fact that those definitions may be questioned.
past—became evident in the literary works produced. According to Hsia Tsi-an, “[n]early all the important creative works since the May Fourth Movement are inaccessible.” For the KMT to install its legitimacy and to govern Taiwan, any “left-wing” thinking that was associated with Communist China had to be wiped out. According to Chen Fang-ming 陳芳明, Lu-Xun’s left-wing ideas were in fact well received in Taiwan for a while. However, his work was soon suppressed and removed from public access by the KMT, since Lu Xun’s fundamental philosophy for writing was rooted in a Communist perspective. Lu Xun’s left-wing thinking was regarded as intolerable for and incompatible with KMT’s methods of governing the island. Only certain Chinese intellectuals and writers, who were less involved in the leftist literary movement and whose works produced little effect on politics, remained in the literary framework preserved by the KMT (such as Dr. Hu Shi 胡適, Xu Zhi-mo 徐志摩 or Zhu Zi-qing 朱自清). In Taiwan, literary dianxing (exemplarity) was modified and guominxing (national character) was transformed in line with the KMT’s political values and strategies. From the 1940s to 1950s, Taiwanese literary dianxing thus aimed to produce anti-communist literature or “literature of the escapists.” Contrary to the proletarian values of mainland China, the Taiwanese ethnic and/or class character was based on principles of respect and subjection, the core values of ancient Chinese moral doctrine. The philosophy of Confucianism, which regards highly one’s social conduct and morals, constantly reminds people of the “virtue” of respect and subjection to the hierarchical superiority. Hence, to govern Taiwan, the KMT assumed the role of hierarchical superior and

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185 See Hsia Tsai-an, “Appendix: Taiwan” included in the work of Hsia Chih-tsing’s A History of Modern Chinese Fiction 1917-1957, p.509.
186 May Fourth Movement 五四運動: was an anti-imperialist movement in the cultural, social and political domains, which grew out of student demonstrations in Beijing on May 4th 1919. Originally protesting against Chinese government’s weak response to the Treaty of Versailles, but later on diffused as a general movement and upsurge of Chinese nationalism. It eventually oriented towards a political mobilisation of the populist (rather than of the intellectuals or the elites).
187 Hsia T.A., op.cit., p.509. Notice that Hsia Tsi-an’s analysis was published in 1961, in which case his knowledge about the inaccessibility of the literary works from the May Fourth Movement was conditioned by the specific period of time when he made such remarks, and which, of course, no longer holds today.
188 Chen Fang-ming 陳芳明, Taiwan xinwenxueshi shangxiace 台灣新文學史上下冊 [A History of Modern Taiwanese Literature Vol.1&2], p.227.
190 “Literature of the escapists” is an expression coined by Hsia Tsai-an. According to him, in the process of Taiwanese literature’s development, writers in this genre produced works that are very detached from social and political reality. And if there is any socio-political conflict or difficulty to be confronted by the characters in the story, the problem is often resolved by “a triumph of love,” a characteristic plot of “escapism.” Ibid., pp.512-13.
“preached” a specific character defined in accordance with the Confucian moral philosophy.\(^{191}\)

Regarding literary escapism in Taiwan, Xu Zhi-mo’s (1897-1931) motifs in poetry writing often concern the themes of love and beauty, and Zhu Zi-qing’s (1898-1948) essays are turned inward towards his personal sentiments towards nature and the members of his family.\(^{192}\) The literary representation of Taiwanese dianxing present in these texts clearly aimed to produce a sort of “escapism” from reality, for their writings did not engage in political discourse and historical narratives and nor did they provoke social reflection or public debate. Naturally, Xu Zhi-mo and Zhu Zi-qing’s works were included in the official textbooks of Chinese literature and language by Guoli bianyiguan 国立编譯館 (National Institute of Translation and Compilation).\(^{193}\) Inserting escapist writings into the public school system—in which an artwork was considered refined and ideal when it paid attention to aesthetic values and praised certain moral “virtues”—the KMT not only created a vacuum in its immediate history after 1945 but it also cleansed certain memories that many had lived through. As a successor of the Japanese colonialists, the KMT needed to establish its authority in government by making people forget their past; and it was through the repetition of such escapism that the KMT achieved this aim. For the KMT, the only possible way to make people recognise its political authority was to construct a unified and “legitimately Chinese” set of cultural references via the literature of escapism.

\(^{191}\) Personally, I would disagree with Hsia Tsai-an’s point of view on this matter. Hsia Tsai-an acknowledges that such “preaching” of ancient Chinese moral philosophy was an objective of the KMT. However, he claims that it existed only as theory, but in reality such “preaching” was hardly put into practice. “[I]n practice[,] this policy [the calling for the anti-Communist novel writing and the preaching of ancient Chinese moral philosophy] is binding chiefly on playwrights and scenarist who can hardly have their works produced unless they satisfy the fastidious requirement of one censor after another. Writers in general and publishers however, encounter little interference from the KMT Central Headquarters.” \textit{Ibid.}, pp.520-21. Nevertheless, if one consults official textbooks used in schools, social commentaries in major newspapers and most of the literature publications at that time, one would acknowledge that there was an inherent top-down hierarchy which imposed moral lessons on the public. For example, the calling of “virtue”—\textit{Xiao} (respects and tributes to one’s parents)—was transcribed in the story of Dr. Hu Shih’s sweet memory of his mother’s gentleness and his profound gratitude and respect for her, and this story was integrated into the official textbook of Chinese literature for elementary students.


\(^{193}\) The Guoli bianyiguan 国立编譯館 [National Institute of Translation and Compilation], founded in 1932 (in Nanji, Mainland China) by the government of Republic of China, was the \textit{only} publisher of textbooks for junior colleges and elementary schools in Taiwan before 1997. It was after 1997 that the government started to allow private publishers to edit and publish different versions of textbooks.
With Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek’s slogan of “anti-communism and anti-Russia,” anti-communist literature was largely promoted by the KMT during the fifties. Important writers of this literary genre—Chang Tao-fan 張道藩 or Chen Ji-ying 陳紀滢 (both founders of the Chinese Writer’s & Artist’s Association 中國文藝協會), for example—published a number of novels and long fictional stories in the newspapers portraying the “horrific communist rule” in China. There are specific features of that rule that the KMT chose to highlight while imagining and constructing the ethnic and/or class character for the people(s) of Taiwan. First, since anti-communist sentiment was called for, this character took the form of a nationalistic patriotism which practised a total rejection of all communist ideas and forms. Second, the value attached to hierarchy in traditional Chinese moral philosophy’s (especially Confucianism) was supplemented by a duty of obedience to the sovereign. Certain traditional Confucian moral values, which serve to “provide guidance in wisdom” with respect to a person’s conduct, were praised in some of the anti-Communist novels. Chiang Kuei’s 姜貴 (1908-1980) anti-Communist satirical novel, Xuanfeng 旋風 [The Whirlwind], serves also as a good example. According to Hsia Tsai-an, Communist advocates like Fang Hsian-ch’ien (one of the characters in Xuanfeng) had completely corrupted the harmonious society of Confucianism, which could only be attained by individuals respecting


196 It is important to note that the embrace of Confucian values can only be carried out after the basic work of establishing a modern national community has already been completed. The modern community means that people who inhabited in that community become citizens and they are all considered equals. In a modern community where people from all over society are regarded as equals, Confucianism, which sees people as intrinsically relational, is an obstacle, since Confucianism is not founded on the idea of citizenship. This is one of the reasons that ultimately explains why the May Fourth movement in communist China had welcomed anti-Confucianism. Nonetheless, one must also acknowledge that, by the 1930s, the KMT had decided to re-inscribe and use Confucianism as part of their state cultural project.

197 For example, the response of traditional Confucian moral philosophy to political governance is junjun chenchen fufu zizi 「君君臣臣父父子子」, meaning that “there will be a government, when the prince acts accordingly as a prince, and the minister acts accordingly as a minister; when the father acts accordingly as a father, and the son acts accordingly as a son.” It is evident that such Confucian ideas highlight the importance of obedience and the hierarchical formalities expected of the participants of society. For Confucius, society can be harmonious only when the individual as a social being recognises his and her social status and willingly surrenders his/her obedience to the sovereign. Confucius 孔子, “Yanyuan di shier hui 颜淵第十二回 [Book XII Yen Yuan],” LunYu 論語 [Analects of Confucius], n.d., Web, 20 May 2014, website accessed: http://www.taiwanus.net/E/E_4/E_4_12.htm.
his or her social role and acting accordingly. Furthermore, Hsia Tsai-an even claims that Fang’s conduct is “a bankruptcy of human values” (526). Hsia Tsai-an’s discussion has a strong implication: for Taiwanese writers to produce “good quality” literary writings, the Confucian moral philosophy had to be reconsidered and applied to their process of creation. The revival of the traditional moral philosophy was not aiming, however, at a return to feudal society. The reason for the revival of Confucianism was that this traditional philosophy delineates and reconfigures the notion of “authentic Chineseness,” which would help to construct a distinctive character in contrast to that of the Mainlanders. This explains, then, why the KMT adopted the doctrines of ancient moral philosophy for the evaluation of literary works.

So far, I have examined the production of modern literature in China and its impact on the production of literature in Taiwan, paying particular attention to the regional history of East Asia. The above analysis proves that “literature,” in the construction of the colonial and/or postcolonial modern nation-state, can become the mechanic apparatus par excellence, mobilising universality as well as delineating and legitimizing a national or colonial character. Evoking Paul Silverstein’s idea, for the modern nation-state that has attempted to realise both the colonial project and the production of ethnicity it is necessary to use education as one of its mechanical apparatuses, and this goes hand in hand with the production of “literature.” With this in mind, let us now briefly consider the state’s management of education in Taiwan under the KMT rule.

Over several decades, the KMT had remained in the position of sovereign. As a result, it is not difficult to find that the KMT favoured the literary writings of the waishengren over the works of benshengren. The KMT did not, however, completely dominate the literature market, though its criteria for selection and its preferences certainly influenced the production of literature in Taiwan. In Hsia Tsai-an’s counter-argument, he claims that the Kuomintang

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199 Paul Silverstein is a professor of anthropology who currently teaches at Reed College in Portland, Oregon. His research interests include immigration, race/ethnicity, nationalism, colonialism/post-coloniality, historical and urban anthropology, etc. He is also specialized in Berber activism, political history of Middle East, North Africa and France. His book Algeria in France: Transpolitics, Race and Nation (2004) will also be discussed later in the following chapters.

200 Wang Chen-ho’s 王禎和 works may be taken as an example. His most-widely received novels, Meigui meigui wo i ni 玫瑰玫瑰我愛你 [Rose Rose I Love You] (1984) and Jiazhuang yiniuche 嫁妝一牛車 [An Oxcart for Dowry] (1993), are regarded as classics of Taiwanese literature and yet Wang’s works often portray “authentic Taiwaneseness” from the benshengren perspective, for their settings and plots generally deal with social-realistic portrayals of rural life in the benshengren community. There are several plausible
should not have been blamed for such favouritism because only the artist themselves could be “the person who answers for the failure or success of his [or her] work” (516). Indeed, it is true that certain writers who wrote from different community backgrounds, different class experiences, and different languages were quite successful in their careers, and that the KMT never banned them from publishing. Yet, one should not forget that the KMT succeeded in establishing a consensus regarding Taiwan’s most important literary works, thanks to government-sanctioned discourses in the educational system. This consensus was achieved largely by appointing heads of universities and heads of the educational ministry. Nearly all decision-makers in the fields of education and research were, at least to some minimum extent, in agreement with the ideas of the KMT. For instance, when Chen Yi 陳儀 was governing Taiwan, the head of Taiwanshen bianyiguan 台灣省編譯館, the minister of education and the heads of National Taiwan University and other Normal Universities (師範大學), were all appointed by the government of Chen Yi. Last but not least, those positions were offered to people from the same province of Mainland China as Chen Yi before they

reasons which explain why Wang’s works were not banned but remained “popular” under the KMT’s regime. Firstly, although Wang often includes severe opinions in his books regarding the political situation of his contemporaries, there was no direct reference of the KMT government. Secondly, the “authentic Taiwaneseness” partly contributed to the fashioning of a national identity that is different from that of the Mainland Chinese. On the other hand, comparing literary works published by non-waishengren and waishengren authors, works written by waishengren writers had more chance of winning official literary prizes and they were often academically recognised. Pai Hsien-yung 白先勇 and Chu Tien-hsin 朱天心 are two waishengren writers whose literary careers exemplify this phenomenon. As observed, Pai’s Jimo de shiquisui 寂寞的十七歲 [Crystal Boys] (1961) and Taibeiren 臺北人 [Taipei Peoples] (1971) and Chu’s Gudou 古都 [The Old Capital] (1997) are available on the market and have attained a wide readership. In addition, their works are often on the required reading list of literature classes in most Taiwanese universities. Likewise, in academia, the most acknowledged literary critics and academics, David D.W. Wang 王德威 and Pang-yuan Chi 齊邦媛, come from the waishengren family. One can draw the conclusion that the KMT played an influential role in the process of Taiwanese literature production.

201 Chen Yi 陳儀 (1883-1950) was the Chief Executive and Jinbei zongsiling 警備總司令 (Garrison Commander) of Taiwan and a member of the Kuomintang. After WWII, with the authorization of General Douglas MacArthur, Chen Yi was sent to Taiwan by Chiang Kai-shek to accept the Japanese government’s surrender as the Chinese delegate, and he was later assigned to the position of governor general of Taiwan. He ruled Taiwan very briefly under the direction of General Chiang Kai-shek between 1945 and 1947, but was removed from the post for his “mishandling” of the violent incident of February 28th in 1947. Following his dismissal, Chen was reassigned as the chairman of Zhejiang province (in China) in 1948, but shortly after that he was reported to have wanted to abandon the Kuomintang and join the Communist Party. Eventually, he was condemned for treason and was deported and executed in Taiwan in 1950.

202 Taiwanshen bianyiguan 台灣省編譯館 (Taiwan Province Institute for Compilation and Translation) was the highest agency in Taiwan for the compilation and translation of academic and cultural works and textbooks. It was the former Guoli bianyiguan 國立編譯館 (National Institute for Compilation and Translation).
arrived in Taiwan. The political positions and attitudes toward ethnicity adopted by these heads surely had a certain degree of influence on the perception and recognition of the people who received an education in their establishments. As a consequence, writers were “formed” or “schooled” in such a way that they would not wish to contradict the values and the political position of the KMT. In due course, this system served to constitute a consensus—that people are inclined to recognise their cultural differences under the umbrella of a “greater China” for the reference of their ethnic identity. Even when a literary work appeared to criticise the KMT, its author would hardly reject his/her “Chinese ethnic background.” It was evident that the KMT had successfully asserted the ideological values of its party and institutionalised a specific form of nationalism based on a specific type of national character. According to Chen Fang-ming, when Xu Shou-shang 許壽裳 was invited to be the head of Taiwanshen bianyiguan, his main task was to edit, compile and promote teaching materials that follow the ideas of Sanmin zhuyi 三民主義 and nationalism.

Africa: South Africa

Two key ideas can be drawn from the above analysis: (1) the concept of “literature” is to be understood as something that has been constructed, rather than as something naturally given; (2) to understand how “literature” is produced in a (post-)colonial country, it is necessary to study both its colonial history and its regional history. The production of Taiwanese literature thus needs to be understood with reference to social, political and literary movements in Chinese history. This explains why the preceding analysis included extensive discussions about the rise of modernism in China. By analogy, the understanding of literary production in South Africa requires knowledge about British colonial and postcolonial historical influence on South African society. The rise of modernism in Britain is thus also of great importance. Working on the political aspects of the literatures of the twentieth century, Nicholas Brown begins his analysis by underlining the crucial link between British and African literature. According to Brown, both modern British literature and African literature

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204 *Sanmin zhuyi* 三民主義: translated as the Three Principles of the People, is a fundamental political philosophy developed by Dr. Sun Yat-sen 孫逸仙 to further his aim of ending imperial rule and bring forth a Republic of China. To summarise, its three main principles are nationalism, democracy, and the welfare of the people. Later on it also furnished the main principles of the Kuomintang.

emerged in a period of extraordinary political upheaval and thus rich in possibilities (British modernism happened between the world wars and African literature was born when nations were struggling for independence). Moreover, he emphasises that neither of these two literatures can be understood on their own terms. He further claims that this meaning can only be grasped with reference to the rift between capital and labour, understood in a classical Marxian way. Brown’s overall argument is that Marx’s critique of capitalism as a system can be applied to help understand how twentieth-century literatures (be they national, continental, colonial, or postcolonial) are produced in the articulation of a “worldwide capitalist system.” Capital, on this view, is no longer regarded in purely economic terms; cultures are also considered as composed of units of capital. Brown further outlines that European imperialism is responsible for spreading capitalism as a global economic and cultural system. And it was through the introduction of this economic and cultural system that the colonial societies (Brown focuses mainly on the African societies formerly ruled by the British empire) were profoundly reshaped. The African societies he studies were significantly restructured by the colonial economy, thus giving rise to the emergence of a new class and therewith also the continent’s new literature. According to Brown, capital is essential here because it determines the circulation of knowledge. British and African literatures are produced in a context where “cultures” are regarded as forms of capital.

Brown’s theory has proved that the rise of African literature is connected to its colonial history; and, in that colonial period the capitalist system introduced by the European colonisers plays an essential role. Brown’s argument demonstrates how the capitalist system eventually leads to the circulation of cultural capital between the First World (often the former colonial countries) and the Third World (often the former colonies). Brown further argues that even when theoretical or literary production is set in and seemingly about the Third

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206 Brown, *Utopian Generation*, p.1
207 Ibid., p.1.
208 Ibid., p.2
209 Ibid., p.2.
210 Ibid., p.5. Note that this is also the argument which Peter Button adopts from Brown.
211 Brown points out here that Aijaz Ahmad’s critique of the three-worlds vocabulary is valid, adding that he has no intention of reviving any of the old uses of these terms that Ahmad emphatically rejects. Ahmad, “Three Worlds Theory: End of a Debate,” *In Theory: Classes, Nations Literatures*, pp.287-318. Brown emphasises that in his analysis, the use of “Third World” and related expressions corresponds to the one legitimate use Ahmad allows for them, namely as vulgar substitutes for more rigorous language relating the core national economies in contrast with those of the peripheral and semiperipheral nations.
World, there is a strong tendency for it “to be structurally oriented toward the interests of the First World.”

Drawing analogy between cultural and economic production, Brown states,

In cultural as in directly economic production, the Third World tends to provide raw material (local knowledges, African novels, musical idioms) that are shipped to the research centres of the First World to be converted into finished productions (anthropology and pharmaceuticals, literary criticism, Paul Simon albums) that are sometimes reimported to the periphery (4).

For this reason, he thinks that a great number of African literatures, which themselves were strongly influenced by the British modernism movement, continue to be involved in the circulation of cultural capital. Brown names some important figures who have directly influenced the revolutionary thinking of the entire European modernist movement, including W.B. Yeats (Irish poet 1865-1939), T.S. Eliot (American writer 1888-1965) and Bertolt Brecht (German playwright 1898-1956). Regardless of their nationalities, their works defined and shaped the spirit of British modernism. Brown then points out that the “revolutionary” ideas developed by two of the most famous contemporary African writers—Chinua Achebe (Nigerian) and Ngugi wa Thiong’o (Kenyan)—are strongly influenced by and, contain significant references to the work of the British modernists. According to Brown, Achebe has invested apocalyptic visions of Yeats and of Eliot with new meaning in his novels and wa Thiong’o begins his practical approach by relocating Brechtian theatrical form in the African context.

In addition to that, their re-working and relocating of the British modernists’ concepts to produce a new literature of the African continent are mostly consumed by contemporary European (First World) academia rather than by African (Third World) academic circles.

Brown’s argument focusses on the specific historical and political conditions that gave rise to a new continental literature in Africa. For my purposes, this argument also raises two further important questions: (1) What part did South African literature play in the emergence of a new form of literature specific to the African continent? (2) Is the production of South African literature tied to the circulation of cultural capital as Brown has analysed? And if so, what is the nature of this tie? In order to respond to these questions, in what follows I will present the work of Stefan Helgesson, which will allow us to see how historical events and

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213 Brown, *op.cit.*, p.2
their social and political implications may have affected South African literature during its developmental phase.

In *Writing in Crisis*, Helgesson begins by stating that South African literature, which emerged from the 1970s onwards, is generally motivated by the need to respond to social and political tumult. He further raises the following question:

[I]s it possible to find some South African literary texts of the period that both respond to the crisis of the 1980s and deconstruct their own grounding in the conflicts that dictate the crisis, thus enabling the reader to imagine the subject-positions, aesthetics options, and conceptual horizons that lie ‘beyond’? (Helgesson 2). Outlining his research questions in these terms, Helgesson aims to find texts—which possess the quality of being able to receive a certain cultural form while simultaneously deviating from this form—that deliberately set out to “react” to crisis in the social and political realm. Helgesson believes that literary texts written by J.M. Coetzee, Nadine Gordimer, and Njabulo Ndebele each have original features that enable readers to imagine “differently” South African political identities. Helgesson’s thesis can, however, be easily criticised on the grounds that he seems to presume that cultural forms are external to the process of social reproduction and not two sides of the same coin. Although it is true that finding a way to speak of culture in terms of processual relations is very difficult, taking on the challenge of addressing the process of social reproduction while accounting for differences is not entirely impossible. I would argue that even though Helgesson might have failed to see this problematic presumption in his thesis, the writers he selected and their literary works surely had not. Writers like Coetzee or Gordimer have indeed taken on the real challenge of “reacting” to crisis—commenting on events or presenting their positions—in the social and political realm,

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214 One can easily argue against such a general comment by looking at the texts Helgesson chooses to analyse. There are two potential objections here: (1) His selection of texts is circumscribed in advance by his attempts to address only those texts that adopt specific political engagements. (2) All his selected texts are novels, which means that poems, proses, essays and other forms of literary writing are excluded from his reading of South African literature. However, Helgesson’s statement could be said to stand true even if he did not further explain why he made such a general comment. This is because works that are appreciated locally by South African readers and globally by the international readership include, amongst others, the works of J.M. Coetzee, Nadin Gordimer, André Brink (journalist and novelist), Zakes Mda (dramatist and novelist), and Mongane Wally Serote (poet). (The first two novelists are included in Helgesson’s discussion, but the other three authors are not). Their writings are well known because their works are very much engaged in thinking about the political and social environment in South Africa. See “Arts and Culture: 25 Classic South African Reads,” *South Africa Information*, n.d., Web, 28 Jun. 2014, website accessed: http://www.southafrica.info/about/arts/bestbooks.htm#.U9dya1Yug7c.

and they furthermore address the process of social change while delineating differences in various aspects within that process. For example, Coetzee’s *Disgrace* engages a broad discussion of socio-political structural change in South Africa after apartheid, which of course had a direct impact on the social status of all South African people and their ways of life. Its focus, however, is the depiction of the violence and differences that result from the structural change, particularly in relation to the social hierarchical implications that are attached to some former socio-political and cultural references. The violence and the differences are configured into the abuse of power and primal rivalry between men and women, between “the whites” and “the coloureds”.

With regard to the elite system dominating the production of literature in South Africa, the situation resembles, to an extent, what occurred in Taiwan under KMT rule. South Africa, like Nigeria and Kenya, was one of the former British colonies. Its society was significantly restructured by the British colonial economy. This resulted in the emergence of different classes in the socio-political realm and that in turn affected the production of South African literature. One can identify three different class groups among South African writers. First, there are the educated English-speaking elites, mostly descendants of the early-European colonisers or immigrants, including J.M. Coetzee, Nadine Gordimer, André Brink, and others. Their works are mostly written and published in English and have better access to an international readership. Second, there are Black African elites who received higher education in the United Kingdom, such as Njabulo Ndebele and Zakes Mda. Finally, there are a few militants who are involved neither in the elite circles of the White Europeans nor in those of the Black Africans but who stand up to advocate their socio-political consciousness. Representatives of this last group are, however, very limited in the literary realm. Only Steve Biko, who dedicated his political life to the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) and who is more often considered as a political figure rather than a literary figure, produced small amount of writings in relation to his political ideology. We can thus conclude that the production of South African literature remains concentrated in elite circles, but also that these circles are framed by an occidental epistemological imparted from the educational system established by the former British colonials.

Although elitism exists in the literary field, works from different writers of different social classes still continue to shape South African literature in very different ways. Some focus on the manifestation of political identities; some express resistance to various forms of
colonial sovereignty; others address the antagonism and conflicts between ethnic groups during the socio-political transition. According to Helgesson’s analysis, it is only from the 1980s onward that the writings produced in South Africa have finally marked an important transition in the process of the construction of South African literature.\(^{216}\) For a start, authors began to write from the angle of a holistic South African democracy.\(^{217}\) That is to say, beginning from the 1980s, South African literature no longer focuses on themes which are only related to BCM but acknowledges other voices from different classes, ethnic groups, and so on.\(^{218}\) It is the notion of *resistance* that is underlined in the forms of writings, rather than a specific position taken by the author(s) to defend certain oppressed groups of people. Further, Helgesson also suggests that there is an obvious paradigmatic shift in the 1980s from thinking “within” (i.e. addressing phenomenological issues problematised politically and socially by the racial segregation inside the state of South Africa) to thinking “beyond.”\(^{219}\) By “thinking ‘beyond’,” Helgesson does not mean concern about the future in a strictly temporal sense. In fact, he notes that there are a number literary works which, without moving ahead in time, persistently construct storylines and scenarios of the “beyond”, where the beyond consists of a subjective or social space which is neither defined nor circumscribed by the dominant historical force of apartheid.\(^{220}\) Helgesson’s analysis helps us to understand that there is a rupture in the development of South African literature and that this rupture implies a significant change within the representational framework (i.e., within the themes and events evoked or addressed by the authors). Today’s South African literature no longer simply addresses the historical events with an aim to defy the oppression of the former coloniser, and nor does it ceaselessly try to deconstruct the colonial past. Instead, it attempts to fight against all forms of oppression that are left behind as legacies and that have become the roots of many of South Africa’s social problems. This is, in fact, where analogies between resistance in the postcolonial society and resistance in the field of knowledge about the colony (especially as expressed in post-imperial language) become pertinent. It is true, as Helgesson points out, that a substantial part of today’s South African literature has committed itself to

\(^{216}\) Ibid., pp.2-3

\(^{217}\) According to Helgesson, holistic South African democracy is an idea that emerged in the fifties in South Africa. Over time, this idea has become consciously shared amongst the general population. Helgesson also agrees with Stephen Clingman’s point of view that the South African literature published in the eighties has a strong tendency to demonstrate this consciousness in writing. *Ibid.*, pp.3-4.

\(^{218}\) Helgesson, *op.cit.*, p.3.


combatting the legacies of colonial oppressions and has taken that combat to a different level. For instance, Coetzee’s *Life and Times of Michael K* directly addresses the issue of the post-imperial language and thus compels its readers to acknowledge the analogous relation between resistance in postcolonial society and in the field of knowledge about the colony. To do so, Coetzee did not attempt to deconstruct the colonial/imperial language, nor did he try to constitute a new postcolonial Symbolic Order. The resistance is staged by outlining the protagonist’s refusal to speak. This refusal makes it clear that this notion of resistance is not against a singular type of colonial oppression but against *all* forms of oppression. Helgesson’s analysis focuses more on the transitional period of South African literature and on how intellectuals and writers eventually oriented themselves towards a different phase of political and social engagement. However, to come back to the original question of the production of literature in South Africa, it seems fair to say that in a wider historical context, this rupture or transition took place because society as a whole, including its literary production, was formally established in accordance with the British colonial “standard.” The production of South African literature is thus relevant to the arising of a new continental African literature, but it cannot be accounted for without understanding the colonial history of the British Empire.

Another question that needs to be addressed in this section is the following: is the production of South African literature involved in the circulation of cultural capital? The response is clearly affirmative and there are three aspects one can identify in that process. First and foremost, novels, essays, and short stories written by internationally renowned writers such as Coetzee or Gordimer strongly influenced the accumulation of “South African cultural capital.” Their works significantly affect the circulation of knowledge about South Africa. Both authors are Nobel Laureates and both have won numerous other literary prizes all over the world, including CAN, the Booker prize and the Commonwealth Writers’ prize. Along with their fame, their writings—which advance criticisms of the colonial regime, of apartheid, and of social and ethnic conflicts—have become the most indicative sources of South African society for many international readers. At the same time, their works further stimulate different theoretical discourses in the South African socio-political environment. If we follow Nicholas Brown’s argument that is presented earlier, Coetzee and Gordimer’s postcolonial writings can be seen as the productions of “Western” academic theory applied to the South African context. The materials that they work on and turn into literary texts—the

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221 Ibid., p.4.
apartheid and post-apartheid society—are taken as raw materials collected outside the “West” and processed through the “Western theoretical model.” In due course, the finalised works are transported back to the first world to be consumed and studied. Indeed, more research and studies of Coetzee’s and Gordimer’s works are carried out in British academic institutions than in local South African universities.222

Regarding the circulation of cultural capitalism, another aspect one should look into is the usage of the English language. For many, the use of English as the conventional language of most South African literary texts is itself problematic. For Helgesson, Njabulo Ndebele’s writings stand as a good example. Ndebele devotes himself and his writings to achieving an epistemological transformation. According to Helgesson’s analysis, though Ndebele pursued an epistemological transformation, his writings are tied up with a self-contradictory employment of the English language. Ndebele, one of the best-known South African black writers, is very much aware of a number of problems regarding the production of knowledge, culture and literature. In his essays, he constantly reminds his readers that knowledge in South Africa can never be regarded independently from its agent, that is, the former British colonisers.223 Ndebele sees that knowledge of “black” literature tends to be delimited by the dominant “white” society, because the epistemological horizon was originally structured by the “white” establishment.224 In one of his essays published in the 1980s, he pointed out that the state of “black” South African literature during that period was in fact in a counter-productive mode of representation.225 For Ndebele, it is important to call upon “an alternative mode of representation where ‘blacks’ are situated as subjects rather than objects” (Helgesson 17). Only then, a transformation in the epistemology can be possible. In this respect, I am inclined to agree with Ndebele’s viewpoint. However, it is true that Ndebele’s proposed literary practice of this idea is much too reductive, and his proposition risks being taken as a phantasmal postcolonial desire to overcome the binary relationship between subjects and objects. For example, in commenting on the significance of “storytelling,” Ndebele speaks of the deployment of the African storytellers (and writers) in urban settings and urges them to be in touch with the new black oral art in poetry and theatre. This particular idea actually comes

222 I have compared curriculums and research proposed among different disciplines in different universities of UK and of South Africa.
from Ndebele’s understanding of the aesthetic of “Turkish Tales.” In his essay, “Turkish Tales and Some Thoughts on South African Fiction,” Ndebele draws our attention to his prime example of a Turkish writer, Yasar Kemal, to highlight the important presence of oral and local culture in the work of a “storyteller.” Kemal’s works have drawn heavily on his familiarity with the local, oral culture, and this allows Kemal to “engage ‘imaginatively’ yet critically with the social processes of his country” (Helgesson 48). Yet, while proposing this literary practice in storytelling, Ndebele’s own story writing lacks such a practice. Furthermore, according to Michael Vaughan’s observation, Ndebele’s fictional works owe more to the tradition of Western realism than to the exhibition of local or oral culture. This is why Vaughan raises doubts about Ndebele’s theory about the realisation of change in the epistemology, since Ndebele’s own practice of story writing contradicts his theory.

Ndebele’s attempt to overthrow the epistemological horizon may be simplistic, but it is also true that critics have interpreted his vision in a reductive way. Helgesson, for example, shares Vaughan’s opinion that Ndebele has left out the issue of the usage of English language, viewed as a mode of representation, from his argument. Helgesson and Vaughan assume that Ndebele was after an epistemological change that would involve total avoidance of the use and manipulation of the English language in the production of South African “black” literature. Ndebele is thus criticised by Vaughan on the ground that he writes only for “sophisticated, English-speaking readers.” Helgesson agrees, noting that even when Ndebele argues and defends the virtues of vernacular orality, he does so in “flawless” English. So, even though Ndebele wishes to address the fundamental problem of the epistemological heredity of South Africa literature, for these two critics, once he starts constructing his texts in “perfect” English, he cannot avoid falling back into the occidental epistemological system, since it is through the English language that the British colonials had established their epistemological system. The determination to transform the already-established epistemology cannot be carried out unproblematically, for the vehicle of

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227 Helgesson, op.cit., p.48.
228 Ibid., p.48.
229 Ibid., p.48.
231 Helgesson, op.cit., p.17.
representation—the English language—already bears the mark of Western epistemology, which is inseparable from colonial history.

Finally, when our attention is turned to the selection of “authentic” texts that represent South African literature, questions such as “what is South Africa?” or “what is South African literature?” inevitably follow. Helgesson’s view on this issue is that ideas of both “South Africa” and “South African literature” are highly contestable. Generally speaking, South African literature is limited to its political context or geographical horizon. In other words, it means that only literary works that evoke themes and issues related to the South African nation-state or its history could be considered as South African literature. But such a position presupposes that South Africa, as an independent nation-state, has determined boundaries, that those boundaries are clearly determined, and that within those fixed boundaries, there exists South African literature. But merely thirty to forty years ago these boundaries were subject to constant changes due to the creation of bantustans. Fauvelle-Aymar’s studies of South Africa’s history and ethnography show that South Africa has gone through a long phase during which its inner geographical boundaries were undetermined because of the conflicting territorial claims of different bantustans. Geographically, it was already difficult to specify the borders of South Africa, not to mention defining South Africa in social and cultural terms. For such reason, the very idea of “South Africa” is itself highly problematic.

232 Ibid., p.5.
233 Ibid., pp. 5, 13-14.
234 Ibid., p.5. However, it is noted that Coetzee’s writings stand out as exception, especially his later works.
235 See cartography included here in fig. (1), the image is reproduced and taken from Xavier Fauvelle-Aymar’s *Histoire de l’Afrique du Sud*, p.430.
Fig. (1) Categrophy of bantustans or homeland of South Africa (between 19070s to 1980s), reproduced from Fauvelle-Aymer’s Histoire de l’Afrique du Sud

To conclude, the understanding of literary production in the two regions we have considered (Africa and Asia-Pacific) and in the two countries on which we have focussed (South Africa and Taiwan) must be placed in the context of modernity. In contrast to Goethe’s idea of Weltliteratur, literature in modernity should no longer be seen as a point of access to comprehend humanity, but must rather as the means whereby meanings and definitions are ascribed to the modern subject (i.e., modern human beings). It is a project of “creating an archetype” of humanity. The articulation of this archetypal humanity is reified as character in national literatures. In modern Chinese literature, guominxing (the national character) binds with a Marxist proletarian doctrine. In Taiwan, by contrast, where the political situation was quite different, ethnic and/or class character (the privileged waishengren) was promoted by
the KMT propaganda. In fact, to a certain extent, one may even argue that instead of building a national character, the KMT was actually trying to prevent the construction of a national character, since the “real” nation for the KMT was located elsewhere, i.e. in mainland China. The KMT had tried to construct a colonial discourse that would enable a distinction between the coloniser, the privileged waishengren, and the colonised, Taiwan populations. Ultimately, however, the “construction of national character” relies on anti-communist and patriotic sentiments. In its literary articulation, Taiwanese literature during the KMT regime thus calls for a return to traditional Confucian values, which celebrates subjugation to the sovereign.

Similarly, the production of African literature is inevitably tied to its colonial past, particular British modernism. Indeed, as Nicholas Brown has argued, the “revolutionary” ideas developed by contemporary African writers were deeply “indebted to” the British modernists. Furthermore, he also points out that the capitalist system, introduced by European colonialism, is the main reason that African literature is directly influenced by the British modernism movement. In the capitalist system, “cultures” are converted to forms of “capital.” And the cultural forms of capital produced in Africa eventually end up being consumed in the First World. Needless to say, the system dominates the circulation of knowledge and, at the same time, determines the literary production of intellectuals. Further, both in South Africa and in Taiwan, literary works, especially literature which represents the nation-state, are mostly produced by elite circles exposed to modernism. Hardly any other forms of literary production are considered as “national literature.”
2.1.2. In Response to the Production of Literature

With regard to the analysis presented above regarding the production of literature in the modern postcolonial nation-state, the following chapter proposes a comparative analysis of Coetzee’s *Foe* (1986) and Wu’s *Shuimian de hangxian* [Routes in a Dream] (2007). This comparative study makes it possible to understand how the two authors developed their responses to address the problematic issues related to the production of literature in their postcolonial home countries.

**Literary Implications of the Titles: *Foe* and *Shuimian de hangxian* [Routes in a Dream]**

Before going into a detailed analysis of the two chosen texts, we shall first return to Helgesson’s viewpoint mentioned in the above analysis. Helgesson points out that literary production in South Africa from the 1970s onward aims to respond and react to the crisis in the social and political realm. However, one could easily argue that this is true of almost any other postcolonial literature production in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. In this section, I analyse the literary implications of the titles of *Foe* and *Shuimian de hangxian* [Routes in a Dream] so as to show that they correspond exactly to what Helgesson is suggesting—that they are indeed “reactions” to the socio-political crisis (and to a certain extent, even the historical crisis).

The title of Wu’s novel, *Shuimian*, known English as *Routes in a Dream* and in French as *Les Lignes de navigation du sommeil*, offers a clear indication of how works of literature may constitute a “reaction” to historical and/or socio-political crisis. The French title, translated by Gwennaël Gaffric, is of particular interest, since it is much closer to the original meaning of the Chinese title. The English title, on the other hand, is further from the original meaning of the Chinese title, for it derives rather from the content of the book. Three key words—dream, sommeil [somnolence], and navigation [navigation]—are found in the two titles. The English title speaks of a “dream,” which in fact refers not to an ordinary dream of any kind, but specifically to the “historical dream” about Taiwan under the Japanese imperial/colonial rule between the two World Wars. As Chen Fang-ming writes in the preface
of the novel, “in a poetic mood, I joined Wu Ming-yi by undertaking the historical dream he weaved.” Chen’s remark immediately calls our attention to a poetic association between the colonial “history” of Taiwan and the “dream” depicted in Wu’s story. In Chen’s opinion, Wu Ming-yi has successfully transcribed the individual memory and experiences lost in the current of history into an overlapped dream shared by the two narrators (the father, Sanlang 三郎 and the protagonist, the son of Sanlang). The “dream” is used as an *atemporal* space of dialogue between the two narrators from two different time-spans. In the French title, the word “*sommeil*” is used in the place of the word “dream” (from the English translation). *Sommeil* refers to a state of drowsiness or sleepiness, though it sometimes also describes a desire or intention to fall sleep. If we compare the French title to the English one, the force of the word *sommeil* is that it refers to a colonial history that the colonised peoples lived through passively and wearily, as if sleeping through it. The metaphor inscribed in the title thus resonates perfectly with the complex attitude of the postwar and/or postcolonial survivors toward their lived experiences of wars and of colonisation. It is as if the history that was once lived among the colonised people(s) in Taiwan is too unbearable to be faced directly, hence the need to leave the painful memories behind and “put the history to bed.” Another key word employed in the French title is “navigation.” Whereas the English title uses a noun—“routes”—to describe the paths that Sanlang and his son undertake in their postcolonial dream, the French title uses the word “navigation.” “To navigate,” a verb, offers a literary image which portrays the piloting or the navigation of a historical trajectory. Considering both the French and the English translations of the title, it is thus clear that they have significant literary implications that clearly describe the “reactions” of the colonised peoples to the historical and/or socio-political crisis.

Coetzee’s *Foe* is a parody of *Robinson Crusoe*, a famous example of the colonial imaginary written by the seventeenth century English novelist, Daniel Defoe. The content of this novel reveals multiple possible meanings that may be read into the word “foe.” Firstly, “foe,” in its literal sense, conjures up the image of an enemy or opponent. This opponent, the

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236 Original text in Chinese：「懷抱詩意的心情，我與吳明益相偕走完一程他編織出來的歷史夢。」
Chen Fang-ming 陳芳明, “Lishi ru meng-xu wumingyi *Shuimian de hangxian* 歷史如夢—序吳明益《睡眠的航線》[History as a Dream—Preface to Wu Ming-yi’s *Shuimian de hangxian*],” *Shuimian de hangxian* 睡眠的航線 [Routes in a Dream], p.4.

237 Ibid., p.8.

archetypical enemy that is usually targeted in Coetzee’s early postcolonial/postmodern writings, is *History*. In a sense, this *History* with a capital “H” is understood as a single unified chronological process in which humanity as a whole participates, and in another, it is understood as a grand narrative that is compiled of colonial heredity. Secondly, the word, “foe” evokes the word “false” through wordplay with the French pronunciation—“faux.” The implied “falsity” in the book’s title thus cleverly reminds us that the work is a parody of Defoe’s canonical. The third reason concerns the fact that Coetzee’s novels are often read as being in line with the thought of Jaque Derrida, notably in the field of postcolonial deconstruction theory. The title “foe” (as well as the character, Mr. “Foe”) may thus be seen as a gesture towards postcolonial deconstruction, for the letters “De” have been removed from the name of the author of *Robinson Crusoe*, Daniel Defoe, and thus in a way “deconstructed.”

Postmodern Metanarrative

Postmodern metanarrative is one of the most frequently used writing techniques in contemporary postmodern literature. From the world famous British-Indian writer, Salman Rushdie, to the popular American author, Thomas Pynchon, contemporary novelists have consistently used this literary device to draw readers’ attention to their works’ status as an artefact. At the same time, however, these writing techniques aim to break with the chronological and unified grand narratives that supposedly embody *History* with a capital “H.” Both Coetzee and Wu apply postmodern metanarratives in the two novels discussed above, and for the same reasons. In the following section, I argue that this specific writing technique can evoke a direct response to “literature,” as defined by the German Romantics. To be more specific, I argue that the postmodern metanarratives employed in *Shuimian* and *Foe* challenge the essence of modern human being that is configured in relation to modern literature.

According to the *Oxford Dictionary*’s definition, metanarrative is “a narrative account that experiments with or explores the idea of storytelling, often by drawing attention to its

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own artificiality.”

But to define postmodern metanarrative, one must turn to Jean-François Lyotard’s famous quote, “I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives” (xxiv). We can conclude that postmodern metanarrative, seen as a literary technique, expresses and manifests an unwillingness to settle on the idea of a single narrative account and thus emphasises the story’s own artificiality. Often, postmodern metanarrative articulates this unwillingness by ridiculing the artificiality presented in fictions, particularly in the following two manners. First, it ridicules the artificiality by introducing the author into his own story or, conversely, by introducing the fictional characters into the life of the author. For example, in *Foe*, the main characters, Susan Barton and Friday, take temporary shelter in Daniel (De)Foe’s house while he is away. In a usual narrative, this scenario would be impossible, since Friday is a fictional character in Defoe’s novel. This “encounter” between the (invisible) author and his/her character creates a dimension of meta-fictionality. At one point, Coetzee even attempts to go beyond this meta-fictionality by affirming Susan Barton’s fictional existence while also having Barton’s demand of (De)Foe to finish his story-writing:

> Can you not press on with your writing, Mr. Foe, so that Friday can speedily be returned to Africa and I liberated from this drab existence I lead? […] Will you not bear it in mind, however, that my life is drearily suspended till your writing is done? (*Foe* 63)

Of course, *Foe* is not the only novel in which Coetzee has tried to incorporate the technique of postmodern metanarrative in order to emphasise the artificiality of fiction. In the postscript of Coetzee’s *Elizabeth Costello*, Coetzee inserts a fictional seventeenth-century letter to Francis Bacon. The fictive letter plays the role of postmodern metanarrative. Lady Elizabeth Chandos is present in the letter as a parody of one of Coetzee’s own invented characters, Elizabeth Costello (note that their initials are both E.C.). Whereas the contemporary E.C. provokes philosophical debate by defending animal ethics, vegetarianism and humans’ poetic faculty in accessing the subjectivity of animals, the seventeenth-century E.C. denies this faculty and further proclaims belief in its existence as a mental illness. In a letter that she writes to Sir Francis Bacon, she “details her husband’s madness, which, she suggests, emanates from a belief that ‘each creature is key to all other creature’ and thus can be understood through figurative language, and, above all, through allegory.”

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242 Coetzee, *Foe*, p.64.

Similar strategies are adopted in Wu’s *Shuimian*. But before we further discuss Wu’s adopted strategies, we must first understand the narrative structure of the book. The entire novel is divided into two major narratives: (1) the narrator “I,” who we discover later in the text is the son of Sanlang, recounts his abnormal sleeping rhythms. The “I” claims that after this peculiar sleep rhythm first occurred, he is incapable of dreaming. Occasionally, the “I’s” narration is presented in the form of letters or emails to his girlfriend, describing his journey to Japan in search of a doctor who may be able to “cure” his problems of sleeping and dreaming. (2) The second narrative voice is the voice of the author, telling the life story of Sanlang from an omnipresent voice. However, one should note that, occasionally, narratives of other characters are also included in the novel in order to draw different perspectives in understanding the plot line of the novel. To create a meta-fictional dimension, Wu chooses to introduce a character, a turtle named Shitou 石頭 [Stone], who is irrelevant to the two main narratives (Sanlang and his son’s narrations). The introduction of this character can be seen as the author’s attempt to create a “crack” that allows his readers to “peep into the reality” of the metafictional story. Shitou is a turtle with an incredibly hard shell that Sanlang’s wife one day decides to use as a pad stone in order to stabilise her bed with one broken leg. Being one of the bed legs, it is said that Shitou is able to enter the dreams of whomever it is that sleeps in the bed and to dream their dreams. The reader thus begins to feel unsure whether the dreams recounted by the two main narrators, Sanlang and his son, are actually their own dreams or the dreams of Shitou. One can conclude that Wu has successfully created different metafictional layers in the narrative construction of the whole story.

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244 Wu M.Y., *Shuimian*, pp.32-33, 53.

245 Ibid., pp.55-56.

246 The following texts in English are translated by myself, since there exists no English translation of this book from Wu Ming-yi.「石頭漸漸發現，雖然床上都是這兩個人，但床有時重些有時輕些。⋯⋯這讓石頭深感疑惑。於是石頭開始做夢來嘗試進入三郎伊多桑與卡桑的夢境。」(Translation: “Shitou begins to find out, even though it has always been the same persons sleeping on the bed, the bed is sometime lighter and sometime heavier. […] This troubles Shitou a lot. Shitou thus decides to start dreaming in order to enter the dreams of Sanlang’s mom and dad.”) Ibid., p.59. 「這些日子以來牠[石頭]已經習慣了被壓在床腳，承受兩個人的體重和夢境，牠成了一個解夢者，甚至忘了自己是一隻龜。每天晚上牠靜靜地潛入床上的人的夢境，像在看著遙遠的風景。」(Translation: “After a long while, [Shitou] becomes so used to being the pad stone of the bed, so used to the weight of these two people and their dreams. Shitout becomes a dream interpreter and eventually forgets that it was once a turtle. Every night, it quietly waits the moment to enter the dreams of the people on the bed, like watching some scenic view from afar.”) Ibid., p.262.
Secondly, postmodern narrative also tries to emphasise the artificiality of fiction by interfering with or overlapping the narrations presented in the story. In so doing, it adds more depth to the meta-fictionality. An example of this in *Foe* is the appearance of another Susan Barton, who claims to be the daughter of the original Susan Barton. (The original Susan Barton is the lady who appeared at the beginning of the story and who has spent quite some time on the deserted island with Cruso and Friday.) The interference of the narration of the original Susan Barton becomes so self-evident that the reader is not only troubled by the metafictionality but even became lost in it. In *Shuimian*, Wu produces a similar effect by overlapping the depicted situations of the narrator “I” and Guanyin 觀音. The narrative of Guanyin only appears twice in the entire book. However, towards the end of the novel, in a passage where Guanyin offers his own narrative account, Guanyin complains that one of the greatest pains he suffers is the inability to sleep and to dream, which is evidently the same condition as the narrator “I.” This announcement is intended to trouble and challenge the readers through the overlapping of narratives that underscore the artificiality of the story.

Let us now our attention to the essence of the modern human being and *dianxing*. Earlier I raised the suggestion that the postmodern metanarratives in the two novels are able to challenge the essence of the modern human being as figured in modern literature. But how and in what aspects can postmodern metanarrative achieve that? First, we need to return to the issue of “freedom” in relation to subjectivity, which has been addressed above in my discussion of Peter Button’s critical analysis. In alignment with Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe’s reading of the Jena Romantics, Button argues that the essence of the modern human being is essentially articulated through the medium of “literature” and this essence is the “freedom” of the human subject. A subject can confirm his/her subjectivity only through an affirmation of his/her “freedom.” In the Age of Enlightenment, the “freedom” of the subject was mostly associated with Reason, but the Jena Romantics undertook an inquiry into the limits of Reason in philosophy, the principal result of which was the view that the primary quality in humans associated with freedom is creativity. Hence, they considered that it is the various forms of creation that affirm the essence of the human subject. “Literature,” in the Jena

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249 Coetzee, *Foe*, p.73.

250 Guanyin 觀音: also known as Guanshiyin 觀世音 in Chinese. Guanyin is an East Asian spiritual figure of mercy. Originally, the name of Guanyin is written as *Avalokitasvara* in the Sanskrit. “Avalokita” was translated as “seeing” and “savara” as “hearing” when Buddhism was first spread to the midland of China. Wu M.Y., *Shuimian*, p.294.

Romantics’ view, was thus the domain where modern human subjectivity is realised. Postmodern metanarrative, on the contrary, rigorously challenges the idea that an individual subject is capable of realising his/her subjectivity through literature, since it raises questions about the existence of subjectivity by obscuring the boundaries between fiction, metafiction and reality. Button further shows that after the emergence of the Jena Romantics’ concept of “literature,” this “freedom” is paradoxically annulled because it is now “literature” that defines the essence of the modern human being. It can thus be further argued that postmodern metanarrative can also successfully overcome the idea that it is “literature” that defines the essence of modern human being. In *Foe*, the story is composed of different layers of narratives and metanarratives and it questions radically the “freedom” of the subject, which could be both that of the author and of the reader. These layers of narratives and metanarratives render meditation on the human subjectivity almost impossible. In the first layer of the story, Susan Barton, as the sole narrator of the story, failed to confirm even to her own fictional subjectivity, for the reader is informed, at one point, of her being the creation of Mr. Foe’s writing. In the second layer of the story, readers are also challenged to comprehend the fictionality of Mr. Foe’s existence, in which case it is again impossible to meditate on the subjectivity of the invisible author. A similar writing technique, that is, one which presents the invisible author in a fictional text is likewise adopted in Wu’s *Shuimian*. As pointed out earlier, the narrative of “I” (the protagonist) is sometimes presented in the form of letters or emails to his girlfriend, describing the protagonist’s troublesome sleeping rhythms. One of the symptoms that the narrator “I” has is that he falls asleep immediately after he starts to feel drowsy, without any control over himself. Nevertheless, in one of his emails, the text did not stops after the narrator “I” writes, “xiedao zheli shi, bu zhidaowei shiyou yiaode youdian kunle 写到這裡時，不知道為什麼我覺得有點睏了 [As I write till here, with no particular reason, I begin to feel a bit drowsy]” (Wu, *Shuimian* 255). On the contrary, the text continues for another few lines, describing what the narrator “I” plans to do after his return to Taiwan. The continuation of the text makes the readers aware of the presence of the invisible author (Wu Ming-yi), “helping” the narrator “I” to finish what he wants to say. The reader thus realises the emails are simply part of Wu’s creativity, and the narrator “I” in fact is not at all “free” to tell his own story. Wu, like Coetzee, has successfully evoked the possible existence of an invisible author between himself and the omnipotent first person narrator, which ultimately renders the meditation on subjectivity impossible. In this respect, one concludes that the literary writings of Coetzee and Wu can never be taken as “literature,” inasmuch as literature regards the essence of modern human being as free subjectivity.
2.2. Colonial History and Postcolonial Memory

2.2.1. Remaking History, Memories, and Narratives

It is undoubtedly in the nature of postcolonial literary writing to address and take into account the history of the colonial and transitional periods. The memories and narratives recounted by, or invented by, the individual(s) and the collective in relation to that history are essential for this writing, for it provides a way to revisit and negotiate the past that was once lived and shared by certain individuals or groups of people. The following chapter draws attention to the viewpoints of several South African and Taiwanese writers and literary critics on the subject of how history and memories in relation to the colonial or transitional periods should be articulated, represented, remembered or even remade in postcolonial literary texts.

Postcolonial writing as a genre is inevitably linked to the questioning of historical texts, memories and narratives, for postcolonial writings deal with devastating past experiences shared among groups of people. Yet, with regard to the devastating experiences, the first question that is often evoked and addressed is: Can these experiences be remembered factually or recalled realistically? And immediately there follows another question: Is a narration of the history or a historical text (or testimony) able to represent the past experience(s) in its authenticity? The answers to both questions, at least as regards literature, would often be negative. As a result, it is important to think of these problematic issues differently whether from a philosophical or literary perspective. In this chapter, the aim is to approach these problematic issues by addressing the following questions: (1) what does it mean exactly when one speaks of the writing of history or historical writing? And (2) how is such writing related to the production of postcolonial literature?

To address these questions while including all the pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial experiences would, however, be virtually impossible. It is thus more appropriate to define and work on a specific period of time, such that the critical analyses presented are more coherent and focused. Since this thesis concerns primarily the postcolonial social and political conditions of South Africa and Taiwan, we will thus focus on two time frames: (1) between 1948 to the late 1980s or early 1990s and (2) from the late 1980s and onward. Both
of these postcolonial countries experienced almost half a century of traumatic transition, which encompassed calamitous racial, sexual, cultural, class and linguistic violence inherited from the colonial legacies, notably in the form of the imposition of the “Order of Martial Law” and the implementation of apartheid. In the late eighties, two major political decisions significantly marked and changed the social and political spectrums of both countries: (1) the lifting of the “Order of Martial Law” in Taiwan and (2) the termination of the apartheid in South Africa. In 1987, nearly four decades after the beginning of the military dictatorship under the Koumintang party, the “Order of Martial Law” was finally lifted and the country entered a new era of post-martial law, in which Taiwanese people were entitled to freedom of speech and to democratic rule. Likewise, in South Africa, 1994 was the year that the political system of racial segregation finally came to an end—a change represented by the first democratic election in South Africa and the victory of Nelson Mandela. It was from this moment on that South Africa could finally embrace a democratic political system. Naturally, writers like Coetzee and Wu, who have lived through these epochs and socio-political changes, have, in their own different ways, produced works of literature related to their times.

There are two themes one can easily find in the literary production that relate to the writing of colonial and postcolonial history. One is the testimony of people’s suffering during the colonial and/or transitional period(s) and the other is the awareness of the lack of consensus regarding an irretraceable historical past. These two themes constantly return in the writing of different postcolonial authors as well as to more general discussions.

**Testimonial Memory and Narratives of Apartheid**

As mentioned above, South Africa’s social and political conditions are significantly marked and influenced by the implementation and the termination of the system of racial segregation. Here, the analysis will look at three renowned contemporary South African writers and critics’ theoretical or literary views—Njabulo Ndebele(1948-), André Brink (1935-2015) and Sarah Nuttall—on the issue of testimonial memory and narrative construction after apartheid, all of which are found in Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee’s co-edited publication, *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa*. As outlined by Nuttall and Coetzee in the introduction to this work, it is particularly interesting to see how contemporary thinkers and writers from South Africa regard the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and its role in accounting and portraying the nation’s
historical past in relation to apartheid and colonial legacies. The two critics consider that it is the event that “has most captured South Africa’s imagination [since] [t]he task of TRC has been to delve into South Africa’s grim past” (Nuttall and Coetzee 1). Most importantly, they claim:

The questions addressed by the chapters in this collection centre on how it happens that certain versions of the past get to be remembered, which memories are privileged, and what the loci are for the production of memory. (Nuttall and Coetzee 1)

Indeed, the critical point that gives rise to debate is how the past should be remembered and what kind of memories should be included in the project of remembering the past. Njabulo Ndebele’s response is as the first article and it initiates debate on the issue of testimonial memory and narratives of apartheid. Ndebele focuses on the production of the “truth”. His wish is that the testimonies and the narratives collected or constituted by the TRC reflect the factual documentation of the horrific and painful experiences that have survived in the memories of the black South Africans who suffered under the apartheid regime. The narratives and testimonies produced in this manner are seen by Ndebele as a counteracting force to the violence and lies of apartheid. For Ndebele, the logic behind the discriminating laws and policies applied during apartheid completely failed to justify itself either in terms of its philosophical foundations or even in terms of its internal coherence. This is why he claims that the achievement of the apartheid society was to produce a moral and intellectual desert. Up to this point, Ndebele’s reasoning does not seem far-fetched but rather well-justified, since the National Party did create both a moral and juridical grounding that entirely favoured and privileged the whites, hence excluding the non-whites and furthermore aggravating their disadvantage situations in front of the justice system. Nevertheless, Ndebele’s reasoning has its own weaknesses; in particular, in his insistence on the production of the “truth,” he arguably over-emphasises the moral crimes perpetrated against the black South Africans at the expense of a sufficient consideration of other minorities. In the meanwhile, he may also overlook the possibility that other narrations could be recounted by some Afrikaners who have suffered violent revenges in post-Apartheid era, as the example of

254 Ndebele names some examples such as: the country’s parliament should legislate laws to settle the quarrel over who (white people, black people, coloured or Asians) should be sitting on a particular park bench or it should define if a white man and a coloured woman are allowed to be seen kissing in public. Ibid., pp.21-22
255 Ibid., p.22.
Lucy’s rape (i.e. a white Afrikaner female descendent raped by three black South African men) that Coetzee has evoked in his fiction, Disgrace. As Ndebele claims, the Afrikaners have a psychological prejudice against the non-white members of the society since they have acquired privileged socio-economic status.\textsuperscript{256} For Ndebele, it thus becomes impossible for the Afrikaners to produce unbiased or objective “truth.”

In addition, Ndebele’s argument is characterised by his strong personal desire to transcend the voices of the individuals of a particular racial group (the black South African) and to attain a unidimensional representation of the collective historical past. This is very problematic: if a nation-state is sincere in its attempt to record and reconstruct its postcolonial historical past, it is dangerous to put forward a unidimensional representation based on the suffering of one particular group of people. At one point, Ndebele recounts his personal experience of feeling emotionally provoked by the condescending tone of a “wealthy white” South African businessman. The man has asked Ndebele and his companions a question about the team that the South African Bafana Bafana team had played against. Ndebele recounts how his resentment was stoked by the deliberate use of the “we” (all people from South Africa) in opposition to the “you” (the black South Africans) implied by this question. However, whether or not the self-conscious use of the “we” and “you” was implied in that context, it is evident that Ndebele’s perspective is confined to the conventional conception of “race” (instead of criticising that construction or conception), hence his following comments:

Not only did the man know nothing about the sporting preferences of his fellow South Africans, but the glory of the Cameroon team, the pride of Africa, had passed him by. The tragedy of this situation is that that man felt superior in his ignorance. And while he ritualistically sought information which was of no use to him (as the important thing for him was to demonstrate lack of racism in himself by seeking information from a black person, without realizing, in the process, that he was being his own usual inordinately condescending, racist self), we were being reduced by him to explaining ‘our people’. As I have observed, he was not asking for information; he was demonstrating his lack of prejudice. Little did he realize that he was actually saying to us. Here is what he was saying: ‘I do not know you to be good enough to beat a good European. This other team, whatever it is, can’t be that good. So you are beating a useless team. Therefore you can’t be that good either. But am I not wonderful that I am asking you?’ (“Memory” 25-26, emphasis mine)

The reduction of Ndebele and his companions’ individual subjectivities to a general political identity of a racial group (the black people)—“we were being reduce by him to explaining ‘our’ people”—may be genuinely true in accordance to Ndebele’s description of that

\textsuperscript{256} Ibid., p.32.
particular context. Yet Ndebele’s own wording—“his fellow South Africans”—also reduces the individual subjectivities present in that event to a generalised political identity, only that this time the political identity manifests itself in an ethno-centric term. Last but not least, the last few lines of Ndebele’s writing turns out to be an over-statement in which his intense personal feelings are projected onto a binary perception of the roles of perpetrators and victims (masters and slaves/superiors and inferiors) that corresponds with the prejudice image produced on the whites and the blacks. While voluntarily assuming the role of the “victim,” Ndebele sees that his individual insurgency, which is based on a personal and corporal association with the other “victims” by the colour of their skin, can thus be transcended by a collective political identification, which represents all “black” South Africans who have suffered from the violence and discrimination of apartheid.

André Brink’s text, which follows Ndebele’s, presents an entirely different view on the issue of testimonial memory and narratives of apartheid. Unlike Ndebele, Brink favours the imagining and the representation characteristic of fictional narratives, which he considers a practical way to bring about healing for people. As Brink points out, in post-apartheid South Africa, the maxim, “the personal was the political,” becomes all the more important in the process of establishing reconciliation for survivors of apartheid. Brink notes that the TRC may has some good intentions in its attempt to bring about reconciliation by establishing the “truth” about human rights violations during the apartheid period, yet he also notes that it has unjustly assumed a reductive interpretation of the meaning of “truth” and is thus incapable of achieving its objective of a genuine reconciliation among peoples in South Africa. “The ‘truth,’ in this context, is being equated with ‘facts,’” says Brink (30). And Brink believes that “facts” could, in many ways, be manipulated by the narrators or the commentators of the events. He thus proposes to look into the enterprise of fiction instead, for he believes that this enterprise may “reach[e] well beyond facts: inasmuch as it is concerned with the real (whatever may be regarded as ‘real’ in any given context) it presumes a process through which the real is not merely represented but imagined. What is aimed at is not a reproduction but an imagining” (Brink 30; emphasis mine). Brink’s view immediately challenges Ndebele’s idea of pursuing the production of an authentic “truth.”

Brink develops his argument by analysing Margret Atwood’s Alias Grace. In Atwood’s reworking of an infamous historical murder case, readers are very much aware of

257 Nuttall and Coetzee, *op.cit.*, p.3.

“entering a textualized and storified world” constructed by the protagonist, Grace Marks, since Grace constantly and explicitly manipulates her narrative in order to suit the requirements of her interlocutors. To an extent, Grace herself becomes entangled in a “patchwork” (Brink’s term) of the different versions of her own fabricated “truths” (Brink quoted from Atwood’s work): “I can remember what I said when arrested, and what Mr. MacKenzie the lawyer said I should say, and what I did not say even to him; and what I said at the trial, and what I said afterwards, which was different as well. And what McDermott said I said, and what others said I must have said […]” (Atwood 295). Brink finds that “[the] testimony of Grace Marks in Alias Grace becomes especially revealing if it is read against the background of the activation of public memory in the workings of the TRC in South Africa” (34-35). As suggested in Atwood’s fiction as well as in the approach of TRC, memory is the key that grants the existence and the historical place of testimonies. Nevertheless, memory, as one learns from Grace’s stories, is highly unreliable. Dr. Simon Jordan, one of the characters in Alias Grace, wisely points out: “we are also […] what we forget” (Atwood 406). And further he adds, “[t]he mind […] is like a house—thoughts which the owner no longer wishes to display, or those which arouse painful memories, are thrust out of sight, and consigned to attic or cellar, and in forgetting, as in the storage of broken furniture, there is surely an element of will at work” (Atwood 362). Brink thus goes on to explain:

Reinventing the past through the imagination involves primarily, as we have seen a peculiar machination of memory. And memory, which is always and even per definition selective, comprises not only acts of recovery but also processes of suppression. (36)

Yet, one should take care when accepting Brink’s argument. In particular, it is important to raise the critical question of whether Brink’s argument applies both in the context of an individual crime and in that of a collective human rights infringement. In his article, Brink’s main target is the issue of unreliable memory given as testimony in the public space; nevertheless, he failed to consider whether his argument applies to the reconstructions of the history (or the past) of a nation-state or to that of an individual, for the former involves a multitude of collective experiences and the later only deals with an individual’s experiences. The real question is whether memories held collectively may also undergo a process of suppression, thus making the recovered memories selective rather than objective. It is thus risky to assume that all memories are unquestionably unreliable and that one should never

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259 Ibid., p.34.
count on finding or recovering the “truth” or “facts” but need only access the “truth” or “facts” through the imagination.

Admittedly, Brink’s argument is in some respects perilous; however, his idea of valorising the literary imagination and fictionality in accounting historical events merits consideration, for it offers us an alternative way of viewing history. Seeing that memory alone cannot suffice to validate the testimonies of all South Africans, Brink is in favour of “an imagined rewriting of history or, more precisely, of the role of the imagination in the dialectic between past and present, individual and society” (37). Precisely because memory may, to a certain extent, “betray” or suppress the traumatic historical experiences and eventually let some real stories go unheard, Brink suggests that the historical inquiries the TRC is bound to make on behalf of all South African people ought to explore the silence of the past.²⁶⁰ And, where possible, one should also explore this silence of the past by constantly inventing voices for it.²⁶¹ Acknowledging William Ray’s claim that both historicisation and fictionalisation entertain their own delusions when it comes to interpreting or constructing reality, Brink still insists that the invention of narratives should be accorded greater importance when as regards its role in the expression of the silence and painful past of nations.²⁶² Brink gives two reasons to justify this claim:

First, in opposition to the usually more public narratives of history […], story explores a situation from the inside, or interalises what passes for facts in the public domain. In this respect it may share many of the characteristics of biography[…] […] But biography is still produced, as is history in Ray’s definition, by what is perceived as real, whereas story constitutes a reality not necessarily commensurate with what is consensually approved as real. Even more importantly, story involves an awareness and an implicit or explicit acknowledgement of its own processes of narrativation: every narrative text, I should venture to say, is per definition also a metanarrative. Story may encompass history […] In the second place, story does not presume to bring to light ‘the’ truth, but at most a version of it. And its value resides in allowing the reader to compare a variety of available versions in order either to choose among them or to construct a composite image from all of them—without the kind of teleology that used to inform the older traditions of historiography. (38-39; emphasis mine)

²⁶⁰ Ibid., pp.37-38.
²⁶¹ Ibid., pp.37-38.
²⁶² Ibid., p.37. Cf. William Ray: “The historicist delusion is that there can be an account of human reality that is not mediated by an act situated in human reality and vitiated by the biases of that situation… The converse delusion is that there could be a narrative having no origins in reality, but capable of modifying—or, as is generally the charge, corrupting—reality,” Ray, Story and History, p.8.
From Brink’s statements, one understands that fictional or imagined narrative is more important than historical (or “factual”) narrative, since story already encompasses history. Brink urges us to valorise the role of fiction, for it has often been downplayed or even sometimes ignored. It is more valuable ad more challenging to read a story, for story does not attempt to confine its readers in an illuminatet and definite “truth.” It reveals a version (or sometimes several versions) of “truth(s),” allowing the readers to freely make their own judgments of what they read.

In fact, Brink is at his most persuasive not when he tries to make his point regarding fictional writing or the imaginative elements of narrative by offering the example of Atwood’s Alias Grace, but when he concludes his argument with Derrida’s idea that “there is no hors-texte [outside-text].” It is true that, as Brink says, “[w]hat the reader is left with […] is the irreducible fact of textuality” when they read any narrative text.263 And it is also true that this applies most pertinently in reading narratives that try to create a “new” South African fiction.264 Brink considers that it is not something negative when the reader is left with only the irreducible fact of textuality, for textuality does not preclude historicity or morality. As Brink explains: “the fact that there is no outside-text, that is, the fact that ‘textuality’ cannot be offset in any way against ‘experience’ or anything else deemed non-textual (and, by that token, ‘real’) means that our moral choices, now reinterpreted within the horizons of textuality, remain as imperative as before” (37). Indeed, what matters in the end is in fact the reader’s ethical engagement and imperative choice made in “interacting” with the texts. As Brink suggests, if life is story-shaped, then we cannot and should not deny or avoid those choices presented by story, for they coincide with the choices of life.265 And if story offers several different versions of the history of the given events, the imperative of choice is even more urgent.266

It is clear, then, that Ndebele and Brink offer very different theoretical approaches to revisiting and constituting the historical past. The former highlights the production of truth and the later accentuates the importance of imagination. Post-apartheid autobiography, as pointed out by Sarah Nuttall, is considered as an important means to realising the constitution of the historical past. The following paragraphs thus introduce Nuttall’s analysis of different

263 Brink, op.cit., p.40.
264 Ibid., p.40.
265 Ibid., p.40.
266 Ibid., p.40.
works of post-apartheid autobiography, a genre which includes memoir and confession and which has a particularly close tie to the revisiting and the recovering of past events. (Autobiography often tries to reconstruct past events and then channel them into a singular narrative told from the standpoint of the present.) Nuttall’s choice of texts can also help us to examine the validity of Ndebele and Brink’s theoretical approaches. These texts include Nelson Mandela’s *Long Walk to Freedom* (1994), Mamphela Ramphele’s *A Life* (1995), and Mark Behr’s *The Smell of Apples* (1995).

At the outset of her analysis, Nuttall asserts: “[m]emory is always as much about the present as it is about the past, and the texts I look at are about telling stories of the past but also about working out what constitutes a collective, resistance, freedom, place, and survival in the present” (“Telling” 76). Autobiography, testimony, memoir and confession are types of writing which not only try to work out how to tell tales of the past, but also to place the historical past in the present context, hence it is as important for them to speak of the present as it is for them to address the past. In a similar way to Brink’s understanding of the relationship between historical memories and narratives, Nuttall claims that “memories, like stories, can never be ‘free’”, and she further adds, “if collective memory is the outcome of agency, in South Africa it may often seem that we need to approach the construction of memory from the other way round” (“Telling” 88). There are two ways to read Nuttall’s statements: (1) in a literal sense, what Nuttall means is that, in South Africa, collective memory has never been the outcome of agency, but a result of the constructed memory told in story form(s) by certain individuals; (2) and implicitly, what Nuttall may also mean is that South African collective memory can be told, and probably should be told, in stories, for “the account may have no more authority than an account given by a biographer or a stranger” (“Telling” 87).

Examining Mandela and Ramphele’s autobiographies, Nuttall finds that both texts reveal a strong desire to acquire a “self that is collectively defined” rather than affirming the “individual self,” despite the fact that the genre of autobiography is generally considered to be about a particular individual’s life and memory. To a certain extent, there may even be an effacement of the individual self in the text. In Mandela’s case, this phenomenon occurs

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267 Idea cited from J.M. Coetzee, “Confession and Double Thoughts: Tolstoy, Rousseau, Dostoevsky,” *Doubling the Point*, p.271.


269 Ibid., p.81.
because he has the distinctive status of a heroic figure of the nation destined to have a complex relationship between the public and private spheres.\textsuperscript{270} The memory recounted in Mandela’s autobiography thus has a strong tendency to be structured around political themes and his “public self”; on the contrary, his personal or individual self tends to be ignored or to be taken as “unpolitical” in the autobiography and thus of little interest or relevance.\textsuperscript{271} Moreover, in Mandela’s autobiography, one also finds an imperative to assert black subjectivity in a way that is meant to influence or instruct the readers, and this attempt to identify with and speak for a trans-personal subjectivity again reduces his individual self to a secondary status.\textsuperscript{272} Nuttall thus claims that Mandela’s autobiography, in which he recounts his memories, is no different from other publications that are specifically designed to portray the “heroic figure” in the history of a country.\textsuperscript{273} She further suggests that if we take away this political/public frame, we would encounter a completely different person. Rather than a successful freedom fighter or a great leader of the struggle against apartheid, one may see a lonely prisoner, a harsh and severe father, or a man called a “dirty kaffir” by other black prisoners.\textsuperscript{274} In addition, the fact that this collective self is at the centre of Mandela’s autobiography means that the veracity of this memoir may be called into question. At one point in his autobiography, Mandela writes that “[w]e created an assembly line to process the manuscript” (463). That said, the “memory” included in his autobiography is not exclusively his, but is edited, processed, and shared among others. This, ultimately, is not only an invention of a collective self, but also an invention of the national self.

Mandela’s autobiography may be contrasted with that of Ramphele, which, according to Nuttall, “expresses the need for the individual self to cleave away from a self that is more collectively defined” (Nuttall, “Telling” 81). In Ramphele’s autobiography, corporal meaning becomes the centre of her discourse. Being a black South African woman, Ramphele feels the need to talk about her relationship to her body publicly, as she believes that that is \textit{the} necessary process required to heal.\textsuperscript{275} Nevertheless, when she speaks of the healing process, she addresses it as a collective political struggle. This is why Nuttall points out that “an inverse individualism comes to the fore” and that the “self” of Ramphele has ultimately been

\textsuperscript{270} \textit{Ibid.}, p.76.
\textsuperscript{271} \textit{Ibid.}, p.77.
\textsuperscript{272} \textit{Ibid.}, p.77.
\textsuperscript{273} \textit{Ibid.}, p.78.
\textsuperscript{274} \textit{Ibid.}, p.78. In South Africa, the colloquial used term, “kaffir,” is a derogative term to insult a black African.
\textsuperscript{275} Nuttall, \textit{op.cit.}, p.82.
transgressed into collectivity. Instead of affirming that individual private self, Ramphele’s private self is effaced. One thus notice very quickly that whether the memoir is told from the perspective of a “public self” or from the view of a “private self,” the collective memory in South Africa is in fact the outcome of the constructed memory told in story form(s) by certain individuals.

Confession can also be counted as a form of autobiography. The confession made by Mark Behr, who worked as a spy for the South African security police until 1991, raises the most controversial debate on the credibility and veracity of post-apartheid testimony. Behr’s confession in *The Smell of Apples* is meant to assume his historical guilt and sins, but at the same time, he admits to speaking with a tainted voice—a voice of betrayal, a voice that cannot be trusted. As he states, “I speak with and from within and through what is already a fault line” (Behr, “Living” 116). For Behr, this voice, which is heard “in words more broken and more suspect than others” exposes “the limited relationship between reality, language and memory” (Nuttal, “Telling” 86). Behr’s logic seems to suggest that language—particular the words that come from him—can never actually bring forth a reality to the readers or correctly represent the memory. Nevertheless, despite the fact that language does not necessarily produce reality, it does not mean that it is impossible for language to manifest “truth”, at least to a certain degree. Following J.M. Coetzee’s criticism, Nuttall suggest that Behr’s presentation of a memory bound to language constitutes a disavowal of the possibility of truth—especially in a context that is intended as an apology. Hence one cannot deny there is a sinister dimension to Behr’s confession. Citing Coetzee, Nuttall writes:

Where the confessor takes the approach of confessing with an “open mind,” acknowledging from the beginning that what he avows as the truth may not be the truth, “there is something literally shameless in this posture.”

Nuttall goes further, questioning the very intention behind Behr’s confession. For Nuttall, confessions may well be constructed rather than discovered; moreover, viewed from a psychological perspective, the confessor that speaks of their crime may attain their desire of achieving release or escape from their burden of guilt. Nuttall concludes that in no matter

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276 Ibid., p.82.
277 Ibid., p.86.
278 Ibid., p.87.
what form the autobiographical recounting of history may take (memoir, confession, or testimony), the memory on which the narrative draws can never be totally “free.”

To conclude, let us briefly summarise the viewpoints of these three theorists and literary critics. Ndebele’s approach appears to have the disadvantage of according undue weight to the interest of specific group when it comes to historical recounts of events in apartheid South Africa. If one accepts Ndebele’s approach, the whole construction of historical narratives might eventually end up privileging only the black South Africans’ shared past, excluding other possible narratives told by or about different South African populations. Moreover, constructing narratives with the primary objective of discovering the “authentic truth,” which Ndebele maintains is necessary, is itself highly questionable. It is, of course, possible sometimes to attain consensus about certain “factual” events that took place in the past, yet it is very unlikely to determine what is an “authentic truth” in history. Most historical “truths” are representations of a negotiated memory or an agreement made with respect to the shared past experiences of a specific group or groups. By contrast, from Brink’s theoretical argument and Nuttall’s textual analyses, one realises that the best way to respond to the construction of historical narratives and to the long healing process necessitated by traumatic historical experiences is perhaps not what Ndebele considers necessary—i.e., the impossible task of finding an “authentic truth” opening the possibility of reconciliation with the violent history of the past—but rather leaving narratives open for the exercise of creation and imagination. Though under certain circumstances, the constructed narrative of the past may evokes different problems (such as incompatibility between the memories of the collectivity and the individual, or the involvement of a public self and a private self, etc.), the openness required to treat every narrative as “text” will allow more voices to be heard. And by that token, readers are compelled to assume an ethical engagement when they “read” these historical “narratives.”

Historical Representations and Narratives of the Martial Law Era

Adopting a similar structure to the preceding section, in what follows I present some Taiwanese literary critics’ analyses—notably those of Chen Fang-ming 陳芳明 and Peng Hsiao-yen 彭小妍—of historical representation, memories and narratives, mainly in relation

281 Nuttall, op.cit., p.88.
to the post-martial law era in Taiwan. As suggested at the beginning of chapter 2.2., the lifting of the “Order of Martial Law” in Taiwan plays a similar role in that country’s history to the termination of apartheid in South Africa, for the two political decisions have completely changed the social and political environments in both postcolonial countries. In South Africa, the TRC thereafter assumed a political function and task that directly affects all recollections of the memories and historical past of the country. In Taiwan, though there was no specific institution set up in order to carry out this political function, it is widely agreed amongst critics and writers that the lifting of the martial law was a crucial moment, from which point onwards authors in Taiwan began to thrive, for their creativity was no longer subject to political restraints. After 1987, Taiwanese authors entered an epoch of literary production that was more accommodating of political differences. As one of the leading Chinese/Taiwanese literary critics, Wang Der-wei 王德威, has remarked, in the mid-twentieth century there was political tension built up by the wounds and the traumatic memories of the civil wars in China, which divided the Republicans and the Communists. Wang regards that theses wounds and war memories have eventually turned into “scar narratives” in the contemporary Chinese literatures (note that Wang is referring here to all literatures written in Chinese language, including literatures produced in Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong). Nevertheless, restrained by the highly suppressive censorship, these “scars” of war and political tension could not have been explicitly articulated. Wang points out in his analysis that it is only after the eighties that the scars, the tensions and the political differences can finally be discussed freely and treated as subjects in literature by a different generation of writers.

Chen Fang-ming, in his essay, “Houjieyan shiqi de houzhimin wenxue 後戒嚴時期的後殖民文學,” directly addresses issues related to Taiwanese literature production in the post-martial law era. According to Chen, Taiwanese literature produced in this period emphasises

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282 “Scar narratives”: Wang argues, writers who had experienced the split between the Republican China and Communist China during the fifties and undergone civil wars in Mainland China, invented a “typology of scars” in their writings. Both writers as well as their readers see the “scars” as a metaphor of the violence and the pains they had endured. The “scars” represent a corporal evidence of the physical and psychological trauma marked unnaturally by the enemy others. One would normally want to conceal the scar(s), yet paradoxically, one would also want to reveal it (them) in order to revisit the scene(s) of that horrifying past. At the moment where the traumatic memories are interpolated and recalled, a “scar narrative” is thus created. Wang’s idea of the “typology of scars” came from his reading of Auerbach’s discussion of Odysseus’s scar. Wang Der-wei 王德威., Yijsjsiu: shanghen shuxie yu guojia wenxue 一九四九：傷痕書寫與國家文學 [1949: Scar Writing and National Literature], p.8. Cf. Auerbach, “Odysseus’s Scar,” Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature, pp.3-24.

an internal process of decolonisation, particularly a decolonisation of the political authority of the KMT. Literature produced in this period is therefore mostly concerned with issues related to the reconstruction of historical memories and cultural subjectivities.\textsuperscript{284} Chen further notes that in the literary field it is through narratives that new cultural or ethnic identities are constructed and that different historical memories are finally told.\textsuperscript{285} In Chen’s view, it is through these narratives that the decolonising process can possibly be achieved. Thereafter, Chen argues that, in this process of decolonisation and of narrative construction, an approach of “quzhongxin 去中心 [de-centring]” is crucially needed.\textsuperscript{286} In other words, Chen is convinced that the literature produced after the lifting of the martial laws should by all means stages narratives that adopt such approach. He explains, “de-centring” in the context of postcolonial literature, means the reconstruction of a historical past or the recovery of historical memories of marginal or marginalized people who experienced or survived the colonial period.\textsuperscript{287} Chen further argues that, in the post-martial law era, the narratives constructed in this manner try to remove or avoid political ideology produced by the KMT’s official nationalism, notably its attempt to fashion a Chinese origin for all the different populations in Taiwan.\textsuperscript{288} According to Chen, the political ideology of fashioning Chinese ethnic or cultural origin was one of the major concerns in the literary texts of the precedent era, before the martial laws were lifted. To counter this political ideology, narratives that emphasise the “de-centring” should try to offer a genealogical history of specifically “Taiwanese” families.\textsuperscript{289} One example cited by Chen is Tong Fang-pai’s 東方白 Langtaosha 浪淘沙 [A Cinematic Journey]. Published in 1990, Langtaosha tells the stories of three families in relation to their changing political identities brought about by shifts of power in Taiwan.\textsuperscript{290} Chen considers Tong Fang-pai’s plot design successfully exhibits the periphery or marginal perspective of the historical past, and which would not have been tolerated under the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{285} \textit{Ibid.}, p.111.
  \item \textsuperscript{286} \textit{Ibid.}, p.113
  \item \textsuperscript{287} \textit{Ibid.}, p.113.
  \item \textsuperscript{288} \textit{Ibid.}, p.113.
  \item \textsuperscript{289} \textit{Ibid.}, p.113.
\end{itemize}
KMT military regime, in contrast to the “central” point of view of the State. When following Chen’s argument, the reasoning appears to be quite logical; nevertheless, if one examines it more closely, one immediately realises this emphasis on the genealogical history of the family reveals a weakness in Chen’s argument, for this emphasis can hardly be qualified as an approach of “de-centring.” Instead of actually moving away from the “centre,” Chen’s argument really is to encourage the seeking of a new “centre” to replace the former one. The emphasis of the genealogy of family history, in this context, thus becomes highly problematic. In fact, Chen could at best describe the forming of the genealogy of the family history as an attempt to move away from the State ideology constructed by the KMT. One should acknowledge that there is no “de-centring” in such a decolonising process, but simply a construction of a new “centre.”

In Chen’s discussion of the narratives constructed to recount different historical memories, another interesting point he raises is tied to the issue of Taiwan’s political identities. Chen often focusses on questions related to nationalism, i.e., how different discourses of nationalism that emerged in Taiwan would affect the production of Taiwanese literature and would form specific forms of political identity, and, reciprocally, how the production of Taiwanese literature would affect the construction of these different discourses about nationalism and the invention of political identities. For Chen, there is no such thing as the primary existence of a Taiwanese political identity. Chen sees that this identity only arises when it is placed in opposition to an imagined Chinese political identity (a constructed Chinese origin). He states,

In last two decades, the study of Taiwanese literature begins to rise in Mainland China. This rising can be described as a process of transition from “discovering Taiwan” to “inventing Taiwan.”

近二十年來，台灣文學研究在中國的崛起，可以說是一段從「發現台灣」到「發明台灣」。(Chen, Zhimindi 190)

From a Foucauldian perspective, Chen is right about the invention of Taiwan as both a subject of literary study and also as a political identity. Nevertheless, although Chen argues that a

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291 In *The Order of Things*, Foucault challenges the way we perceive the subject and its relation to other things, while at the same time urging us to rethink the question of knowledge (i.e. epistemology). Foucault argues that a Subject’s existence is often presupposed, as is the existence of the objects with which it is contrasted. Moreover, if one assumes that the Subject exists, it is natural to assume it may be contemplated, studied or governed. Nevertheless, Foucault argues that Subject(s) could occur only after the arrangement of the subjects (i.e. the disciplines) takes place. The arrangement of subjects qua disciplines is the order that gives rise to the Subject. Foucault, “Preface,” *The Order of Things*, pp.xvi-xxvi.

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Taiwanese political identity is merely an invention, he has never questioned the existence of a Taiwanese “subjectivity.” Or, put another way, Chen has never tried to problematise the construct of a Taiwanese subjectivity through historicisation. Chen believes that after the lifting of the martial laws, certain unaddressed historical truths in the past are unveiled, such that an “authentic” Taiwanese subjectivity may finally be displayed.292

Compared to Chen Fang-ming, Peng Hsiao-yen has a milder political view of the Taiwanese literary writings produced after the “Order of the Martial Laws” was lifted. Nonetheless, Peng does agree with Wang and Chen that after the lifting, fictional writings and novels in particular (the main genre she analyses) began to reflect writers’ true opinions or interpretations of past historical events.293 Unlike Chen’s emphasis on the “de-centring” approach, Peng suggests that the novels published in the post-martial law era often attempt to construct a crossing—or to use her own coined term, “intertextuality”—between the fictional and the historical.294 She considers that the Taiwanese post-martial law fictions constantly interweave or overlap fictional and factual elements to create plotlines in the hope to both challenge and open up the boundary between fictional and historical writings. But while recognising the viability of the approach, Peng remains concerned for the effect this crossing between the fictional and the historical may produce on the readers. Situated between invented stories and the realistic history, Peng believes that the narratives constructed in the post-martial law novels, such as Li Ang’s 李昂 Miyuan 迷園 (1991), can serve to question the “objectivity” of the documented historical events. Peng also thinks, however, that readers’ knowledge of history is easily influenced and can be shaped by a constructed narrative in the fictional story. Peng thus notes that this approach may risk confusing reader’s apprehension of an “authentic” or “factual” history. As she explains:

After the lifting of the post-martial law, there are more and more novels revealing writers’ personal attention to and interpretation of history. In addition, these novels also attempt to embody thoughts and theories of a different kind of Taiwanese history, which is independent from the KMT’s construction of a national history. These literary works intentionally create an intertextuality between novels or fictional texts and historical accounts. […] This can be a challenging experience for the readers. As is generally

294 Ibid., p.183.
agreed, the essential criterion of a narrative in a novel is its fictionality; readers are thus expected to adopt “a willing suspension of disbelief” without while reading; however, since the literary texts directly address or allude to historical events, it is very likely that the texts will lead the readers to believe the “truthfulness” of the historical events described in the story.

In *Miyuan*, as Peng summarises, the narrative of Zhu Ying-hong 朱影紅, the protagonist, mingles and overlaps her personal memory of her father, her father’s past, and her experiences with her lover, Lin Xi-geng 林西庚, all in a political context that is related to the history of Taiwan. The construction of narrative in *Miyuan* is similar to that of *Alias Grace*: readers have to rely only on the protagonist’s (Grace Marks or Zhu Ying-hong’s) single-dimensional views of the past and on their memories in order to reconstitute the history of the events. But, what distinguishes Zhu’s narrative from Grace Marks’ is that Marks’ recounting of the past only matters on a personal level, whereas Zhu’s narrative has importance to the collective, for it may potentially help constitute a collective political identity. According to Peng, it is through Zhu’s recounting of her past, which mingles with her current experiences, that a political identity, a disidentification with the nation-state and an alternative knowledge of the history of Taiwan begin to take shape. For instance, the novel juxtaposes Zhu’s father lecturing on the colonial political history to Zhu in a Mercedes-Benz and Ling Xi-gen’s instructing Zhu to perform sex with him to serve his voyeuristic pleasure at the back seats of his Rolls-Royce. According to Peng, in both circumstances, Zhu had submitted herself to

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295 “A willing suspension of disbelief”: is a term coined and used by the early nineteenth-century English poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Coleridge suggests that if a writer could infuse a “human interest and a semblance of truth” into a fantastic tale, the reader would suspend judgment concerning the implausibility or the “truth” of the narrative. It is why Peng borrows Coleridge’s idea and claims that there might be a risk for creating intertextual literary texts, for readers would naturally give in to the narrative and willingly suspend (or even dismiss) their disbeliefs or judgments of the truthfulness of the narrative. Coleridge, “Chapter XIV,” *Biographia Literaria*. Project Gutenberg, 23 Jan. 2013, Web, 21 Mar. 2016, website accessed: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/6081/6081-h/6081-h.htm#.


298 N.B. Ling takes pleasure for the fact that his sexual intercourse with Zhu may be seen in the rear mirror by the driver of Rolls-Royce. Li Ang 李昂, *Miyuan 迷園* [Lost Garden], pp.217-219, 254-256.
the two dominant males and assumed a subordinated role.\(^{299}\) However, learning from this subordinated role that is assigned to her, she eventually rises up to power. In the end, Zhu knows how to manipulate other people to serve her will and how to assert her political influence. For example, Zhu’s father holds the strong belief that it should be the Taiwanese people who rule the politics in Taiwan, instead of submitting themselves to the political authority of the Kuomintang party. Nevertheless, he failed to take any action to realise his belief in his lifetime. In fact, it is Zhu Ying-hong who is capable of fulfilling that belief. As described in the text, Zhu’s father had to put Hanyuan 菡園—the family inherited garden land where Zhu grew up—for sale due to his heavy debts. After her father’s death, Zhu eventually persuades her lover, the wealthy properties trader Lin Xi-gen to marry her and purchase Hanyuan as her wedding gift. After acquiring Hanyuan, Zhu then sets up a foundation and donates the garden to the Taiwanese people. For Peng, not only has Zhu Ying-hong completely reversed her subordinate female position in her personal relationship with Lin, but also, as far as politics is concerned, affirmed a political identity that is evoked from the recounting of her past.\(^{300}\)

If the intertextuality exhibited in Miyuan—Zhu’s recounting of her personal past intermingled with her experiences of political history—can successfully evoke and assert a political identification, Peng henceforth feels the need to challenge this approach. Peng thinks it is possible that readers’ apprehension of an “authentic” or “factual” history is jeopardised due to this intertextual approach used in Li Ang’s text. Peng criticises Li Ang for according undue importance to “multiracial identity theory”, which arose in a Taiwanese nationalist context during the forties and the fifties, when constructing the fictional background of Miyuan.\(^{301}\) Peng claims the description of Zhu Ying-hong and her mother’s physical features fits the logic of the multiracial identity theory; and she further adds that the discourse of multiracial identity had emerged in Taiwan during the fifties because there was a strong political desire to construct a discourse that favours the Taiwanese independence and distinguishes Taiwan from the mainland Chinese.\(^{302}\)

\(^{299}\) Peng H.Y., *op.cit.*, p.188.

\(^{300}\) *Ibid.*, p.188.


Madame Chen [Zhu’s mother] is a descendant of the Hokkien immigrants mixed with the natives and the Dutch people. She is incredibly beautiful, tall and slim, with a pair of big round eyes. Her eyes are similar to the ones of the natives or of the whites, with the double-fold eyelids. They are not the slanting kind that the yellow-skin Asians have.

陳氏，是一位有山地人、荷蘭人血統的福建移民後代。長身大眼極為美麗。不是黃種人有的狹長單眼，而是山地人或白種人有的深陷、雙眼皮的大眼睛。 (Peng 189; Li Ang 111)

Peng considers that the multiracial identity theory is too contestable to be applied in the literary text, since it may mislead readers to an incorrect judgement of the history. In the meanwhile, Peng also questions the credibility of this theory used in anthropological or ethnographical studies. In Peng’s critical analysis, she openly accuses Li Ang’s obsession of inscribing the multiracial identity theory in Miyuan, suggesting that this inscription may lead readers to a false understanding of “real” Taiwanese history.

Undeniably, one may be able to tell an author’s political orientation via author’s employment of certain theory in his/her creative writings. However, arguing from a different perspective, even if Peng’s claim about multiracial identity theory could be justified (i.e., that this theory has dubious scientific credibility), her reasoning displays Peng’s own insistence that an “authentic” (or a single-dimensional of) Taiwanese history can and should be told. For Peng, the telling of Taiwanese history must not be dominated by the author’s personal views and political position. Nonetheless, where Peng goes awry is in her misreading of Paul Ricœur’s views on narrative, which she adopts to criticise Li Ang’s work. Peng suggests that Ricœur, in Temps et récit, has distinguished narrative into the two categories: the fictional and the historical. According to Peng’s reading, the way that Ricœur makes the distinction between the two is by introducing the principle of “explaining by recounting” [expliquer en racontant]. Peng then argues that Ricœur thinks the fictional follows this principle, whereas the later problematises ideas and concepts in order to engage readers’ critical reflexion. She concludes that fictional narrative should be mainly about plot construction and story-telling. In so doing, the narrative may raise the readers’ awareness and sensitivity to different

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303 Hokkien immigrant. Hokkien people (福建人), also know as the Hoklo people (河洛人) are one of the Han Chinese populations whose traditional ancestral homes are in southern Fujian of South China. Historically, in Taiwan, about 70% of the Taiwanese people descend from the Hokkien immigrants. The Hokkien people had arrived to the island prior to the Japanese imperial rule in 1895.


305 Ibid., p.192.

306 Ibid., p.192.

307 Ibid., p.184.
problematic questions presented in the text, however it should not overly manifest the author’s ideas and values. In fact, in Temps et récit, Ricœur has mentioned the principle of “explaining by recounting [expliquer en racontant]” to elaborate his philosophical idea about narrative. But, Ricœur has, at no point, subdivided narrative into fictional and historical types, and neither does he suggest that this principle only applies to the fictional narrative. This is why Peng’s borrowing of Ricœur’s idea to her argument can be her own misreading of Ricœur’s text. As for historical narrative, Peng claims that it should propose a new theory or interpretation of history and that its chief purpose should be to prove the validity of the proposed theory; hence, objectivity is required in the historical narrative. Returning to Peng’s criticism of Miyuan once more, precisely because Peng considers that the multiracial identity theory lacks scientific credibility, she thus disapproves Li Ang’s adoption of this theory in the context of her intertextual fiction. Moreover, she implicitly suggests that Li Ang’s intertextuality may bring confusion to the readers’ knowledge of the “real” Taiwanese history while reading Miyuan. To an extent, despite the fact that Peng does recognise the viability of the intertextual approach—which can challenge the “objectivity” of history—Peng’s criticism of Li Ang eventually reveals her distrust and insecure feelings towards the deconstruction of a grand-narrative (i.e. a narrative that has been consistently produced under the colonial military ruling of the Kuomintang). Peng is aware that the greatest asset of the post-martial law fiction is its embodiment of the intertextual approach, which problematises the “objectivity” of history in the literary field, yet, at the same time, Peng is not ready to accept that a history constructed on the basis of a grand-narrative can or should be deconstructed completely.

In fact, unlike what has been argued in Peng’s article, post-martial law fiction can be more encompassing and more tolerating to different historical views. Peng’s argument urges us not to “easily” take the history contextualised (or intertextualised) in the fictional narrative as historical truth, and that we should examine carefully the validity and the authenticity of the history recounted. Nevertheless, if we see that post-martial law fiction as a new genre that emerge for the writers to freely express their points of view, then the intertextualisation of the history should have never been an issue. I consider that the liberation of the fictional narrative in the post martial era should have gone even further to question the validity of “writing” itself (which is precisely why the postmodern movement occurs in the nineties in Taiwan),

308 Cf. Ricœur, Temps et récit [Tome I], p.247.
rather than only problematizing the validity of the historical narrative. It is only through the process of writing and re-writing different perspectives of history that both the possibility and the impossibility of historical narrative can be shown to the readers. And it is from this possibility and impossibility, as Brink has convincingly argued, that an ethical imperative befalls the reader. In a way, whether Li Ang’s usage of “multiracial identity theory” is scientifically or theoretically viable or not, it should be accepted as a literary version of historical representation.

In fact, in negotiating the past via historical accounts represented in the post-marital law literary writings, both Chen and Peng have their blind spots. Chen is convinced of the existence of an “authentic” Taiwanese subjectivity, which can be evoked through this genre of literature. And he believes that this Taiwanese subjectivity can contest the invented political identity of the KMT. Peng though agrees that the “official” history constructed during the KMT military rule can and should be challenged by post-martial law fiction, she remains critical of the strong presence of the writers’ personal views, for she thinks it may have a distorting influence on the perception of the readers. To conclude, both critics believe there exists a legitimate history which can be represented or recounted either in a fictional narrative form or in documentary form. What is ultimately lacking in both cases, however, is consideration of the philosophical question of whether a “true” history really exists or not.
2.2.2. In Negotiation with the Past

With regard to the questions—“Can the past be remembered or recalled realistically? And, is historical writing (or historical narrative) able truly to represent past experiences?”—the above discussion showed how certain scholars, such as Ndebele and Peng, believe that the main objective of fictional, yet historical writing is to remember the past “factually.” To an extent, they also believe that it is writer’s responsibility to reconstruct a historical narrative which presents an “authentic” representation of the past events. Aligned more with André Brink’s view, my thesis argues that historical narrative embodied in fictional writing should go beyond “facts,” since memory never comes from facts but from personal experiences of the past—be they psychological or corporal—that occurring in certain socio-political condition(s). Moreover, historical writing that invokes memory should be more open to different kinds of narrative construction and should be more accommodating. As Wu Ming-yi remarks elsewhere about story-writing in relation to memories:

Stories are not necessarily formed by memories. Memories are similar to delicate and fragile objects or something that embodies somebody’s sentimental attachments, yet stories are not. Stories are clay; they are born out of where memories do not exist. […] Moreover, a story determines how it should be told, by the person who tells it. As for memories, it is important how memories are preserved, but they are not destined to be articulated. Only when the lost memory is put together and turned into a story that it is worth for telling.

故事並不全然是記憶，記憶比較像是易碎品或某種該被依戀的東西，但故事不是。故事是黏土，是從記憶不在的地方長出來的⋯⋯，而且故事會決定說故事的人該怎麼說它們。記憶只要注意貯存的形式就行了，它們不需要被說出來。只有記憶聯合了失憶的部分，變身為故事才值得一說。(Tianqiao shang 218)

Bearing these ideas of Wu in mind, the following analysis will analyse Coetzee’s *Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life* (1997) and Wu’s *Danche shiqieji* 單車失竊記 [The Stolen Bicycle] (2015). It will focus on how the two writers recall their past during the transitional colonial periods and further contextualise their memories and use them in their fictions.
Childhood Memories and the Transitional Colonial Periods

With regard to the construction of historical narratives in fiction, both Coetzee and Wu choose to contextualise their childhood memories in specific socio-political contexts. In Boyhood, Coetzee narrates his childhood spent at Worcester, a town in the Western Cape, which was famous for hunting and herding in the colonial periods. Wu, in Danche, begins his novel with the narration of an eight-year-old boy, describing all the lost (or stolen) bicycles of his family. In a sense, one can say that both authors choose to present narratives through the eyes of a child of eight to ten years old. Coetzee applies a third-person voice to reconstruct the autobiography of his boyhood, whereas Wu uses the first-person perspective of a character based largely on himself. Both novels allude strongly to some autobiographical elements and events. This chapter looks at why both authors choose to narrate the story from the perspective of a child. There are potentially two reasons to explain this strategy. First of all, from the age of eight or ten and over, both writers experience, each on their own terms, significant structural changes in society resulting from the political measures adopted in the colonial transitional period. When Coetzee was aged eight to ten was the moment when ethnic

310 Though later on, the entire story is mostly recounted from the adult’s perspective of the protagonist, one should note that the story begins with the narration of the protagonist when he was a boy.

311 In Wu Ming-yi’s Danche shiqieji, it is clear that the protagonist, Mr. Chen [程先生], is a fictional character created by Wu. Nevertheless, Wu has explained how he decided to write a novel about a lost bicycle: his email-exchanges with a reader who had commented on another of his published novels, Shuimian de hangxian 睡眠的航線 [Routes in a Dream] (2007), and who gave him the idea of writing this book about bikes. Moreover, Wu has even adopted a postmodern writing style to tell this anecdote in order to convince his readers of the factuality of this anecdote. Wu (as an author) binds himself with the voice of the protagonist (the “I” in the story) and writes, “I have written a novel called Shuimian de hangxian. [...] After a while, I received a letter from an unknown reader, asking me a question that I had never asked myself: ‘[...] The father of Sanlang rode the bike to the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall and then left; he had never returned to the [Zhong-hua] shopping centre and he had never returned home. He simply disappeared. [...] What about the bike? For me, the bike is a symbol in the novel [...] But where did the bike go?’ [...] In the process of novel writing, I have learned that there is bound to be a crossing over between the invented fictional elements and the non-fictional life stories. [...] The bike that I have inserted in my fictional world is in fact [an unattainable truth], which is like a needle that pains my heart. It is a well-covered trap in my real life, so deep, and remaining unveiled. 我寫了一本叫做《睡眠的航線》的小說,一過了一陣子，我的信箱出現了一封陌生讀者的信，他問了我一個我從來不曾想過的問題：『主角的父親三郎將腳踏車騎到中山堂後離開，從此再也沒有回到營商場，也沒有回到家庭，他就如此消失不見了。那台腳踏車呢？對我來說，那腳踏車應該是小說裡的一個象徵─可是，後來腳踏車到哪裡去了呢？』在我寫作小說的過程中，早就理解到虛構之事和非虛構的人生必然彼此交雜─那腳踏車，確實是我真實生活裡插在心頭上的一根針，是我生活裡一個掩蓋良好，卻像深深的陷阱一樣的存在。” Wu Ming-yi 吳明益, Danche shiqieji 單車失竊記 [The Stolen Bicycle], pp.46-48, 66.
separatism took place. From 1910 to 1961, South Africa was ruled as a dominion of the British Empire in the name of the Union of South Africa. Later, with the rise of Afrikaner nationalism, The National Party (NP), which promoted Afrikaner language and culture and favoured an “ethnic separation,” implemented apartheid in 1948. Coetzee, who was born in 1940, experienced this radical social change at the age of ten. There is therefore clear political significance in Coetzee’s choice to recount his childhood at that age. Likewise, Wu, born in 1971, also experienced significant social changes in his childhood tied to the political measures taken in the transitional colonial period of Taiwan. Between 1979 and 1984, political confrontations had escalated under KMT’s martial law ruling. Together with the official termination of diplomatic relations with the United States, social instability accelerated and, in the late seventies and early eighties, a series of important political incidents took place, including *Meilidao shijian 美麗島事件* [The Formosa Incident] (1979), *Linzhai xuean 林宅血案* [The Lin Family Murders] (1980), and *Jiangnan an 江南案* [Jiangnan Murder Case] (1984). This political turmoil eventually led the KMT government to remove the martial law in 1987. Wu Ming-yi, from his childhood to his adolescence, lived and witnessed the decade during which the most dramatic recent political and social changes within Taiwanese society took place. Another reason that would seem to explain both authors’ choice of telling stories through the eyes of a child is that it gives rise to a more corporal experience of the political experiences and historical moments. In other words, both authors’ experiences of the past—which later amounts to their memories and eventually becomes the narratives of their stories—portray their specific politicized bodies. It is common to see children as representing an early stage of spiritual innocence, and children are also typically carefree with respect to political or social influences. However, the two authors did not necessarily have the opportunity to live in such a state in their childhood. As Coetzee unreservedly states:

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312 One can deduce Coetzee’s setting of his age is between eight or ten in *Boyhood*, since Coetzee has mentioned the age of his younger brother, David Coetzee, who was seven at that time. In real life, David Coetzee was three years younger than J.M. Coetzee. Coetzee, *Boyhood*, p.78.

313 *Linzhai xuean 林宅血案* [The Lin Family Murders] (1980), and *Jiangnan an 江南案* [Jiangnan Murder Case] (1984) both are murder cases that were crucially related to Kuomintang’s authoritarian rules. *Linzhai xuean* was about the murder of the keens of Lin Yi-shung 林義雄, a political activist who defended democratic rules under KMT’s military regime. Lin’s two daughters and his mother were killed at home on the 28th of Februrary, 1980. The murder case remains unresolved till today and many have suspected that the murder was planned and carried out by Kuomintang. *Jiangnan an* was about the assassination of Liu Jiangnan, a Taiwanese-American writer who was killed in 1984 because of his publication promotes criticisms against the authoritarian KMT government.
Childhood, says the *Children's Encyclopaedia*, is a time of innocent joy, to be spent in the meadows amid buttercups and bunny-rabbits or at the hearthside absorbed in a storybook. It is a vision of childhood utterly alien to him [J.M. Coetzee]. Nothing he experiences in Worcester, at home or at school, leads him to think that childhood is anything but a time of gritting the teeth and enduring. (*Boyhood* 14)

Coetzee’s statement does not mean to express a lament of an unfulfilled innocent childhood. It is meant rather to draw the reader’s attention to the unsettling transitional period “corporally” carved into his individual memory and that is significantly linked to the collective memory of the country as a whole. The childhood that these two authors lived through do not conform to the classic conception of childhood as a period of innocent joy, for the conditions of daily life did not grant them that privilege. Growing up in a time that one has to “grit one’s teeth” as Coetzee claims, the choice of presenting this period through the eyes of a child is at once brutal and remarkable. Childhood (or boyhood, in Coetzee’s expression), an age during which one normally has not yet formed a political position or carried out any political acts, certainly has a very different meaning for Coetzee and Wu, for both authors’ memories of their childhood have significant corporal-markings tied to the specific histories of their (post-)colonial nation-states. This is another reason why Coetzee and Wu see the importance of writing a historical narrative from a child’s perspective, for the memories of the transitional colonial periods—Apartheid and the Order of Martial Law—are “imprinted on their bodies.”

**The Bicycle and Involuntary Memory**

When telling tales of one’s own past in a literary way, writers often employ symbolic element(s) to demonstrate how past memories can be interwoven into narratives. For instance, Marcel Proust’s eating of the madeleine lightly soaked in tea in the first volume of *Remembrance of Things Past* represents to many readers the most remarkable and unforgettable way in which memory is invoked through a specific symbolic element. The madeleine, according to Proust, ascribes an “involuntary memory” that is invoked and recalled by a powerful corporal link to the narrator/author himself:

[My mother] sent out for one of those short, plump little cakes called “petites madeleines,” which look as though they had been moulded in the fluted scallop of a pilgrim’s shell. And soon, mechanically, weary after a dull day with the prospect of a depressing morrow, I raised to my lips a spoonful of the tea in which I had soaked a morsel of the cake. *No sooner had the warm liquid, and the crumbs with it, touched my palate, a shudder ran through my whole body, and I stopped, intent upon the
extraordinary changes that were taking place. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, but individual, detached, with no suggestion of its origin.\(^{314}\)

[Ma mère] envoya chercher un de ces gâteaux courts de dodus appelés Petits Madeleines qui semblent avoir été moulés dans la valve rainurée d’une coquille de Saint-Jacques. Et bientôt, machinalement, accablé par la morne journée et la perspective d’un triste lendemain, je portai à mes lèvres une cuillerée du thé où j’avais laissé s’amollir un morceau de madeleine. Mais à l’instant même où la gorgée mêlée des miettes du gâteau toucha mon palais, je tressaillis, attentif à ce qui se passait d’extraordinaire en moi. Une plaisir délicieux m’avait envahi ; isolé sans la notion de sa cause. (Du côté 44)

As Proust meticulously and beautifully describes his memory of the things past which the “petite madeleine” enabled him to recall, it is clear that the madeleine plays the role of a corporal marker, one that has physically inscribed memories en soi [in him]. This writing technique is not uniquely found, however, in the work of Proust, for many other writers, including Coetzee and Wu, have applied the same technique in their writings. Interestingly, in Coetzee’s \textit{Boyhood} and Wu’s \textit{Danche}, both authors choose to use the bicycle as the symbolic element used to call forth “involuntary memories” of the transitional colonial past. For both authors, the bicycle is the means for transporting them into the past.

In \textit{Danche}, the story-telling and the memory-recounting begin with the bikes of the protagonist’s family. Chen, the protagonist who incarnates Wu Ming-yi, says that his obsession with bike-collecting did not initially arise from a passion for riding bikes; his fascination with bikes is rather with the references conveyed by the object itself.\(^{315}\) This is why, in Chen’s narrative account, the personal and genealogical history evoked by the bikes weighs more than the bicycles themselves. At one point, the protagonist realises that his passion to find and collect old bicycles actually comes from one of his family’s disappearance. When Chen was young, his father had disappeared with one of the family’s bikes without warning anyone and he had never returned.\(^{316}\) A journey to find the old bicycle is a journey to find out

\(^{314}\) The full text of Marcel Proust’s \textit{Remembrance of Things Past. Volume 1: Swann’s Way}, translated from French to English by C.K. Scott Moncrieff (1992) is in the public domain, thanks to Project Gutenberg. The online webpage of this cited English translation is created by Philipp Lensen; it was last updated on February 2014. Website accessed: \url{http://www.authorama.com/remembrance-of-things-past-3.html}.

\(^{315}\) “Sometimes, I wonder if it is really not bike-riding that I am into, but the idea and the referenced meaning of the term—‘bicycle’—that I am fascinated with. Originally, it was called a ‘vélocipède à pédales’ by Michaux père et fils and then changed into ‘bicycle’ by Pierre Lallement (combining \textit{bi} in Latin and \textit{kyklos} in Greek).

\(^{316}\) “My passion for the bike comes from my lost father. 我對鐵馬的熱情，源自於失蹤的父親。” \textit{Ibid.}, p.45.
the reason why his father disappeared. The climatic moment of this journey is when Chen finally finds the bike and, through physical contact with it, retrieves the memory and the image of a father that had been lost to him for twenty years.

I stood in front of the bike, nervously reaching my hand towards the seat post; I felt like holding a girl’s hand for the very first time, because I knew it was where the serial number was seared on the bike. [...] The moment that I touched the serial number, I was convinced that there must have been some sort of inexplicable force that let the bike appear in front of me once more. The uneven surface where the number was seared resembles the swelling hills. This was my father’s Lucky Brand bicycle, number “04886.” [...] For the last twenty years, where did it go? Where had my dad’s “other leg” been traveling? [...] I dropped down and pulled up the anchor of my memory, unable to find a point to park.

As Wu explains here, his emotional recollection of the past is established directly through the protagonist’s corporal relation to the bike. The figure and the memory of the father is inscribed both in Chen’s hands and on the bike, and it is only through re-establishing that connection—by touching the bike—that the protagonist can feel the memories of his past.

At the same time, however, the recounting of the bike-related stories also unfolds the “historicity” of the colonial past and the transitional period, which is contextualised in Chen’s childhood memory. In fact, Chen’s narrative account imagines a history of the bicycles, which serves to highlight the historicity of the colonial and the transitional colonial periods, inasmuch as these periods relate to his personal genealogical history:

I am, of course, fascinated by the unique subjectivity of a bike. What I mean is that I am fascinated by the bike(s) that was made in certain epoch(s) and that only belongs to that specific epoch(s). I believe that, one day, someone can actually write a book about the history of bicycles. [...] As I was saying, in order to talk about my family, one has to begin from the stolen bikes. The story can be told as early as from Meiji 38, year 1905.

我也著迷於鐵馬個體的獨特性，意思就是在某個時代被打造，也只屬於那個時代的鐵馬。我想信有一天有人能編出一本鐵馬史。……

剛剛講到，如果要談起我的家族，得從那些被偷的腳踏車說起。這事最早可以說到明治三十八年，一九〇五年。（Danche 12)
The juxtaposition of the two types of historicity—colonial and genealogical—is carefully threaded in Chen’s narrative account of the history of the lost bicycle. By tracing the new owner of the lost bike, Chen also undertakes a journey into the historical memory of the colonial past. On one occasion, Chen was introduced to Abbass 阿巴斯 through a personal contact. Abbass had temporarily kept the bike that had disappeared with Chen’s father twenty years ago, yet unfortunately he was not the owner of the bike when Chen met him. After having befriended Abbass, they share stories about bikes that are dear to them. Abbass tells Chen the story of a bike that he acquired from Laozou 老鄒, a retired Chinese military man, who used to fight for the Kuomintang. The story of Laozou’s bike introduces a historical narrative which maps out the transitional period from Japanese imperial rule to the KMT colonial rule in Taiwan. One day, Abbas takes Chen to his hometown in Nantou, inhabited by the aboriginal Tsou tribe (鄒族). There, Abbass hands over a recorded cassette to Chen, which contains stories about Laozou’s bike, told by Abbass’s father, Basuya 巴蘇亞. “Listening to” the story recounted by Basuya, readers of this novel as well as Chen himself acknowledge that a historical narrative of the colonial past begins to emerge and intertwine with Chen’s own story of the lost bicycle. As Abbass reminds Chen:

This may sound somehow hypothetical, and even nonsensical. But I have always had a feeling that if you ride someone else’s bike, you are in fact experiencing that person’s life.

Abbass’s father, Basuya, a young man from the Taiwanese Tsou tribe, was educated by the Japanese during the imperial-colonial rule. Basuya had joined Qingniantuan 青年團, and volunteered to serve the imperial Japanese army. He was later assigned to the Silver Wheel Unit [銀輪部隊 in Chinese and ぎんりんぶたい in Japanese], which had fought battles in the northern forest of Burma. The Silver Wheel Unit is a military unit of the Imperial

317 Ibid., p.66.
318 Ibid., p.136.
319 Ibid., pp.138-39.
320 Qingniantuan 青年團: During the Japanese imperial rule in Taiwan, military education and training was implemented at the colonial middle schools. Between age sixteen to seventeenth, young males are divided in groups and they are managed and trained as units in the army force. Qingniantuan was one of those groups. Huang Chin-lin 黃金麟, Zhanzheng, zhimin, xiandaixing 戰爭、殖民、現代性 [War, Colonialism and Modernity], p.104.
Japanese Army troops during the Second World War. All soldiers who fought for this unit, including Basuya, were trained to use bicycles in military operations.\textsuperscript{322} This military unit is well known for its strategic battles in the Pacific War (Greater East Asia War).\textsuperscript{323} From Basuya’s recounting of his military service in the Silver Wheel Unit (in both Tsou and Japanese languages), the “historicity” of the Japanese colonial past is unfolded to the readers, and at the same time, this particular historicity is tied to the “undiscovered” memory of Chen, the protagonist, as well as Wu Ming-yi, the author.

As suggested earlier, in Wu’s novel, the bicycle is not simply used as a symbolic element which solicits memories of Wu’s past; more importantly, it contextualises the global history of the two World Wars and other colonial wars. In alluding to the history of the bicycle, Wu has also given an account of the use of bicycles in war and in the military, including the United States’ military suppression at Havana in 1898 and the South African Anglo-Boer War at the end of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{324} Wu’s reference to the Anglo Boer War, in a sense, brings in an indirect and unintended reference to J.M. Coetzee and the South African colonial experience. As a matter of fact, Coetzee, too, makes the choice to insert a bicycle as a symbolic element in \textit{Boyhood}. While Wu deliberately sets the protagonist’s father’s disappearance with the bike as a prologue, Coetzee recounts his mother’s failure to learn how to ride bicycle at the start of his book. The bicycle, in Coetzee’s novel, has a metaphorical meaning of freedom. Coetzee’s mother, for instance, is enthusiastic to learn how to ride a bike because she believes it is the way to her own freedom. Nevertheless, though she manages to teach herself how to ride a bike, after being mocked several times by her husband and her son, she eventually gives up the practice:

She bought the bicycle thinking that riding it would be a simple matter. Now she can find no one to teach her. His father cannot hide his glee. Women do not ride bicycles, he says. His mother remains defiant. I will not be a prisoner in this house, she says. I will be free. […] Nevertheless she does learn to ride, though in an uncertain, wobbling way […] Then one day, without explanation, she stops riding the bicycle. Soon afterwards the bicycle disappears. No one says a word, but he knows she has been defeated. (\textit{Boyhood} 3-4)

From the above passage, one finds that his mother’s “defeat” is not a simple fact of her nonfulfillment; rather, the defeat represents, in that specific social context and climate, the denial of women’s freedom in South African (post-)colonial society. It is clear that, on the one
hand, Coetzee tries to incorporate the meaning of freedom to the symbolic element. On the other hand, Coetzee also indirectly uses this symbolic element as a reference to draw readers’ attention to the social background of South African (post-)colonial society. His mother’s defeat may also be contrasted with Coetzee’s own experience; he has learned and mastered bike riding quite quickly and has since continued bike riding without giving it up.\(^{325}\)

Moreover, the denial of woman’s freedom, Coetzee emphasises, is associated with male desire.

The memory of his mother on her bicycle does not leave him. She pedals away up Poplar Avenue, escaping from him, escaping towards her own desire. He does not want her to go. He does not want her to have a desire of her own. (Boyhood 4; emphasis mine)

Obliquely, Coetzee ascribes the bicycle with the metonymic meaning of male desire, and further, he uses it to articulate a colonial desire. For instance, in chapter seven, Coetzee establishes a link between this colonial and/or male desire and the symbolic element that is the bicycle. He employs here a similar writing technique to Proust in Remembrance of the Things Past. Coetzee first speaks of the bike he acquired on his eighth birthday, and from there, a serial of the past events embodied in his memory and related to that bike emerges in his narration. At the very first instance, when Coetzee announces the brand of bike acquired, a colonial reference is immediately hinted, for he intentionally specifies that it was a Smiths bike. Smiths bikes, in fact, are known to be produced by BSA (British Small Arms), a major British industrial manufacturer which produced military and sporting firearms, bicycles, motorcycles, and other machines and tools.\(^{326}\) Coetzee’s choice to acknowledge the brand of the bike is no accident, for it again highlights the colonial past registered unnoticeably in his childhood memory. In 1880, BSA went into bicycle manufacturing. In the same year, the British government gained power in southern and East Africa, beginning its colonial rule and expansion in the African continent.\(^{327}\) Evoking this colonial reference, Coetzee then recounts his memory of the pleasurable bike-rides to school in the early mornings. From there, he plunges into other memories flashing into his mind. He goes on to describe the physical

\(^{325}\) Coetzee, Boyhood, pp.75, 55-56.

\(^{326}\) BSA: in Boyhood, Coetzee claims that the initial of BSA stands for British Small Arms. After having conducted some research online, it would appear that Coetzee has made a mistake here, for BSA actually stands for the Birmingham Small Arms Company Limited. However, it is true that this company started as a private firm, but eventually worked with the British government in the manufacturing of rifles. Ibid., p.55. Cf. “BSA,” Grace’s Guide to British Industrial History, 23 Nov. 2015, Web, 29 Apr. 2016, website accessed: http://www.gracesguide.co.uk/BSA.

features of the boys from the Afrikaans classes who he met at school, and then, delicately, he shifts the subject to philosophical questioning about the idea of desire related to corporal beauty and the colonial gaze.

Beauty and desire: he is disturbed by the feelings that the legs of these [Afrikaans] boys, blank and perfect, and inexpressive, create in him. What is there that can be done with legs beyond devouring them with one’s eyes? What is desire for? […] Of all the secrets that set him apart, this may in the end be the worst. Among all these boys he is the only one in whom this dark erotic current runs; among all this innocence and normality, he is the only one who desires. (Coetzee, Boyhood 56-57)

The desire which Coetzee describes denotes a colonial desire. Coetzee declares, even as a child, that he had experienced this colonial desire. Politically identifying himself as English (when he was a boy), Coetzee understands and aims to stage the guilt that is conveyed in such colonial desire.328

To conclude chapter 2.2.2., my thesis defends Brink’s view, which holds that the contextualising and unearthing of a post-colonial country’s past can be achieved through a negotiation of historical narratives with fictional writings, and that, in doing so, an ethical demand may be made on the readers. It further draws examples from Coetzee and Wu’s writings, arguing that the involuntary childhood memories that are summoned in postcolonial authors’ semi-autobiographies can provide an alternative path for the reconstructing postcolonial narratives. The return to childhood memories often provides a glimpse of innocence or naivety about the past. The lived experiences of Coetzee and Wu do not, however, conform to this tendency. Without noticing the significance of these lived experiences when they were young, the evoked memories in their works may thus be considered as “markings” on their bodies. These colonial markings are kept under their skin and they come to the fore when a spontaneous force of an object summons the strong sentiments or emotions that are tied to these markings. It is not simply a coincidence that this object which brings about the childhood memories of these two authors happens to be the bicycle. If we retrace the history of the colonial and transitional periods of the two countries, the bicycle stands out for its symbolic significance, for it was a mechanical tool frequently used in military battles. The bicycle plays a singularly important role in tying together colonial memories and postcolonial narratives.

328 “Beauty is innocence; innocence is ignorance; ignorance is ignorance of pleasure; pleasure is guilty; he is guilty. This boy, with his fresh, untouched body, is innocent, while he, ruled by his dark desire, is guilty.” Coetzee, Boyhood, p.60, 67.
2.3. Language and (Post-)Colonial Political Identity

2.3.1. Language and Identity Formation

As the title of this thesis indicates, my study draws attention to the political identity of postcolonial nation-states. The chapter thus aims at examining the relationship between language(s) and the formation of identit(ies), particularly concerning its socio-political, historical and colonial dimensions. Without a doubt, language has remained the principal subject in discussions of the formation of identity—be it colonial, postcolonial, ethnic or national. As John Edwards, a renowned sociolinguist, points out: “to a considerable degree, language and the social world are mutually shaping” (17). One can easily deduce that identity-forming is inevitably linked to our language(s). And further, Edwards also cites John Joseph, affirming that: “language and identity are ‘ultimately inseparable.’” But, what is the relation between language(s) and political identity? How can a political identity be formed or constructed through language(s)? The following section will examine the relation between language and political identity-formation, looking particularly at the historical context of colonialism and post-colonialism.

Language, Identity and Postcolonial Theory

Looking at the relation between identity formation and language in the context of a modern postcolonial nation-state, it is clear that this issue is inevitably tied to the production of ethnic and/or national identity and the long history of colonisation. As Etienne Balibar’s critically observes, in the process of creating a modern nation-state, it is impossible not to produce a fictive ethnicity.

No nation, that is, no national state, has an ethnic basis, which means that nationalism cannot be defined as an ethnocentrism expect precisely in the sense of the product of a


fictive ethnicity. To reason any other way would be to forget that ‘peoples’ do not exist naturally any more than ‘races’ do, either by virtue of their ancestry, a community of culture or pre-existing interests. But they do have to institute in real (and therefore in historical) time their imaginary unity against other possible unities. (Balibar, “Racism” 49; emphasis original)

Such production, as affirmed and proven in many other scholars’ studies—notably from Benedict Anderson’s Imagined Community (2006) and Paul Silverstein’s Algeria in France: Transpolitics, Race and Nation (2004)—is significantly tied to language and to political-identity forming. In Silverstein’s research on Algeria, he has successfully demonstrated how Berber has come to be created as a specific ethnic-cultural identity and linguistic political identity in contrast to arabopohones under the French colonial rule.331 If we wish to discuss language and its relation to ethnicity and political-identity forming, it is therefore necessary to take the “colonial continuity,” which still persists in the postcolonial societies, into consideration. In other words, there are mechanisms that were developed during the colonial periods and which continue to exist in certain forms in postcolonial societies. The production of ethnicity through language and political-identity forming is one such mechanism.

The objective of this chapter is to use the arguments of contemporary cultural theorists and philosophers to show how ethnicity is produced by this mechanism in the postcolonial modern nation-state, but also to offer detailed analyses of the cases of South Africa and Taiwan. Naoki Sakai, in his article, “How Do We Count a Language?,” asserts:

[T]he institution of the nation-state is, we all know, a relatively recent invention. We are led to suspect that the idea of the unity of language as the schema for ethnic and national communality must also be a recent invention. (73, emphasis original)

From Sakai’s statement, one understands two things: (1) the unity of a language has become a model for ethnic and national communality in modern nation-states; (2) this schema is a pure invention. This view is not only shared by philosophers like Etienne Balibar, but also affirmed by the renowned sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu believes that language is able to create ethnic or regional identity. He argues that in the production of an ethnic or regional identity, essential criteria, like language, dialect and accent play an important role, for they are the objects of “mental representations.” From these objects of “mental representations,” interlocutors end up investing “objectified representations” in actual things, such as emblems, flags, badges, etc., and hence producing a self-identification with specific types of ethnicity or

331 Silverstein, Algeria in France: Transpolitics, Race and Nation, pp.35-75.

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regional identity. Different from Bourdieu’s view, Homi Bhabha, one of what Robert Young calls the “holy trinity” scholars of Postcolonial studies, emphasises the hybridism of the political identity invented through language(s). Bhabha outlines that there is a particular ambivalence that haunts the idea of the nation, but also the language of those who write about it and the lives of those who live in it. And this ambivalence comes from a process of hybridity of different cultures and languages, which he thinks every nation experiences. And that also explains why there never exists a unified or unitary “locality” of national culture.

The ‘locality’ of national culture is neither unified nor unitary in relation to itself, nor must it be seen simply as ‘other’ in relation to what is outside or beyond it. The boundary is Janus-faced and the problem of outside/inside must always itself be a process of hybridity, incorporating new ‘people’ in relation to the body politic, generating other sites of meaning and, inevitably, in the political process, producing unmanned sites of political antagonism and unpredictable forces for political representation. (Bhabha, “Nation” 4)

Bhabha further adopts these ideas—the process of hybridity and the non-unitary or un-unified “locality”—in his discussion of language formation. He uses the example of Salman Rushdie’s novels, published in English, to argue for the importance of the hybrid language in narration. For Bhabha, in the postcolonial linguistic milieu, there is no “authentic” English language; the language itself is a hybrid. He further cites Timothy Brennan to suggest that such hybridism elicits much of the readers’ awareness of the postcolonial and neocolonial conditions. Whether one chooses to follow Bhabha’s or Bourdieu’s view of language, both scholars have demonstrated that there is a decisive link between language and identity formation. In the next section, we will look at the specific political identity formation in South Africa and Taiwan, as influenced by the language policies promoted or enforced by the colonial and postcolonial governments.

332 Original text in French: “La recherche des critères « objectives » de l’identité « régionale » ou « ethnique » ne doit pas faire oublier que, dans la pratique sociale, ces critères (par exemple la langue, le dialecte ou l’accent) sont l’objet de représentations mentales, c’est-à-dire d’actes de perception et d’appréciation, de connaissance et de reconnaissance, où les agents investissent leurs intérêts et leurs présupposés, et de représentations objectales, dans des choses (emblèmes, drapeaux, insignes, etc.) […]” Bourdieu, Langage et pouvoir symboliques, pp.281-82.

333 Bhabha, Nation and Narration, p.1.

334 Referring to Timothy Brennan, Bhabha states, “Brennan […] take[s] his stand with those hybridizing writers like Salman Rushdie whose glory and grotesquerie lie in their celebration of the fact that English is no longer an English language.” Ibid., p.6.

335 Ibid., p.6.
South Africa: A Multilingual Identity

How is national identity imagined in today’s postcolonial South African nation-state? Does this imagined identity relate to people’s appropriation of their language? To answer these questions, one has to look into the historical evolution of languages in South Africa. From there, one is able to know if the South African national identity is linked to people’s socio-linguistic identification.

To begin with, it is first necessary to address the historical development of languages in the Africa continent in relation to European colonialism. As is well known, European colonialism had a significant impact on the development of language and the evolution of language policy in Africa. Especially when it comes to the area of education, colonial administrators frequently adopted a common objective of providing a minimum amount of schooling in Western languages. They trained a sufficient number of junior-level civil servants to be proficient in English or French, leaving the majority of the local African populations to the sporadic initiatives of missionary groups. According to Andrew Simpson, this approach has produced two particular results: (1) Missionary involvement in the spread of Christianity as well as in the process of education leads to the fact that certain indigenous African languages have become standardised and formally “produced.” It is also through this process of standardizing local African languages that ethnic identities have become much more clearly defined among different groups of populations. As Simpson explains:

Dictionaries, grammars and orthographies of many African languages were consequently produced, alongside teaching materials, and those varieties of language selected for such formal promotion acquired a higher status which in many cases assisted in their diffusion as lingua francas and may have also solidified ethnic identities that were previously less clearly defined. (“Introduction” 3, emphasis mine)

Simpson further adds that this solidifying of ethnic identities is most evident in Ghana, Democratic Republic of Congo and Zambia. (2) The use of African languages in schooling during the colonial periods was not necessarily welcomed, due to the fact that acquiring knowledge of a Western language usually means having access to better jobs or entitling

337 Simpson, op.cit., p.3.
338 Ibid., p.3.
339 Ibid., p.3.
economic or social prestige. From Simpson’s analysis, one learns that not only does European colonialism have a significant tie with the language development and its policy in Africa, but also, within that process, that ethnic identities or socio-economic identities became all the more visible and inseparable from such development. Needless to say, South Africa is no exception to that process.

Acquiring real independence and democratic rule from white supremacist rule on the 27th April 1994, South Africa’s postcolonial era came rather late in the twentieth century. Having experienced two major colonisations from the Dutch (1652-1815) and the British (1815-1910) governments, there still remained significant colonial domination with respect to the use of language in the country. In the post-apartheid South African society, there are in total eleven official languages that are recognised today by the state and inscribed in the Constitution, including Ndebele, Swati, Xhosa, Zulu (from the Nguni languages), Pedi, Sotho, Tswana (from the Sotho languages), Tsonga, Venda, Afrikaans and English. The presence of first nine languages arose from the political decision to acknowledge all nine African languages already recognised and used within bantustans, the homelands system. The last two are associated with the country’s colonial past. Afrikaans derived from Dutch colonial rule, which lasted for more than one hundred fifty years. English, on the other hand, is the result of a direct enforcement of the British colonial government. A surprising linguistic fact, however, is that the Afrikaans language, which is still present in today’s South African society and which was strongly promoted by the rise of White Afrikaners’ nationalism, in fact developed much later than the end of the Dutch colonial rule. In addition, historically

340 Ibid., p.3.
341 Although South Africa’s real achieved independence date from British rule was on 31st May 1910, Freedom Day became the official Independence Day of South Africa. Freedom Day is celebrated on 27th of April every year and it commemorates the first democratic, non-racial election held in 1994. As the official independence day of South Africa, Freedom Day is celebrated to pay tribute to all those men and women who have made relentless efforts and sacrifices on behalf of the oppressed masses. “Independence Day of South Africa,” 123IndependenceDay.com, 1995, Web, 12 May 2016, website accessed: http://www.123independenceday.com/south-africa/#sthash.YEeYMgAU.dpuf.-
343 Ibid., p.323. The homelands, also known as the bantustans, were established by the Apartheid government. They were areas to which the majority of the Black South African population was moved to prevent them from living in the urban areas. During the Apartheid period, racial and ethnic segregation took place throughout South Africa. The homelands are one of the political measures used to achieve this segregation. The homelands began around mid-twentieth century and ended with the termination of Apartheid era in 1994. “The Homelands,” South African History Online, 5 May 2016, Web, 11 May 2016, website accessed: http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/homelands.
speaking, it is rather ironic that Afrikaans was first substantially developed as a written language by the “non-Whites” in the Cape, especially by the descendants of Muslim slaves.\textsuperscript{344} These Muslim descendants employed Arabic script to write religious texts in Afrikaans during the period of 1868 to 1910.\textsuperscript{345} Whites only began to develop Afrikaans after 1876, with the formation of the Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners (“Fellowship of True Afrikaners”) in Paarl.\textsuperscript{346}

In another important development, South Africa was significantly affected by the discovery of bountiful resources of diamonds and gold in the northern regions in 1860; the discovery led to a major conflict between the British colonial government and the Afrikaner republics.\textsuperscript{347} Wars were fought over control of land and wealth; in the meanwhile, Afrikaner nationalism grew stronger, in line with rising resentment against the British rapacity. Shortly after the turn of the century (1901-1905), the British statesman, Alfred Milner, came to rule South Africa from the city of Johannesburg.\textsuperscript{348} One of Milner’s ambitions was to anglicise and assimilate the Afrikaners, such that they would become subjects of the British Empire. Hence, a heavy emphasis was placed on English over Dutch in the public schools founded by the state for the White population. (On the contrary, the education of the Black population was left to churches and missionary schools, and these establishments were neither financed nor organised by the British colonial government.).\textsuperscript{349} This policy was, however, strongly resisted.

As Rajend Mesthrie outlines:

\begin{quote}
Afrikaners strongly resisted Milner’s Anglicization policy, and the status of Afrikaans as a bearer of local cultural values and the identity of an Afrikaner nation began to gain clear prominence. Nationalism on a large scale thus came into being among the Afrikanders, fuelled by anti-English sentiment and their sense of difference from the Khosean and Black people. In the development of Afrikaner nationalism, Afrikaner leaders emphasised their uniqueness in Africa, the uniqueness of their language, and their long ties to the land they inhabited.\textsuperscript{350} (319-320)
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{346} Mesthrie, \textit{op. cit.}, p.319.

\textsuperscript{347} \textit{Ibid.}, p.319.

\textsuperscript{348} \textit{Ibid.}, p.319.

\textsuperscript{349} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 319.

\textsuperscript{350} Mesthrie explains in his footnote saying that one of the claims of entitlement to the land was that the Dutch has settled in South Africa from the south in the seventeenth century, just as the Bantu were coming in from the north. This chronology is however faulty and the reasoning behind such claim is false. The Early Bantu
Clearly, the later development of Afrikaans by the Whites, though based on a racial discrimination, has a strong attachment to “local” identity. The rivalry between English and Afrikaans as dominant languages lasted even after South Africa had acquired “independence” in 1910. Between 1910 and 1948, though claiming itself to be an independent nation, South Africa was still closely tied to the British Empire, and, in a way, it remained under the supervision and the governance of the British thereafter. After the two World Wars ended, under the apartheid regime, Afrikaner nationalism and Afrikaans language were strongly promoted. Nevertheless, both Afrikaans and English were retained in the education system, since there was a fear that dropping either one would run the risk that both the language and the political identities dependent on it would gradually wither away or even perish. In the post-apartheid society, however, it is very surprising that English alone turned out to be the only language that positively benefited from the excesses of apartheid rule. Not only that, most of the black politicians accepted it as a common language in which they can feel free to communicate with one another, given that not everyone speaks the same mother tongue. English has even become the central language for the discussion of political affairs in parliament. A period of intense political negotiations took place in 1994 before the first democratic elections. At one point, the African National Congress (ANC) even appeared “to be headed for a policy preferring English as the only official language” (Mesthrie 323; emphasis mine). One possible explanation provided by Mesthrie is that the excessive emphasis placed on Afrikaans during Apartheid and the violence and extreme nationalism associated with that language are the main reasons why English was more acceptable to the general black population, especially given that the black population was not involved in the anglicization process of the past. Moreover, English remains widely used internationally, settlements in South Africa date back to the third century AD. Moreover, the claim to original ownership made by Afrikaners also dismisses ownership rights of the autochthonous Khoesan.

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351 Mesthrie, op.cit. p.321.
352 Mesthrie explains, “As it was widely used by the linguistically mixed anti-apartheid political leadership, English became perceived as the language of unity and liberation among the Black population.” Ibid., p.322.
353 Ibid., p.323.
354 Ibid., p.327.
355 The African National Congress (ANC): was a non-racial movement, whose leaders of the 1960s were largely forced into exile. It drew upon activists from all race groups, using English as their de facto lingua franca. Famous leaders from the party includes Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu, Nelson Mandela, and Winnie Mandela. Ibid., p.323.
especially in business and trade; therefore, people associate the language with educational and economic progress.\textsuperscript{356}

Mesthrie considers that this preference for English relates to both the late decolonisation of South Africa and the emergence of globalisation. He argues that since the decolonising experience arrived very late in South Africa (after 1990s) compared to other ex-European colonies of Africa and Asia, European languages were already firmly rooted in the country.\textsuperscript{357} Mesthrie also suggests that globalisation, which had already emerged in the 1990s, acts as a counterforce to postcolonial emancipation. \textsuperscript{358} As a result, globalisation contributes to the fact that English has emerged as the preferred language for legal adoption in South Africa. However, what seems to be overlooked and underestimated by Mesthrie’s analysis is that the rapid post-apartheid assimilation of the English language is in fact a colonial legacy, for it was part of British imperial schemes for its global trading network and agenda of economic liberalism. One can even argue that the establishment of economic liberalism and a global market, in which the lingua franca was English, was the long-term objective of the British Empire. The colonial strategies undertaken by the British Empire were very different from those of its European continental rivals. According to Alastair Pennycook, this is most evidently shown in the post-war philosophical and political shifts in Great Britain’s international relations.

[The post-war period] was to be a new era in which battles were to be fought for people’s minds and in which language and culture were to play an ever greater role. It was to be the era of organisations such as the British Council and the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations. A major cause of increased overseas activity came in response to the highly efficient propaganda systems of the German and Italian states in the 1930s. The British felt that through promotion of British culture, language and political system, they could counter the European fascism. It was prompting from the business world, however, which finally led to the setting up of ‘The British Council of Relations with Other Countries’ in 1934. This committee, made up of educational experts and businessman, aimed to help spread the English language and develop an understanding of British culture. (Pennycook 146-47)

On one hand, the British Council aimed to put forward the “cultural propaganda” of the British language and culture. On the other hand, the Council was itself a vehicle for British government’s long-term political vision of the world: colonisation and global power. As documented, during the Second World War, it was evoked as a possibility that the British

\textsuperscript{356} Ibid., pp.322-23.
\textsuperscript{357} Ibid., p.323.
\textsuperscript{358} Ibid., p.323.
Council be taken over by the Ministry of Information. The Minister of Information at that
time, Duff Cooper, himself made a strong argument against this move in a letter to the Prime
Minister, Winston Churchill, saying that:

‘The supposition is that the British Council exists only for cultural and not for political
propaganda, but this at the best of times was mere camouflage since no country would be
justified in spending public money on cultural propaganda unless it had also a political or
commercial significance.’ (Pennycook 148, emphasis mine)

This argument shows that the preference to keep the English language in the ex-British
colonies like South Africa cannot be simply regarded as a phenomenon that was secondary to
the emergence of globalisation, for other former British colonies such as India, Australia,
Malaysia, etc. experienced the same process of language and culture assimilation. Rather, the
promotion of the English language has a long history that is embedded in the British colonial
political strategy.

So far, the discussion has centred on the European colonial languages in South Africa
and their relation to South African political identities. The following paragraph looks into the
revival of other black South African languages, both in socio-historical and political domains,
and tries to understand how these languages play the role of identity construction. In 1996,
South Africa’s new constitution officially announced its recognition of the eleven languages,
in which nine local South African languages mentioned above are specified. Four among them
are from the Nguni language: Ndebele, Swati, Xhosa, and Zulu. Three are from the Sotho
language: Pedi, Sotho, and Tswana. And two, Tsonga and Venda, are used and shared by two
minor black populations in South Africa. The text of the Constitution not only emphasises the
link between language and culture, but also touches on many important themes relating to
nationhood.359 One notices that in post-apartheid South Africa, an emphasis was placed on the
multiple languages of the country, and this emphasis was used as a political identifier of the
nation-state itself, for the multiplicity of languages was created under the banner of “feel-
good rainbowism.”360 As noted above, government publications must respect the reality of
functional multilingualism, hence, legal documents or governmental publications have to be

360 Mesthrie points out that the rainbow was taken as a powerful symbol of unity with diversity for the new
nation for a while. Yet, he also suggests that the metaphor of rainbow may appear ironic, since neither black,
white, nor brown has been featured as a colour in rainbows. Ibid., p.327.
published in all eleven languages where possible, and in any case in no fewer than six of them.\footnote{Ibid., p.326.} One of the constitutional articles states:

> National and provincial governments may use particular official languages for the purpose of government, taking into account usage, practicality, expense, regional circumstances, and the balance of the needs and preferences of the population as a whole or in respective provinces; provided that no national or provincial government may use only one official language. Municipalities must take into consideration the language usage and preferences of their residents. (Mesthrie 325)

Though the constitution of South Africa underlines the importance of the multiplicity of languages rather than enforcing a single official language policy (which is the case in many other modern nation-states), it does not mean that individual political identities have not been constructed by South Africa’s embracing of a multilingual policy. On the contrary, languages that are recognised officially end up empowering both the political and ethnic identities tied to them.

In addition, there also exists a huge gap between theoretically and legally approving eleven different languages and practically applying them all in every circumstance. For South African linguistics and educators, successfully and effectively putting these official languages into practice is a challenging task. Victor Webb is not the only one who characterises the constitutional provisions on language as a mission statement, rather than a policy. Other scholars also argue that though these proposals constitute a policy, in reality there is no real plan to put the policy into practice:\footnote{Ibid., p.325. Cf. Webb, Language in South Africa—the Role of Language in National Transformation, Reconstruction and Development, p.40, 56.}

> Language planning processes in South Africa today have a surrealistic aspect to them as a result of the tension between what the governing elites are obliged to do constitutionally and what they prefer to do based on their interests and the convenience of inertia. (Alexander, “Linguistic” 122)

In fact, there do exist some language committees and organisations which focus on policymaking and help to carry out concrete plans. The most active organisation in research and campaigning for an effective multilingual policy in education is PRAESA, Project for Alternative Education in South Africa. The founder of PRAESA, Neville Alexander, regards language as an indispensable element for achieving a just social order.\footnote{Mesthrie, op.cit. p.327.} He also considers that English being the monolingual in public life is a political trap, and he thus tries to
persuade common citizens, intellectuals and educational leaders to engage themselves in developing and promoting black South African languages.\textsuperscript{364} PRAESA is largely credited for the work it has achieved on issues of literacy in African languages, notably Xhosa.\textsuperscript{365} At one point, Alexander, with another African socio-anthropologist, even took the initiative to work on the “harmonization project” of the African languages.\textsuperscript{366} In this project, Alexander proposed that a new standard Nguni language could be developed from the Nguni “cluster” of Zulu, Xhosa, Swati and Ndebele, likewise for a new standardised Sotho, which could emerge from a combination of North Sotho, South Sotho, and Tswana.\textsuperscript{367} Both scholars had the ambition to carry out the “harmonization project” because they had the fatalist feeling that African languages, without being united and standardised, remain too small and fragmented to play a significant or economically viable role in formal education.\textsuperscript{368} Nonetheless, this proposal was virulently attacked by most Black academics. Not only did they express their strong doubts as to the feasibility of such a unification in spoken language (despite the fact that Alexander placed more emphasis on the benefits at the written level), but also, they felt that their cultural and ethnic identity, as it relates to their own individual mother tongues, was being suppressed for political gain.\textsuperscript{369} Particularly for smaller language communities, such as Tsonga, Venda, Ndebele and Swati, they felt much less empowered even though they were included in the constitution.\textsuperscript{370} Regardless of the failure of Alexander’s project, he seems to forget that the process of harmonization or standardisation of a language (or languages) is one of the most prominent colonial schemes, rehabilitated in the central discourse of modernism. Especially in the construction of modern nation-states, the standardisation of language plays a crucial role in creating a unified and harmonized ethnic population. Hardly any modern nation-state has escaped the fate of putting in place one single national (or official) language.

The social reality and the reaction of the people that have been described so far prove that linguistic grouping and identification are often tied with people’s sensibility to their “constructed” ethnic political identities. It may appear that people seek a linguistic

\textsuperscript{364} Ibid., p.327.
\textsuperscript{365} Ibid., p.327.
\textsuperscript{366} Ibid., p.329.
\textsuperscript{367} Alexander, Language Policy and National Unity in South Africa/Azania (1989).
\textsuperscript{368} Mesthrie, op.cit. p.329.
\textsuperscript{369} Ibid., pp.329-30.
community to insure their specific identities because, psychologically, they fear for exclusion or non-belonging. Hence, though it is generally agreed that ethnic political identities are socio-political constructs, people still wish to be recognised and admitted to a group that designates a specific identity. One simple way to acquire a constructed identity is of course to relate one’s linguistic belonging to another’s, for language is relatively stable compared to other constituents of socio-political identification (for instance, social or cultural traditions, moral or religious values, personal beliefs, philosophy, and knowledge of a shared historical past, etc.). Mesthrie further points out that speakers of other non-official language groups, such as Northern Ndebele, Portuguese, the Khosean and Indian languages, have recently manifested their will to be recognised at a national level, for they fear of the perceived neglect arising out of their non-official status. Mesthrie criticises that this manifestation from the non-official language groups reveals people’s incapability to understand the real meaning of an official language. He states:

> Here we see a misunderstanding of the concept of an official language: people who identify with a language that is not one of the chosen eleven have used the opportunity to express their feeling of exclusion, yet official languages are supposed to be vehicles for practical functions, and not just feelings of identification. (Mesthrie 331)

Nevertheless, Mesthrie’s criticism cannot be fully justified because in social reality it is almost impossible for people not to assimilate the process of linguistic identification with the process of ethnic political identification. To some extent, the designation of an official language(s) in a modern nation-state is meant to put in place an automatic mechanism of political identification. Singling out and standardising an official language(s) simply is to assert a political identity which is bounded and encompassed by that language.

To summarise, from the historical context of South Africa, we learn that both the use and the development of languages have always been diverse. At no point, it would seem, has there ever existed one single language policy that is imposed on the entire population. Nonetheless, whether it is before or after the creation of the postcolonial modern nation-state, languages in South Africa are inevitably bound with people’s political identity-formation. The current policy of a multilingual system proposes an alternative model to that of most other modern nation-state, but it still functions according to a logic whereby “ethnographic and cultural specificities” need to be emphasised and reproduced, thus giving people a “concrete”

372 Mesthrie, op.cit. p.331.
political identity. The following section will extend this examination of the relation between language and political identity-formation, looking particularly at the historical context of Taiwan.

**Taiwan: From Unilingual to Multilingual Identity**

This thesis has so far treated the issue related to the development of languages and national identity in postcolonial South Africa. The following section deals with this same issue but focuses on postcolonial Taiwan. How is national identity imagined in today’s postcolonial Taiwanese nation-state? Does it also relate to people’s perceptiveness to their linguistic belonging? Likewise, the historical evolution of languages in Taiwan is considered, with specific attention paid to analysing this evolution in relation to Taiwan’s colonial experience.

A subject of great public debate in contemporary Taiwan is, as Andrew Simpson and many other geopolitical scholars suggest, the political issue of what kind of nation the people on the island think they should belong to and what kind of nation that the people would imagine it be. Similarly to South Africa, Taiwan has experienced a long colonial history which ultimately affected the development of language on the island, but this process of colonial and linguistic domination has its own specificity in the colonial context of East Asia. In Taiwan, the Dutch colonial rule (1624-1662), Qing Empire’s territorial claim over the island (1683-1895), the Japanese imperial rule (1895-1945), as well as the military occupation of the KMT Chinese army (1945-1987), all significantly marked the colonial history of the island, and each period had its unique view on language policy in regard to its political control over the island. As Simpson has remarked,

> In each period it will be seen that policies of both the repression and promotion of languages have been of central importance in attempts to shape the loyalty and identity of the population, and that languages and language choice have come to be invested with remarkable symbolic power on Taiwan, polarizing, dividing and at other times unifying the population as explicit and deliberate signals of ethnic and political allegiance. (“Taiwan” 236)

Historically speaking, before any immigration from Mainland China took place (even prior to Qing or Ming dynasties), the major populations in Taiwan were composed of different groups

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of Austronesian tribes. Today, they are referred to as the “aborigines” of Taiwan (non-Sinitic peoples), and twenty-eight different languages are identified in accordance to their language usage.\textsuperscript{374} In 2009, a report published by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) noted that, among the twenty-eight languages, seven are confirmed to have been lost permanently and another seven are in great risk of extinction.\textsuperscript{375} Tsao Feng-fu’s study shows that during the Dutch colonial rule, language policy had little impact on local aboriginal inhabitants. Despite the fact that the Dutch colonials treated aborigines like slaves, they did not launch particular oppressive or discriminatory language policies to control the aborigine populations.\textsuperscript{376} As regards to language development under the Dutch rule, the only major thing to note was the invention of the writing system of Siraya, an aboriginal language which served as lingua franca in the south during the period.\textsuperscript{377} The missionaries who accompanied the arrival of the colonial government had invented the system for general missionary purposes, but it was more frequently used to produce contracts and to record documents.\textsuperscript{378}

According to different sources in the geopolitical-historical study of the area, the reasons behind Qing’s occupation of Taiwan were security and imperial sovereignty.\textsuperscript{379} Simpson suggests that the main reason is most likely to have been avoiding the island from falling into the hands of other competing powers in the neighbourhood area, but he also observes that there was no signs indicating that the Qing government had intended to develop

\textsuperscript{374} The identified aboriginal languages include: Atayal 泰雅, Bunun 布農, Amis 阿美, Kanakanabu 卡那卡那富, Kavalan 噶瑪蘭, Kaxaubu 噶哈巫, Paiwan 排灣, Saisiyat 賽夏, Puyuma 卑南, Rukai 魯凱, Saaroa 拉阿魯哇, Seediq 賽德克, Thao 邵, Tsou 蘇, Siraya 西拉雅 of the living languages; Basay 巴賽, Ketagalan 凱達格蘭, Taokas 道卡斯, Babuza 巴布薩, Favorlang 虎尾廬, Papora 巴布拉, Hoanya 洪雅, Taivoan 大滿, Makatao 馬卡道, Paeze 巴宰 of the extinct languages; and Yami 雅美 (or Tao 達悟) which is in Taiwan but does not belong to the Formosan language.


\textsuperscript{376} Tsao Feng-fu, “The Language Planning Situation in Taiwan,” Language Planning and Policy in Asia, Vol. 1., p.238.

\textsuperscript{377} Ibid., p.238.

\textsuperscript{378} Ibid., p.238.

Taiwan in any particular way. \(^{380}\) In keeping with this, Qing had no specific language policy imposed on the inhabitants of the island. For a while, the Qing government did try banning immigration for reasons of population control, however, for economic reasons, more and more Chinese migrants continued to settle in Taiwan. In the mid-seventeenth century, the Chinese migrant population grew to 5000, and by the beginning of the twentieth century, it had grown to 3 million. \(^{381}\) During the same period, as a result of conflict over land and resources with the Chinese migrants, the aborigine population had largely declined, from between 150,000 and 200,000 to 113,000. \(^{382}\) The dominant population then became the Chinese migrants, and the dominating languages were the two principal languages brought by these migrants from the provinces of Canton and Fujian—Hakka and Minnan [Southern Min] (also called Hokkien or Holo). In terms of the ratio of these languages speakers, Southern Min speakers outnumbered other language users (80 per cent at the end of nineteenth century), followed by the Hakka (16 per cent) and then the various aboriginal tribes (4 per cent in total). \(^{383}\)

From the Dutch colonial rule to Qing’s imperial control, the evolution of languages in Taiwan—the decline of aboriginal languages and the rise of two Han Chinese languages—were little affected by the policies introduced or imposed by the ruling governments. However, beginning with Japanese imperial rule, language policies became extremely important, for they helped the governing sectors create and impose a national/ethnic identity on different populations. Both the promotion of the Japanese language and the repression of Southern Min, Hakka and other aboriginal languages were deliberately carried out by the Japanese colonials in order to unify the different inhabitants of the island and instil loyalty to the regime. During the Japanese occupation, the speakers of Southern Min and Hakka found themselves completely cut off from all contact with their Chinese families and culture on the mainland, and, as time went by, they came to believe that the occupation might not be temporary but a permanent state of affairs for Taiwan. \(^{384}\) Consequently, the promotion of the Japanese language and the adoption of a Japanese ethnic identity became gradually accepted. Further, the attempt to enforce assimilation became particularly strong from the 1930s and


The Japanese colonial government wished completely to change the cultural habits and the spoken languages of the various peoples inhabiting Taiwan. Thus, inhabitants of the island were encouraged to take Japanese names, adopt Japanese traditions and follow Shinto religious practices. Similarly, the Japanese language was strictly enforced, especially in certain public areas, including banks or government offices. The exclusive use of Japanese language in education and in the public domain certainly had a negative effect on the development of other languages, most evidently in the case of intellectual and political affairs. Simpson asserts,

people forgot (or never learned) how to use Hakka and Southern Min to discuss [higher] level issues relating to politics, education, and other intellectual matters. Instead these languages were largely confined to the home and became restricted to very informal conversation. […] The younger generations therefore mostly became bilinguals, with a restricted formal competence in their mother tongue but daily use of these mother tongues in domestic, affective domains. ("Taiwan" 329) Simpson’s analysis reveals the determination of the Japanese colonial rule. As he suggests, the enforced policy of speaking Japanese language in public and legal domains had gradually made people lose the vocabulary used in these domains in their mother tongue. Likewise, it also meant that only those who acquired a good command of Japanese were eligible to be selected to participation in political, educational and other intellectual activities. As we have already seen above of John Edwards’ statements, language and the social world constantly shape each other and eventually one’s identity forming is destined be tied to the language s/he uses. It therefore explains why, gradually, the well-educated local elites came to identify themselves as Japanese. Moreover, even in the education of the non-elites or commoners, teaching the reading and writing of Chinese was banned (but not aboriginal languages, since written forms of these languages did not exist). The ban thus successfully prevented literary access to Chinese culture, and thereafter identification with the Han Chinese significantly declined. To sum up, while the policy of enforcing implementation of the Japanese language in the late colonial period of Taiwan was generally considered a success by the ruling authorities, it nonetheless failed entirely to remove the Southern Min, the Hakka and

385 Ibid., p.239.
386 Ibid., p.239.
387 Ibid., p.239.
388 Edwards, op.cit., p.17.
the aborigine languages from the domestic environment. The Japanese were unable to convert Taiwan into a fully monolingual Japanese society.

As noted above, the Japanese rule had implemented policies that cut off the connection between the Chinese mainlanders and the local inhabitants of Taiwan. Gradually, the locals formed a stronger tie with each other and also developed a deeper sense of the island as their homeland. In Simpson’s view, this eventually led the local inhabitants to develop an attachment to a permanent homeland that was distinct from their tie to the mainland China. Simpson further notes that this attachment also gave rise to a new political identity:

[T]he local inhabitants of the island began to feel naturally connected to each other and increasingly connected to Taiwan as well, as a permanent homeland now quite separate from China. This growth of a new sense of identity with the island and fellow residents was principally the result of the perception of being bound up in a common fate together, but may have also been assisted by the increased prosperity experienced on the island. (“Taiwan” 240)

The rise of this new political identity soon faced a significant challenge: the transitional period characterised by the fall of the Japanese Empire and the Civil War between Communists and Nationalists in Mainland China. In 1945, after the Japanese Empire lost the Second World War and surrendered on August 15th, the Chinese nationalist KMT army seized control of Taiwan on the 29th of the same month, setting up Taiwan as its main base of operations. Immediately, Chiang Kai-shek appointed Chen Yi to be the Chief Executive and Garrison Commander of the Taiwan Province and set up a new government. After being defeated by the Communists on the mainland in 1949, the nationalist KMT army was forced to evacuate China and settle in Taiwan. This brought a massive new population of mainlanders into Taiwan. About 2.5 million people had moved to Taiwan with Chiang’s government, and this dramatically pushed the total population to over 8 million, creating social conflicts and tensions between the newcomers and the original inhabitants over food, resources and land-usage. The KMT government continued to claim that it was the official government of all China. As a result, policies taken by the KMT government on Taiwan promoted an idealised Chinese national identity and simultaneously enforced the suppression of local Taiwanese languages and cultures. The new mainlanders who came along with the

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390 Ibid., p.240.
391 Ibid., p.240.
KMT military troops imposed some very aggressive laws and restrictions, leading to a difficult and repressive regime. According to Wong Ka-yin, “[t]he KMT government had imposed law and treated the Taiwanese more like a conquered people than as liberated fellow Chinese.” Naturally, the repressive regime lost the trust and the confidence of the local inhabitants. For a while, the local population had even sympathised and identified more with the former Japanese colonials, particularly some Taiwanese elites who had received higher education under the Japanese rule. In the eyes of the mainlanders, it was thus necessary to re-educate and re-Sinicise the local inhabitants in Taiwan. Thus it was that soon after power was transferred from the Japanese to the KMT government, the Japanese language was immediately banned. Simpsons describes the effect of banning the Japanese language in Taiwan as follows:

The result of this elimination of Japanese from public life was that for some considerable time, before they were able to acquire Mandarin Chinese, the Taiwanese were left unable to discuss formal matters in public and had no access at all to any written materials they could understand. (“Taiwan” 243)

In regard to the specific new language policies which the KMT government tried to impose, Kubler states very clearly that “the institution of Mandarin Chinese as the official language of the island was full of political significance.” Mandarin Chinese was invented as a form of speech based on a northern variety of Chinese. The word “Mandarin” literally means the speech of officials. The nationalist KMT party set the objective of promoting Mandarin Chinese, calling it guoyu 国语 (“the national language”) and spreading it as lingua franca while the party was in power on the mainland. It was therefore quite natural that when the KMT seized control of Taiwan, the implementation of Mandarin Chinese became one of the primary tasks for the government, since it would make it more likely for the people to be reunited in the future with the rest of China. Conversely, as Simpson states, Southern Min at that time was in fact the most widely spoken language in Taiwan, yet as a political concern, “Southern Min could have never been interpreted as signalling that KMT-controlled Taiwan was not likely to be reunited with the rest of China, where the national language

396 Ibid., p.242.
policy had been to promote Mandarin” (“Taiwan,” 243). In addition to the promotion of Mandarin, the first governor of Taiwan, Chen Yi, also issued orders to ban the use of Southern Min from public areas and radio. Furthermore, educational campaigns and political propaganda were designed to present a negative image of the Southern Min. The objective of the propaganda was to produce an ideology in which Southern Min was seen as a vulgar language or a language that lacks grace when compared to Mandarin. Although non-Mandarin speakers continued to use Southern Min and other local languages in their domestic environments, they were compelled to feel that their languages were unsophisticated and could only really be considered as dialects rather than as an “authentic” or “genuine” language. The imposed policies and discriminatory language propaganda had thus produced social discrimination against non-Mandarin speakers. These local inhabitants in Taiwan were effectively prevented from taking jobs in the civil service, because of their insufficient knowledge of Mandarin Chinese. Legally, such discrimination did not count as an unlawful act, for the favouritism of Mandarin Chinese was after all a national policy. As a consequence, the mainlanders occupied most of the senior positions in the governmental or public sectors and thus benefited from any further bureaucratic decisions they took.

The Sinicisation policy imposed by the KMT government lasted more than forty years. From the 1950s to the 1970s, there was continual advocacy of a Chinese national identity tied to the political motivation of promoting Mandarin Chinese as lingua franca. It was not until the 1980s that a strong demand for democracy and Taiwanese political identity began to arise. Simpson thinks that the demands of democracy and Taiwanese political identity have partly contributed to the local languages revival in Taiwan from the end of the 1980s onwards. He suggests that, with the demand of democracy, a Taiwanese nationalism that called for independence became more and more urgent; in the meantime, the reunion with China under the KMT rule gradually became an unattainable desire rather than a viable reality. Hence, for the KMT ruling government, it was difficult to justify the need to impose the martial law.

400 Wachman, Taiwan: National Identity and Democratization (1994).
401 Simpson, op.cit., p.244.
402 Ibid., p.243.
403 Ibid., p.243.
404 Ibid., p.243.
405 Ibid., p.246.
and the monolingual policies of Mandarin Chinese. In 1987, Chiang Ching-kuo 蔣經國, Chiang Kai-shek’s son as well as the president of the Republic of China at that time, announced the lifting of the martial law, which followed by a series of political reforms (such as the formation of other political parties, the reform of the National Assembly, and the openly-contested presidential elections, etc.) and the cessation of the local languages ban. The liberation of the local languages has had a huge influence on language development and social change in Taiwan. On the one hand, the liberation has affected the attitude of intellectuals for it has allowed them to treat language development as a serious academic subject. According to Hsiau A-chin, after the restriction of the use of local languages was lifted, more and more universities have been working with linguistic associations or individual specialists to develop research that revitalises the Southern Min and the Hakka languages. On the other hand, the liberation has also brought significant meaning to people’s social and political life. For instance, the politicians from the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), a party known for the fact that the majority of its members are Southern Min speakers, often use the Southern Min to give speeches or pose questions to their Mandarin-speaking KMT opponents in political context, even though their opponents cannot understand them. Simpson remarks,

Local language was therefore used in a defiant way as a new weapon to potentially embarrass politicians in the KMT and so reverse the previous relation of power between Mandarin and Southern Min, obliging mainlander politicians to gain a proficiency in the latter as well as Mandarin. (“Taiwan” 248)

Simpson’s remark shows the realistic side of the Taiwanese society. This phenomenon sometimes recurs on social or political occasions when speakers of Southern Min confront monolingual Mandarin speakers, especially when it comes to the moments when mainlander politicians are running campaigns for political elections. Yet, this peculiar

406 Ibid., p.246.
408 Simpson, op.cit., p.248.
409 Simpson gave the example of local Southern Min taxi drivers, suggesting that the taxi drivers’ aggressive attitude in demanding fares by speaking Southern Min can in some way articulates an expression of Taiwanese national identity. But, I remain hesitant to agree with Simpson’s remark, for I consider this could be a biased example in his own personal experience rather than a thoroughly conducted study about the phenomenon. Ibid., p.251.
410 For examples, both Ma Yin-jeou and Soong Chu-yu are Mandarin Chinese speakers, and they speak neither Southern Min nor Hakka or other aboriginal languages. Nevertheless, while running the presidential elections in year 2008 and year 2012, both Ma and Soong felt obliged to personally speak the Southern Min language in their campaign videos broadcasted on TV. “2008 zhengdang lunti mayingjiu jingxuan yingpian 2008 政黨輪
phenomenon was not solely the outcome or the manipulation of a political concept promoted by DPP members in the 1980s. Simpson emphasises that it was “an issue which was discussed often heatedly at all levels of society, and frequently resulted in demands among people to openly declare their identity and their commitment to being either Chinese or Taiwanese” (‘Taiwan’ 248).

The development of the local languages and the question of political identity affect one another reciprocally. In the recent revival of local languages, there are of course different political meanings closely tied to how people regard their identity formation. From a more critical perspective, it is interesting to note that this shared and imagined “Taiwanese identity,” which came late in the 1980s and 1990s and which is elicited by a history dating back several centuries, has a tendency to be exclusive. Firstly, as a rule, it often prevents the more recently arrived mainland population from participating in this “Taiwanese identity,” since those who came to Taiwan after 1945: (1) could not claim to have memories (or family members with memories) of the Japanese occupation; (2) generally followed the Chinese nationalist culture which was promoted by the KMT; and (3) often did not speak any of the languages which were viewed as local languages of Taiwan. Secondly, because Southern Min speakers were in a great majority when DPP initiated the nationalist opposition movement, the language thus came to be the primary language of party meetings, demonstrations and political rallies. Hence, there is a long history of how Southern Min became the dominant language that tied together the imagined “Taiwanese identity.” Taking the most recent Sunflower student movement, which arose from a battle against the Cross-Strait Service Trade agreement, “Taiwanese identity” was again elusively present, being evoked by the theme song Daoyu tianguang [Island’s Sunrise] in the Southern Min language. As a result, other local language speakers feel largely excluded from engagement with or participation in this “Taiwanese identity.” As Simpson indicates, “[s]trong protests against the appropriation and use of the term ‘Taiwanese’ as an exclusive label for Southern

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411 Simpson, op.cit., p.249.

412 Hsiau A-chin, op.cit, pp.125-47.

413 “Daoyu tianguang taiyanghua xueyun donghuaban 島嶼天光 太陽花學運動動畫版 [Island’s Sunrise Sunflower Student Movement Animation Clip],” Youtube, uploaded by Liou Jie, 30 Mar. 2014, website accessed : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N6vRCQqOiUw.
Min have consequently been made by Hakka and aborigine communities alike” (‘Taiwan’ 251).

Indeed, the revival of the local Taiwanese languages is significantly tied to the formation and the imagination of a “Taiwanese” political identity, and to some extent, it has been dominated by Southern Min language users. Nevertheless, it does not mean that today’s current promotion and development of the Taiwanese languages is unchanging. In fact, after being elected as the first pro-independence president in 2000, Chen Shui-bian 陳水扁 tried to enforce a multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic Taiwanese political identity during his presidency. This identity includes the Hakka, the aborigines, the mainlanders as well as the Southern Min, leading to an increased presentation of Taiwanese-specific culture and history in its broadest sense. 414 The policies and measures adopted directly affect the system of education, the state-run media and cinema production. Moreover, school curriculums and textbooks were also significantly modified; they are less China-centric but present more geo-historical or socio-political events related to Taiwan itself. 415 From an international perspective, it is also clear that this state-sponsored promotion of multilingualism and multiculturalism now counts as an important aspect of how Taiwan’s autonomous sovereignty is viewed by other countries. As Edward Friedman argues, the establishment of a national identity, which highlights the multilingual and multicultural aspects of Taiwanese society, is critically important for Taiwan’s aim to continue claiming various forms of distinction and existent independence from the People’s Republic of China (PRC). 416

In regards to the evaluation of local languages development, though there today exist governmental policies which actively encourage learning different languages at school, the outcome of local languages learning is not without problems. As part of the government’s commitment to multicultural and multilingual nationhood, there have been attempts to stem the loss of the aboriginal languages. Different funding packages and bilingual education programs are provided to support sustainable learning of aboriginal cultures and languages, yet so far the success rate has been very low. 417 Simpson further points out that there is even a

414 Simpson, op.cit., p.252.
415 Ibid., p.252.
lack of motivation to learn and speak the aboriginal languages among the youngsters.\textsuperscript{418} The Hakka language is experiencing a similar situation. Currently, about 11 per cent of the total Taiwanese population (about 2,500,000 people) is made up of Hakka speakers, however the Hakka community constantly expresses sorrow and anxiety that there is now a huge communication gap between the younger and the older generations.\textsuperscript{419} The youngsters have stopped learning Hakka, which has been more or less replaced by Mandarin Chinese and Southern Min. In terms of educational policy, since 1993 the Hakka language and culture have been introduced as an optional course in elementary schools.\textsuperscript{420} However, in spite of the good intentions of the new educational program, not enough time and resources are put in to achieve effective learning.\textsuperscript{421} On top of that, there is also a serious shortage of qualified instructors for the teaching of non-Mandarin languages.\textsuperscript{422} Comparing to Hakka, Southern Min has the advantage of being the most widely spoken language (apart from the Mandarin Chinese). As noted earlier, Southern Min bounced back in the Taiwanese society with great popularity after the 80s and has since been regarded as a symbol of a new Taiwanese nationalism.\textsuperscript{423} In certain areas, particularly in Southern Taiwan, Southern Min is still considered a dominant language, and is sometimes even required for certain jobs.\textsuperscript{424} But in terms of the teaching and learning of Southern Min, there are still some inherent restrictions preventing Southern Min from becoming fully developed. First of all, higher-level vocabulary and expressions have been forever lost due to the ban of the local languages during the Japanese rule. Being largely confined to the domestic areas, today, Southern Min has a difficulty competing with Mandarin Chinese when it comes to using higher-level terms to formulate discussions. Secondly, there is as yet a standardised and commonly agreed writing system for Southern Min, and it is thus less viable for use in official documents.\textsuperscript{425} Finally, though much of Southern Min can be represented with Chinese characters, there is nearly

\textsuperscript{418} Ibid., p.254.
\textsuperscript{419} Ibid., p.254.
\textsuperscript{420} Ibid., p.254.
\textsuperscript{421} Ibid., p.254.
\textsuperscript{422} Ibid., p.254.
\textsuperscript{423} Ibid., p.255.
\textsuperscript{424} Ibid., p.255.
\textsuperscript{425} Ibid., p.255.
thirty per cent of the language that cannot be fully depicted, making the teaching of the language a challenging task.\textsuperscript{426}

To summarise, the above analysis has looked at the language policies and developments in different periods of Taiwan’s history in order to understand how political identity (or national identity) is related to these developments. We have seen that the formation of political identity in Taiwan, which is associated with the imposition or assimilation of certain linguistic usage(s), cannot be said to have a decisive or consistent link to colonialism or imperialism. Rather, it occurred at the moment when the colonial/imperial expansion took up the idiosyncrasies of modernity. This is why, in the Dutch colonial period or the Qing imperial rule, there existed no definite regulations or restrictions on language use. On the contrary, one finds that the Japanese imperial regime and the KMT colonial and military control of the island both promoted the assimilation of a particular language and culture in order to bring about a homogenous political identity. At the turn of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, different approaches concerning political identity and language(s) have been adopted by the Taiwanese government. Beginning from the late nineties, the concepts and movements of multilingualism and multiculturalism, which epitomise a “multi-ethnic” or “heterogeneous” society, are highly welcomed by the ruling governments. Nevertheless, one should not assume that the revival of the local languages in Taiwan, which is evoked by these new concepts and movements, has nothing to do with a new assertion (or a new formulation) of political identity. The new Taiwanese political identity is praised as involving “multi-ethnic-and-multilingual-identities-united-by-one-single-national-identity.” Simpson draws his conclusion by suggesting that Mandarin Chinese is accepted as a \textit{neutral} language and the lingua franca among all populations in Taiwan, and it is no longer viewed as a negative or repressive language that is associated with the KMT government.\textsuperscript{427} Moreover, he also states that language therefore should not be seen as a definitive characteristic of the new Taiwanese identity, for he considers that only in the period immediately following the lifting of martial law has the use of Southern Min been indispensable for the Taiwanese independent nationalists.\textsuperscript{428} In regard to Simpson’s statements, one can easily contest his conclusion. Simpson accepts almost too easily the idea that multilingualism and multiculturalism are transcendental universal values. By and large, his statements imply that such values should be

\textsuperscript{426} Ibid., p.255.
\textsuperscript{427} Ibid., p.256.
\textsuperscript{428} Ibid., p.257.
embraced, despite the fact that they ultimately serve to construct a “unified” national identity, promoted by the modern nation-state. Simpson shows no critical awareness of any problems with these values, and further ignores the plight of those people who do not conform to the logic of modern nation-state and who continue to feel they are repressed linguistically. These counter examples can be easily found in the political discourses and demonstrations made by the Taiwanese aboriginals who dedicated themselves to the teaching and learning of tribal languages. So, as was the case in South Africa, one should not forget the importance of modernity for Taiwan, for it has left a colonial legacy which has played a critical role in the formation of political identity (be it ethnic or national).

2.3.2. Postcolonial Approaches to Language and Political Identity

The Refusal of Linguistic and Political Constructs

The above sections have discussed the constitution of political identity in postcolonial nation-states, especially in relation to national language policies. In this section, the main focus is on how postcolonial literary texts take this issue into account and above all how the two postcolonial writers studied in this thesis articulate their views and express their criticisms in relation to the formation of linguistic and political identities.

At a very early stage in his literary career, Coetzee deliberately expressed criticism of political identity construction. Coetzee was aware that political identity formation is strongly tied to the issue of language. Hence, in constructing his early works he tried to challenge and overthrow the fundamental concept of language. Both *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983) and *Foe* (1986) depict specific characters who represent this challenge to language. In *Life*, Coetzee portrays a nomadic character with a physical defect affecting his ability to speak. Michael K is described as a man with a harelip. This defect functions as a symbolic reference to the dysfunction of language. The importance of this symbolic reference can be shown by the description Coetzee provides of Michael’s harelip at the time of his birth. “The first thing the midwife noticed about Michael K when she helped him out of his mother into the world was that he had a hare lip. The lip curled like a snail’s foot, the left nostril gaping” (*Life* 3). In Samuel Durrant’s comparative reading of *Life* and *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), he claims that both Michael K’s harelip and the barbarian girl’s scars “literarily disfigure and unnamed them [the two characters], confirming their status as objects, rather than subjects, of history” (437). Also, Durrant points out, this disfigurement prevents Michael K and the barbarian girl from entering the Symbolic Order. Following on from Durrant’s argument, I would like further to suggest that this denial of entrance into the Symbolic Order is in fact an attempt to demonstrate the existence of dysfunctional language to his readers. Following the discovery of Michael’s harelip, Coetzee writes:

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Obscuring the child for a moment from his mother, [the midwife] prodded open the tiny bud of a mouth and was thankful to find the palate whole. To the mother she said: ‘You should be happy, they bring luck to the household.’ But from the first Anna K did not like the mouth that would not close and the living pink flesh it bared to her. She shivered to think of what had been growing in her all these months. (Life 3)

Coetzee’s description clearly shows that Michael’s harelip is only an issue for his physical appearance. Since the palate is intact and not affected by the deformation, with only a bit more effort Michael is fully capable of articulating words and formulating sentences without difficulty. However, this birth defect has psychologically troubled both Michael and his mother. As Michael grows, he learns to be a quiet person. It is later demonstrated in the text, in several occasions when the police and the medical officers pose questions to Michael in order to acquire information and to learn about his past, Michael simply stares at them, not uttering a word. The refusal to speak and the deformation of the mouth are bound together to render an image of the dysfunction of the language system.

Another interesting feature about Michael that Coetzee asserts in the novel is his nomadism. The story begins with Michael’s resolution to take his mother to a farmhouse at Prince Albert, a town in the mid-south of South Africa, to help her health recover. After endless waiting for a travel permission to arrive, Michael decides to put his mother in a wheelbarrow and pushes her all the way to Prince Albert without authorisation. Unfortunately, however, his mother passed away during the journey. After the death of his mother, Michael begins his nomadic life, wondering around on the streets aimlessly with the wheelbarrow. Michael temporarily joined the company of other men and women who sleep outside on the streets, and when they were captured by the police, Michael was sent to join a labour gang for railway construction. He eventually escaped from the labour gang and continued his journey to the farm at Prince Albert. The long journey Michael undertakes can be seen as a kind of nomadism. This “nomadic” journey evokes a sense of non-locality, a “non-locus.” One can further associates this “non-locus” to the sound of “non-logos.”

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431 Coetzee, Life and Times of Michael K, pp.3-4.
432 Ibid., p.135, 138, 140.
433 Ibid., pp.7-10.
434 Ibid., pp.19-22.
435 “[After the cremation of Anna], [t]hough he had no more business there, [Michael] found it hard to tear himself from the hospital. By day he pushed the cart around the streets in the vicinity; by night he slept under culverts, behind hedges, in alleys.” Ibid., p.33.
436 Ibid., pp.33-34, 41-44.
in Greek, refers to “a ground,” “an opinion,” or “an account,” but it also means “word,” “speech” and “reason.” The nomadism of Michael offers a “non-locus” which further links together Michael’s resistance to speak, that is, a resistance to “logos.” Nations, as argued earlier, are both territorial and linguistic communities. On the one hand, Michael’s nomadism defies a territorial belonging; on the other hand, his refusal to speak also excludes him from a linguistic community. The story of Michael thus binds together the “non-locus” and the “non-logos,” for he is somehow at home neither territorially nor linguistically. In short, Michael can be seen as a man who has neither a locus nor a logos.

As suggested earlier, language is essentially tied to political identity formation. Via the character of Michael, Coetzee presents a challenge to the language system, while also calling into question political identity construction. When Michael is captured the second time by the police, he carries no paper document with him. He is then charged with leaving his magisterial district without authorisation and not being able to provide proof of identification. The only concrete information that readers learn about Michael comes from the charge sheet, stating Michael is a forty-year-old coloured male who is unemployed and who has no fixed address. Later, when Michael becomes very ill and weak due to malnutrition, he is admitted into a hospital. The medical officer who gives Michael treatment tries to get Michael to tell the story of his life since there is little available information about him and the reported story (recounted by the police who captured Michael) appears to be illogical and contradictory to Michael’s state of health. The second part of the story is narrated entirely from the third person perspective of this medical officer. The doctor’s narration exhibits a strong attempt to construct Michael’s identity through an “authentic” account of his past:

‘Michaels,’ I said, ‘[…] tell me, tell the Major: What were you actually doing on the farm when they caught you? Because all we know is what we read in these papers from the police at Prince Albert, and frankly, what they say doesn’t make sense. Tell us the truth, tell us the whole truth, and you can go back to bed, we won’t bother you anymore.’ (Coetzee, Life 138)

438 “On the charge sheet he was listed ‘Michael Visagie—CM—40—NFA—Unemployed.’” Coetzee, Life, p.70.
439 “Noël [another medical officer] brought out the register. ‘According to this,’ he said, ‘Michaels is an arsonist. He is also an escapee from a labour camp. He was running a flourishing garden on an abandoned farm and feeding the local guerrilla population when he was captured. That is the story of Michaels.’ I shook my head. ‘They have made a mistake,’ I said. ‘They have mixed him up with some other Michaels. This Michaels is an idiot. This Michaels doesn’t know how to strike a match. If this Michaels was running a flourishing garden, why was he starving to death?’ Ibid., p.131.
This attempt is destined to fail, however, for there is no “authentic” story (or “truth”) about Michael’s life. Right at the start, the medical officer insists on calling him “Michaels” instead of “Michael,” and the paper document from the police indicates that Michael’s surname is “Visagie” rather than a surname that begins with an initial “K.” The inconsistency of Michael’s name immediately shows the impossibility of acquiring the “truth” of Michael’s story. One possible explanation for the doctor’s insistence is that, as a medical officer, he believes the patient is in such an ill or delirious state that he is incapable of reporting his own name correctly. Apart from that, Michael’s withdrawn attitude to speaking and his absurd responses to the officer’s interrogation also create a problematic issue in constructing an identity for him. Struggling against Michael’s resistance to language and to identity formation, the final words of the medical officer to Michael sum up brilliantly Coetzee’s profound challenge to the language system embodied in the character of Michael as well as to Michael’s identity:

‘Forgive me, Michaels,’ I would have had to say, ‘[y]our stay in the camp was merely an allegory, if you know that word. It was an allegory—speaking at the highest level—of how scandalously, how outrageously a meaning can take up residence in a system without become a term in it. Did you not notice how, whenever I tried to pin you down, you slipped away? I noticed.” (Coetzee, Life 166; emphasis mine)

Another example which is able to manifest Coetzee’s challenge to the language system and identity construction can be found in Foe. One of the main characters, Friday, displays Coetzee’s philosophical position with respect to the issue related to language and political identity formation. Friday, unlike Michael K, does not exhibit the “nomadic” feature in his presence, yet Friday’s physical features and characters show even more strongly Coetzee’s resistance to language and to the construction of political identity. Using a postmodern re-writing technique of a text from the classical colonial canon, Robinson Crusoe, Coetzee’s depiction of Friday is very different from that of Daniel Defoe. Challenging the structuralists’

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440 Ibid., pp. 129-131, 70.
441 J.M. Coetzee’s re-writing of Robison Crusoe is a fascinating work in terms of its designed postmodern framework. The story can be unfold into three layers: the first layer is Susan Barton’s, the fictional female character, narration of her “real” experiences lived and shared with Crusoe and Friday on the deserted island. The second layer is Susan’s confrontation with the fictional author of her life story, Daniel Foe, and Susan’s request of Foe’s re-writing of the story and events occurred during her stay on the island. And finally, the third layer which frames the entire story is Coetzee’s own fictional writing. The second and the third layers of the story stage a postmodern questioning between “authenticity and writing.” By staging the scenario of “a character in search of her author,” such problematic representation puts forward a strong philosophical debate on realism and authorship in relation to colonial representations.

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definition of the subject⁴⁴² by removing Friday’s admission to the Symbolic Order, Coetzee creates a figure without tongue and without voice.⁴⁴³ Without tongue, Friday’s story is incomplete, and so is his identity. As Susan Barton, the protagonist, comments:

‘[T]here is the matter of Friday’s tongue. On the island I accepted that I should never learn how Friday lost his tongue, as I accepted that I should never learn how the apes crossed the sea. But what we can accept in life we cannot accept in history. To tell my story and be silent on Friday’s tongue is no better than offering a book for sale with pages in it quietly left empty. Yet the only tongue that can tell Friday’s secret is the tongue he has lost!’ (Coetzee, Foe 67)

There are also several attempts from Susan Barton to try to “civilise” Friday and to engage him in the language system. But, as in Michael’s case, these attempts were destined to fail. Throughout the novel, readers have not once heard the story from Friday’s perspective, nor have they encountered a moment when Friday tries to express himself. Susan Barton laments, “I talk to Friday as old women talk to cats, out of loneliness […] all my efforts to bring Friday to speech, or to bring speech to Friday, have failed” (Coetzee, Foe 77, 142).

The relation between language and identity is also present on several occasions in the text— for example, when Barton debates with Cruso and with Mr. Foe. Barton’s argument provides much ground for philosophical debate. For example, at one point Barton asks Cruso how many English words Friday knows in order to see if Cruso had been able to conduct dialogues with Friday throughout the years when he lived alone as a castaway on the island. Cruso replies, “[a]s many as he needs, […] [t]his is not England, we have no need of a great stock of words” (Coetzee, Foe 21). Barton responds to Cruso’s statement indignantly, suggesting there is a more profound meaning to language. She firmly believes that the language system is the foundation of the civilised world we have constructed.

‘You speak as if language were one of the banes of life, like money or the pox,’ said I, ‘Yet would it not have lightened your solitude had Friday been master of English? You and he might have experienced […] the pleasures of conversation; you might have brought home to him some of the blessings of civilisation and made him a better man. (Coetzee, Foe 22)


⁴⁴³ “Cruso motioned Friday nearer. […] Friday opened his mouth. ‘Look,’ said Cruso. I looked, but saw nothing in the dark save the glint of teeth white as ivory. […] ‘He has no tongue,’ said Cruso. […] ‘That is why he does not speak. They cut out his tongue.’” Coetzee, Foe, pp.22-23.
Towards the end of the novel, when Susan finally meets the “fictional author” of her story, Mr. Foe, she also comments on Friday’s inaccessibility to language. “There are times when I ask myself whether in [Friday’s] earlier life he had the slightest mastery of language, whether he knows what kind of thing language is” (Coetzee, Foe 142; emphasis mine). Evidently, from Susan’s interrogation of Friday’s non-acquisition of language, one can tell that she harbours a colonial desire to impose such a system, thereby also expressing a desire to locate the subject and ultimately constructing an identity for this “uncivilised” subject.

In Boyhood (1997), a work published a few years after the end of the Apartheid era, Coetzee returns to dealing with the issue of language and political identity in a more straightforward manner. Adopting the perspective of an eight year-old boy, Coetzee documents his own experience of the political identity construction process in relation to language as it occurred under the control of the Apartheid regime. As he remembers it, his choice of identifying himself as a South African “English” instead of an “Afrikaner” was largely tied to the change of language policy that occurred in a specific political/historical context. J.M. Coetzee’s family are descendants of early Dutch colonisers, and parts of his family are Afrikaans-language speakers who have adopted Afrikaans culture. Though none of Coetzee’s parents are of British descent, he grew up in an English-speaking household. He further admits that he had a tendency to master the English language at very young age because he was afraid to be found out that he was “pretending” to be English at school. It is therefore not difficult to understand Coetzee’s personal motivations in dealing with the question of language, but also his reasons for portraying characters like Friday or Michael K who manifest his rejection to the language. The portrayals thus exhibit Coetzee’s strong attempts of resistance to the construction of political identity construction, especially when the construction is specifically designed to create an identity for the colonised.

The Embrace of Multiplicity and Hybridity

Wu Ming-yi takes very different approaches to the question of language and identity formation in his creative writings. This thesis suggests that Wu follows Homi Bhabha’s notion of hybridity in contextualising languages and identities in his novels. As Anthony Easthope

444 Coetzee, Boyhood, p.59.
445 Ibid., p.40, 80-81.
446 Ibid., pp.59-60.
observes, Bhabha has gone beyond Said’s postcolonial theoretical framework and further developed his own notion of “hybridity” by drawing on the ideas of Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan and Mikhail Bakhtin. Easthope explains that, for Bhabha, there is a space in between the designation of identity, and that “this interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (Bhabha, The Location 4; Easthope, “Homi” 145). To put it more simply, Bhabha reckons that a cultural hybridity which welcomes difference exists in the interstitial space within the designated identity. Such hybridity, as Bhabha perceives, can be found even in the colonial texts. According to Abdennebi Ben Beya, Bhabha demonstrates that there is an ambivalence in the way the colonised Other is represented in colonialist writings—in the works of Rider Haggard, Rudyard Kipling or E.M. Forster for instance, and that this ambivalence destabilises the claim for the absolute authority or unquestionable authenticity of the colonial texts. For Bhabha, this ambivalence lies in the gaps within these English texts, and which result from an imperial illusion. Ben Beya further suggests from reading Bhabha that these gaps disturb the colonial text’s authoritative representations “by the uncanny forces of race, sexuality, violence and cultural and even climatic differences which emerge in the colonial discourse as the mixed and split texts of hybridity” (n.p.; emphasis mine). Hybridity, in Bhabha’s opinion, undermines the authority of the narratives of colonial power and dominant culture. In a sense, the dominant culture is already infected by the linguistic and racial differences of the native self. Henceforth, hybridity can be regarded and used as a counter-narrative, or, a critique of the canon.

Returning to Wu’s literary writings, unlike Coetzee, Wu does not take the path of undermining the language system or trying to contest and resist the formation of identity through the rejection of language. Instead, Wu’s approach is closer to Bhabha’s ideas inasmuch as he stages the hybridity of languages and of identities in order to demonstrate a counter-narrative to that of colonial linguistic and cultural domination. In his first postcolonial novel, Shuimian de hangxian [Routes in a Dream], Wu’s intention was clearly to explore the

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449 Ibid., n.p.

450 Ibid., n.p.

451 Ibid., n.p.
technique of hybridity with regard to language and political identity formation. A passage in which he challenges the standardised Mandarin language and the imposed “Chinese” identity concerns the inhabitants of Zhonghua shangchang 中華商場 [Zhonghua shopping mall]:

Speaking of Tik-á tshù [bamboo village], a lot of the second generation of Zhonghua sangchang [Zhonghua shopping mall] probably wouldn’t have a clue about it. [...] Before the mall was built, people came to this town looking for work, doing business, and they improvised their own houses at Tik-á tshù. Some of them came here because they had given up their lands in the countryside, some came here because they had failed their business ventures elsewhere, and others came with the military troops of the Koumintang army. … That’s why there were people who talked in Japanese, dialects of Fuzhou and Sandong, and sometimes even in aboriginal Amis language. … “Tik-á tshù” was a world of complex languages. […] Although they could not communicate in one single language, with some guessing of each other’s words and expressions, every one of them seemed to learn a little bit of the others’ languages. Back then, the official language used on the radio was the extremely difficult “Mandarin.” Yet, as you recall, nobody in Tik-á tshù could speak the official Mandarin language fluently; everybody spoke a sort of “mixed language” like the “vegetable noodle stir fry” made and sold by the Cantonese guy on the second floor.

This passage demonstrates Wu’s attempt to depict hybrid languages and identities. In Shuimian, Wu even tried to incorporate the Japanese and Hokkienese languages into the text, but this experiment remains limited in certain aspects. Firstly, the occurrences of Hokkien language in the novel are mostly found in simple dialogues with a word or two replaced with a Chinese characterisation of Hokkienese language. For example, the word “you” and “he/she/it/that” are represented in the form of “lín 恁” or “yi 伊” of the Hokkien language instead of “ni 你” or “ta 他/她/它/牠” of Mandarin Chinese.454 As Andrew Simpson

452 Fuzhou 福州 and Sandong 山東: both are provinces in mainland China, the former is situated in the South East and the latter is at the North East.

453 Hokkien: also referred to as Minnan or Southern Min language. As pointed out earlier, it is the second most widely spoken language in Taiwan.

454 Wu M.Y., Shuimian, p.110. N.B. Both in Chinese and Hokkienese language systems, there is no sex in the designation of pronouns as in English or other European languages. Hence, the word, “ta 他/她/它/牠” or “yi 伊”
outlines, the imposed language policies of the Japanese and Kuomintang’s colonial
governments had largely restricted the Hokkien and Hakka languages to only domestic
environments. Furthermore, since these languages are less frequently used on formal
occasions or in cultural/political contexts, they are further reduced to relatively simple
syntactical structures or to basic familial vocabulary. Secondly, in writing, there are actual
difficulties for Wu to transcribe the spoken Hokkienese into the written form of Mandarin
Chinese. Currently the characterisation system to translate Hokkien language into written
Mandarin has its own limits, such that only certain amount of vocabulary can be represented
in Mandarin Chinese characters. In Shuimian, Wu has chosen to employ only common words
that are widely known to Taiwanese readers. For instance, words like tshàu-hī-làng 嗅耳郎 [a
hearing-impaired person], tsai-iánn 知影 [to know/knowing] and siánn-mih 咻米 [what] are
inserted in the text in place of longzi 聾子, zhidao 知道 and shime 什麼 in Mandarin
Chinese. Thirdly, the major reason that this experiment with language hybridism—as an
attempt to demonstrate a counter-narrative to the colonial linguistic or cultural identities—
remains limited is because the Japanese language hardly appears in the novel. Despite the
story plotline revolving around the Japanese colonial period and many colonial references and
wartime memories being depicted in Shuimian, examples of the Japanese language are
few; throughout the entire novel, use of the Japanese language only occurs four times. If the
hybridity of language is meant to challenge colonial authority, the unbalanced representation
of the Japanese language and Hokkienese does not seem to give much attention to the counter
narrative of Japanese colonial domination.

伊” is equivalent to English’s “he,” “she,” “it.” And sometimes in Hokkienese, “yi伊” can be further applied
in place of “that.”

456 Ibid., pp.254-55.
457 Wu M.Y., Shuimian, p.82, 126.
458 Wu’s insertions of Japanese language in the texts are the following: (1) “Kimigayo 君が代” is the title of
Japanese national anthem. (2) “Akai ringo ni kuchibiru yosete damatte mite iru aoi sora 赤いリンゴに
口びるよせて だまってみている 青い空 [The red apple comes closer to the lips / The blue sky gazes in
silence]” are the lyrics of Ringonouta リンゴの唄 [Song of Apples] (3) “Bokura wa mōsugu uchi ni kaeru 僕
らはもうすぐ うちに帰る [We are soon going home]” is Sanlang’s, the protagonist, murmuring to
himself when he was sent back to Taiwan by the Japanese government after the end of the Second World War.
(4) “Watashi ga ichiban kireidatta toki / machi々wa garagara kuzurete itte わたしが一番きれいだったとき / 街々はがらがら
崩れていて [When I looked my prettiest / streets were bare crumbling]” are the
Nevertheless, what is interesting in Wu’s literary writings is that there is an evolution of this method of language hybridism, and one can also associate Bhabha’s theory of language hybridity with Wu’s adoption of this method. Another two books that came out after Shuimian, Tianqiaoshang de moshuishi [Magician on the Skywalk] (2011) and Danche shiqieji [The Stolen Bicycle] (2015) both take a step further in demonstrating this language hybridism. Tianqiaoshang is a collection of short stories inspired by Wu’s childhood memories or experiences of living in Zhonghua shopping mall. These memories occurred during the period of Kuomintang military occupation, and so, in a sense, they can be said to belong to the context of the colonial framework of the Kuomintang. This context no doubt explains the author’s attempt in these stories to emphasise the importance of the Hokkien language, for it constitutes an act of resistance to the dominant Mandarin Chinese policy enforced by the KMT government. Compared to Shuimian, the Hokkien language references employed in Tianqiaoshang have more variations. Though most of Wu’s insertions of the Hokkien language still remain basic vocabulary used most commonly in a domestic environment, Wu begins to put in dialogues of Hokkienese instead of replacing only one or two words in a sentence. For instance, in one of the stories which tells Mark’s mysterious disappearance from Zhonghua shopping mall, in describing Mark’s return, Wu writes:

“Where have you been for the last three months?” asked those gossip-loving neighbors.

“I wondered around in between these buildings, from building number one to building number eight,” Mark replied.

“Nonsense! This kid must have gone mental.”

“On return he still can’t stop making up stories, even to his own ma [mother].”

“Let him be. The most important thing is that he finally came back home. Let’s not bother him with questions. We don’t want to provoke him, do we?”

一大堆長舌的類居都跑來問：「這三個月汝到底跑去佗位去囉？」

馬克說，「我就是佇商場第一棟到第八棟行來行去。」

「黑白講，這因仔可能是頭腦歹去了。」

「攏轉來囉連老母也騙。」

「因仔轉來就好，不免再問了，萬一刺激著伊就不好了。」 (Tianqiaoshang 45)

The entire conversation is conducted in Hokkienese, and one sees that Wu has successfully transcribed the dialogue in Chinese characters. In addition, for certain pieces of vocabulary, Wu also tries to provide explanations in brackets for non-Hokkienese speaking readers to
understand the meaning of the words. The words, “hû-liu 雨溜” and “khòaⁿ-kàu siān 看到聞,” are followed by the explanation of “niqiu 泥鰍 [a loach]” and “kandaoni 看到膩 [got bored of seeing it over and over again].”

Likewise, in Danche shiqieji, Wu again uses this unique style of “multilingual writing”. Furthermore, Wu has tried different ways to explore this language hybridism in representation. In the ways that the text treats the subject of identity and colonial memory, Danche could be said to be one of Wu’s most successful attempts at representing the hybridity of languages. Firstly, Wu has used the alphabetic system in order both to facilitate and engage his readers in vocalizing the Hokkienese languages. On many occasions, when he makes references to a Hokkienese word or phrase, he further adds alphabetic spellings to help readers to pronounce that word/phrase. For example, in describing an old Hokkienese-speaking bike repairman commenting on the art of bike repairing and collecting, Wu writes:

“To be fair, a bike can last for fifty winters, sometimes even longer. Plus, back in our days, your bike was the most valuable property. A bike for a life time.”

「因為合理來講 (kông), 一台孔明車會使 (ē-sái) 騎五十冬，甚至閣較 (kohn-khah) 久。而且，佇咧 (ti-leh) 阮的時代，真濟人上貴重的財產就是孔明車，一生一台。」

(Danche 41)

Or again, when he makes references to a Japanese word or phrase, Wu inserts a Chinese translation. For instance, the mother of the protagonist has made the following statement about bicycle in her memory of the past:

“Back in the olden days, a bike was like a ベンツ (Mercedes-Benz).”

「彼時孔明車親像ベンツ（賓士）啊。」(Wu, Danche 167)

Or, in describing soldiers’ departing and saying goodbyes to each other at the end of Second World War, Wu writes:

I boarded the shipping boat. Some prisoners of war and other people who were waiting for their return came to say goodbyes. “Korekara mo i kiteiku yo これからも生きていくよ (Wish you live a long life!),” they bid us goodbye.

我上了運輸船，同為戰俘的日本士兵，還有尚在等待遣返的人都到門口來送別，用 「これからも生きていくよ」（希望你活得長久哪！）(Danche 231)

Compared to Wu’s other examples in Shuimian, the examples in Danche call on readers to participate in the text, both in terms of translating meaning and phonetic articulation. The

459 Wu M.Y., Tianqiaoshang, p.44, 62.
hybridity of language obviously takes a much more complex form in representation and is more diversified.

Finally, Danche also contains various attempts to incorporate the Taiwanese aboriginal language. In Wu’s previous fictional publication, Fuyanren 複眼人 [The Man with the Compound Eyes] (2011), he took some Taiwanese aboriginal cultural references or elements as inspiration for his story writing. Nonetheless, Wu had never before tried incorporating aboriginal languages into his text.\(^{460}\) In Danche, Wu has gone further in incorporating the aboriginal Tsou 鄒 language, which is only found quite rarely in the works of the non-aboriginal Taiwanese writers. Wu’s motive is very clear. While portraying the narration of Basuya, a young Tsou fellow, of his war-fighting experience for the Japanese Empire, Wu wishes to bring attention to the resistance of this colonised subject through the hybridity of Japanese and Tsou languages:

Our people are the descendants of maple leaves, and the sons and daughters of the new high mountain. \textit{ak’i} (My grandfather) once said, a long long time ago that Hamo (the God of Sky) shook the maple trees and the leaves that fell on the ground became our ancestors. Later, there was a huge flood. In order to get away from the flood, humans and animals moved up to \textit{patunkuon} (Mont Yu). When the flood was gone, our people began to look for new homeland. The ancestors came down from the new high mountain and moved towards the north, crossed \textit{havuhavu} (Mont Luku), and arrived at the plain in the West. They worked hard to cultivate the land and gave birth to new generations. From a \textit{lenohi’u} (small tribe), it gradually turned into a \textit{hasa} (big tribe).

我們族人是楓葉的後代，新高山的子民。\textit{ak’i}（祖父）說，在遙遠的時代，\textit{Hamo} （天神哈莫）搖動楓樹，飄落的楓葉遂成為鄒族的祖先。後來發生了大洪水，人和動物為了躲避大洪水，就逃到 \textit{patunkuon}（玉山），洪水退去了以後，族人才開始尋照新的家園。我們的祖先從新高山下來以後就朝北方，越過雄狀的 \textit{havuhavu} （鹿窟山），到達西部的平原，努力耕作、繁衍後代，從 \textit{lenohi’u}（小社）逐漸長大成為 \textit{hasa}（大社）。\textit{(Danche 143)}

Although in Chinese, the narration of Basuya is, according to Wu description, a \textit{mélange} of the Japanese and Tsou languages:

Japanese is often used when Basuya tries to narrate events, and the Tsou language often appears when describing his emotions or portraying scenery. […] These two languages are both inscribed in the body of the narrator. The voice of the Tsou language and the voice of the Japanese language are like mountain walls and wind, or like trees and the parasites that feed on them, impossible to be separated.

\(^{460}\) However, Wu has tried creating a similar linguistic system for the Wayo Wayo tribe out of his own imagination. Wu M.Y., \textit{Fuyanren}, p.199, 201, 218-19, 256, 298-99.
巴蘇亞的日語往往被用在敘事裡，而鄒族語則會在表達感情與景色的描述時出現。⋯⋯這兩種語言在講述者身上已合而為一，鄒族的聲腔語日語的聲腔，就像山壁和風、樹以及生長其上的寄生植物，再也難以分解開了。(Wu, Danche142)

Such mixing of the colonial language and the local language becomes a site of hybrid cultural identity, in which there is an interstitial space or passage that can open up to a possible hybridity that entertains difference without an imposed hierarchy.⁴⁶¹

In conclusion, though Wu has adopted a very different strategy in terms of the resistance to colonial linguistic domination or identity formation, he has ceaselessly explored different possibilities for integrating other non-Mandarin languages in Taiwan into his postcolonial fictions, and each time he also tries to develop new techniques for representing these languages. One can therefore consider Wu’s adaptation is an embrace of Bhabha’s theory. In so doing, he has constituted a successful counter-narrative and critique of colonial political identity.

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⁴⁶¹ Bhabha, The Location of Culture, p.4.
2.4. Colonialism and Global Environmental History

2.4.1. Colonial Biopolitical and Environmental Projects

Postcolonial studies, particularly in humanities disciplines (i.e. literature, philosophy, sociology, and political science, etc.), is attracting increasing attention in contemporary academia. Nevertheless, the issues and philosophical discourses treated in postcolonial studies often focus only the subject of human oppression, for example, the history of slavery and racism, the problematic complex of shame, the deprivation of subjectivity, and so on and so forth. Ecological or environmental colonialism, by contrast, is often overlooked in postcolonial studies. As Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley state, “to deny colonial and environmental history as mutually constitutive misses the central role the exploitation of natural resources plays in any imperial project” (10). Undeniably, colonialism at its early stage was structured to carry out a modern biopolitical (and to a certain extent, even an anthropological) project, since the ultimate objective of colonialism underlines mostly the civilisation of the discovered colonies. The earlier discussion of the views of Balibar, Anderson and Silverstein’s views in chapter 2.3.1. has already shown that the formation of the modern nation-state is inevitably tied to the mechanisms of biopolitical management, and this management is indeed a colonial legacy. In considering Zygmunt Bauman’s interpretation of “modernity,” one may better grasp the metaphorical meaning of colonialism as the realisation of both biopolitical and ecological projects. In Modernity and The Holocaust, Bauman acknowledges that in the age of modernity, planners and visionaries held a “gardener-like” position in society, considering that their priority was to treat society as a virgin plot of land which could be expertly designed and cultivated into the required form. He further points out that modernity also had objective of carrying out a civilising mission. Bauman’s figurative view of the modernist as gardener not only well describes the characteristics of the modern era manifest in the rise of German Nazism (the principal focus of Bauman’s study); it also helps understand some of the key characteristics of colonialism. In

462 Bauman, Modernity and The Holocaust, p.114.
463 Ibid., p.45.
a metaphorical sense, colonisers played the role of “gardeners,” trying to cultivate the uncivilised new lands through various biopolitical and anthropological aspects. Often, different social structures and political institutions were introduced or imposed, communities were reallocated, and language or education systems were reformed. On the other hand, in a literal sense, colonisers did become “gardeners,” since they were attempting to study and familiarise themselves with the geographical and environmental features of the colonised lands and make judgements and develop policies in accordance with this knowledge. John Waddington, a British colonial governor of Northern Rhodesia (now called Zambia), for example, once used the term “human ecology” in order to generalise an argument about the difficulties that the coloniser might encounter in managing a colony. As Sven Speek points out in his archive study of the development of Africa, Waddington believed that governing with comprehensive local ecological knowledge would not be sufficient. In Waddington’s view, it is only when government agencies of the colonial regimes begin to conduct research in all spheres—economy, education, health…—and study each unit of the local population thoroughly that they may make rapid and effective progress in the development of their colonies. Speek follows Waddington’ ideas and further states: “Ecology—as a kind of meta-approach to development was thus linked up with a view of how to successfully conduct extension work and with a more general idea about the proper development of societies” (Speek 146). This further demonstrates that biopolitical and environmental projects mutually shaped each other within the logic of colonialism. So, if one wishes to address questions or subjects related to postcolonialism, it is also important to take into account the question of global environmental change in the course of colonial history.

**From Environmental Colonialism to Postcolonial Ecologies**

Richard H. Grove, one of the founders of environmental history as an academic field, coined the term “green imperialism.” Grove discusses extensively in different publications the environmental impacts of colonialism as well as the evolution of colonial thinking about the

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465 Ibid., p.146.

466 N.B. Here, “environmental” project is not exclusively used in the usual sense of the word that it refers to the conservation or protection of our environments, but it can also mean the exploitation of natural resources.
environment from the fifteenth to the early-twentieth century. These works open up a new branch of historical studies capable of widening both environmental and colonial studies. However, the main focus of his research remains the imperial and colonial eras.

Grove presents two important theses. First, he argues that climate change is not simply a problem or result of the industrialisation that began in the modern era, as is often presumed. On the contrary, he claims that the idea of anthropogenic climate change existed long ago in the early days of imperial expansion. Grove argues that even in the early days of empire the growing economy gave rise to climate change and, in this sense, it even foreshadows the current concerns of “the dramatic globalisation of economic and natural transformations that was enabled during the colonial period” (Ecology 4). As early as the 1670s, islands like St. Helena, Mauritius, Formosa (Taiwan) had already been colonised by the Dutch (and later the English), in order to develop better trade routes to India or China.

Yet these small tropical islands suffered serious consequences from the deforestation carried out. Grove outlines how while capitalist plantation and agricultural expansion brought strong economic benefits to the imperial powers, they also provoked changes to the climate. According to Grove, there were in fact learned societies, such as The Royal Society, The Royal Geographical Society, or the Académie des Sciences, which were aware of the problems of deforestation, desiccation and local climate change as early as the 1750s. Moreover, between 1790 and 1791, the unusually strong El Nino current that occurred in South India, Australia, St. Helena, the West Indies, and Mexico caused further worry for these intellectuals. Some intellectuals of the colonial empires had tried to urge for forest conservation, yet, as Grove points out, not every attempt at environmental conservation had the full support from the imperial metropolitan centres. For instance, in the 1860s, attempts to prevent deforestation in the colonies received virtually no support from the imperial centre; only in India and South Africa, was there significant support for conservation. John Croumbie Brown, a missionary and official British Colonial Botanist of the Cape Colony

467 Grove, Ecology. Climate and Empire: Colonialism and Global Environmental History, 1400-1940, p.4.
468 Ibid., p.45.
469 Ibid., p.45.
470 Ibid., pp.4-6.
471 Ibid., p.5.
473 Ibid., p.25.
474 Ibid., p.25.
from 1862 to 1866 tried to promote tree planting and restrict grass burning, yet he obtained little support. In the end, local funding was removed, and with regrets and disappointment, Brown returned to Scotland. As mentioned earlier, serious consequences of climate change were usually tied to imperial projects for economic development. Grove acknowledges that the high rate of deforestation in Madeira and the Canary islands was the direct result of a high demand of sugar from the emergent European urban market. “Faced with the consequences of deforestation and the loss of hydraulic storage capacity, the colonists and planters had to resort to a wholesale development of artificial irrigation systems” (Grove, *Ecology* 45). Eventually, colonisers realised that forest conservation was necessary in order to maintain a sustainable ecological and economic source. Grove further claims that the major reason for forest conservation on colonised lands was fear of the damage that rainfall or soil erosion might bring. It is evident that despite the fact that there was a rise in ecological consciousness, knowledge and practices related to environmental movement were still very limited, since the basic factor which had driven the colonists to adopt environmental conservation was their fear of losing natural resources and economic advantages.

The second thesis that Grove introduces is that the “green imperialism” embedded in the colonial logic had complex yet identifiable roots in both a search of oriental imagination and an ideological longing for an Edenic garden on earth. As mentioned above, the early geographical expansion of the colonial empires was mainly based on economic motives—the colonies were mainly developed to gain better access to the markets of India and China. However, the environments of the colonised oceanic islands soon began to deteriorate rapidly. Grove’s suggestion that there is an ideological search for Edenic garden behind colonial environmental conservation projects through his study of the paper and publications of James Spotswood Wilson and Dr. George Bidie. He claims that both colonial intellectuals make

478 Ibid., p.57.
480 James Spotswood Wilson was a British scholar who published one of the earliest papers on the “greenhouse” effect in 1858 and brought the colonial government’s attention to the possibility of an early extinction of humanity resulting from atmospheric changes brought about by naturally occurring desiccation. Grove, *Ecology*, p.20. George Bidie was a British surgeon general who had served in the British Colonial Empire in
forceful reference to the Old Testament in their publications about environment deterioration. They took desiccation in the colonised lands as a sign of God’s will to expel humans from the Garden of Eden.\textsuperscript{481} Many other early colonial studies on the environmental conditions of the colonies also embrace this Christian ideology, whether implicitly or explicitly. For example, J.C. Brown’s writings to promote South Africa’s forest conservation were based in Calvinist thinking, for he saw conservation as a redemptive act which could compensate for the misdemeanours of the colonialists.\textsuperscript{482} Grove concludes that even though Christian environmental ideology was often present in the responses of different nations and their trading companies to environmental problems, these responses were nevertheless not uniform in character. They did, however, share a common heritage of conceptual and scientific developments and which later on provided an influential stimulus for the development of a new value system for tropical environments encompassing literary, scientific and economic dimensions.\textsuperscript{483} Overall, Grove considers the colonial Edenic garden provided the foundation for the institutional emergence and development of environmental studies.\textsuperscript{484}

Grove has thoroughly studied the phenomenon of local climate change resulting from colonial expansion, as well as its effect on the rise of ecological consciousness. Nonetheless, his argument neglects the significant consequences and impacts produced by the colonial capitalist economic system. Grove notices that policies and measures taken to deal with environmental problems in the first few centuries of the colonial period were not unified or consistent in themselves since there was a real contradiction with the colonial economic interests, yet Grove has not tried to further develop criticism in this perspective. The colonial capitalist economic system is by far the most influential system among of the colonial legacy. Grove’s argument understands the negative impacts that this system had on the environment. However, his argument fails to acknowledge that these negative impacts were not a temporary effect restricted to the colonial context. They continue to exist as a colonial legacy even after the imperial and colonial regimes “officially” came to an end, for the most part in the period following the end of the two World Wars. As Sven Speek’s recent study on the ecological concepts of development in Africa has pointed out, post-war development of former colonial

\textsuperscript{481} Ibid., p.27.
\textsuperscript{482} Ibid., p.28, 33.
\textsuperscript{483} Grove, \textit{Green}, p.475.
\textsuperscript{484} Ibid., p.475.
countries, such as Zambia (formerly called Northern Rhodesia), is still strongly influenced by the colonial capitalist system. According to Speek, post-war land use in Zambia was originally planned by John Waddington and Colin Trapnell, showing greater ecological awareness and taking the local population’s needs and agricultural knowledge into account.\footnote{Speek, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 147.} However, with the subsequent departure of Waddington and the transfer of Trapnell, beginning from 1948 the colony’s development aims were completely shifted to follow a colonial capitalist model. Its development objective was redefined as “more roads, more food, more housing” (Speek 149). Speek explains,

A further zoning was introduced, dividing the territory into intensive development areas, development areas and non-development areas, with a strong bias towards the urban centres of settlement along the railway line[.] (149)

With this division of land management—splitting the territory into areas that could cope with intensive development and those that could not—, one can see that the colonial capitalist economic system continued to exert a strong influence on the postcolonial nation-state of Zambia.

As Deloughrey and Handley have observed, “our planet has been biotically reconfigured due to this long history of what Richard Grove calls ‘green imperialism’” (11). It is also important to note, however, Grove’s claim that environmentalism or ecological consciousness has traversed this long historical process and has gradually emerged as an academic scientific subject for study. But what exactly is the significance of this biotically reconfigured earth when we consider it in the context of current postcolonial societies? One thus needs to examine ecologies in a postcolonial framework in order to unravel the significances of this drastic change. In \textit{Postcolonial Ecologies}, DeLoughrey and Handley severely criticise the “colonial-centric” power that dominates the colonised people and lands. They believe that during the colonial period the reason the slavery system existed was precisely that the colonialists had regarded the indigenous people as fauna.\footnote{DeLoughrey and Handley, “Introduction: Toward an Aesthetics of the Earth,” \textit{Postcolonial Ecologies}, p.12.} Moreover, they agree with Grove’s findings and consider that colonised tropical islands were mainly used as laboratories of empire.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p.12.} Even in regard to the forest conservation realised in New England and South Africa, they reckon the act did not arise purely out of ecological concern, but it arose instead from a manipulative intention and a power-conscious interest in the construction

\footnote{Speek, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 147.}


\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p.12.}
of new landscapes. But, while the possibility for criticising “colonial-centric” impositions is almost unlimited, to address adequately the question of postcolonial ecologies, it is not enough simply to criticise the “colonial-centric” management of the colonised lands. Indeed, it is also essential to foreground the historical process of nature’s mobility, transplantation and consumption, for this process has utterly changed our human bodies, and, to an extent, even affected certain national cultures and processes of identity formation. Moreover, DeLoughrey and Handley remind us that this historical process has not only affect the colonial periphery, for it has also directly and fundamentally changed the colonial centre: “colonialism must not be understood as history relegated to the periphery of Europe and the United States, but rather a process that also occurred within and that radically changed the metropolitan centre” (DeLoughrey and Handley 10). For instance, the importation of the new world agricultural products such as tomatoes, potatoes, maize, chilli peppers, peanuts and pineapples has a significant impact on colonial culinary cultures and trading markets, as well as people’s diet and their physical features. This phenomenon, referred to as “Columbian exchange” by Alfred Crosby, resulted in a doubling of the population in Africa, Asia and Europe and thereby also contributed to industrialisation and colonial expansion. DeLoughrey and Handley also highlight that the drastic impact of the new world food later contributed significantly to the rise of monocultural production in the twentieth century. Today, this “colonial discovery” is increasingly causing environmental problems such as droughts, earth and water pollution from pesticide usage, as well as climate change, for the production is based largely on fossil fuels.

Furthermore, DeLoughrey and Handley also speak about how to address postcolonial ecology. It is very clearly stated at the opening of their introduction:

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488 Ibid., p.12.
489 Ibid., p.13.
491 DeLoughrey and Handley, op.cit., p.13. Furthermore, in Postcolonial Ecocriticism, Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin also note, “[i]n historical studies The Columbian Exchange (1973) and Ecological Imperialism (1986), Alfred Crosby considers the ways in which both materials and ideas were exchanged in between Old World and New in a number of anything but even contexts. In the colonies of occupation, these radical inequalities or exchanges seemed most evident[.]” These radical inequalities and exchanges had arguably produced much surplus value in the colonial capitalist economy which ultimately contributed the acceleration of colonial expansion. Huggan and Tiffin, Postcolonial Ecocriticism, p.7
492 Ibid., p.13.
To speak of postcolonial ecology is to foreground a spatial imagination made possible by the experience of place. Place has infinite meanings and morphologies: it might be defined geographically, in terms of the expansion of empire; environmentally, in terms of wilderness or urban settings; genealogically, in linking communal ancestry to land; as well as phenomenological, connecting body to place. (DeLoughrey and Handley 4; emphasis mine)

DeLoughrey and Handley’s suggestions regarding how we might approach ecologies in a postcolonial context should not be limited to our scientific understanding of geographical alterations or our observation of phenomenological changes of the environments relativise to colonial expansions. Different from Grove’s idea, they see scientific understanding or phenomenological observations can only be submitted to a biopolitical framework of study in regard to the environmental changes. It is why DeLoughrey and Handley highlight the spatial imagination that is fashioned by the experience of place, outlining a poetic dimension in this understanding. In addition, they also encourage a genealogical understanding of natural history. To do so, DeLoughrey and Handley urge us first of all to look beyond the notion of human time, which largely constrains our understanding of the existing natural world. “[W]e must reckon with the ways in which ecology does not always work within the frames of human time,” say DeLoughrey and Handley (4). Admittedly, the notion of human time does not necessarily help us fully apprehend the genealogy of the natural world. Hence, the imagining of a different time from a nonhuman perspective would be essential. Secondly, DeLoughrey and Handley consider that it is important to consider nonhuman agencies when examining postcolonial ecologies, as the Guyanese writer, Wilson Harris, has done.493 Harris once claimed that there is a need for us to enter into a “profound dialogue with the landscape” 494 (DeLoughrey and Handley 4). DeLoughrey and Handley identify with this claim and further suggest that in examining postcolonial ecologies, we should no longer see landscape and seascape as passive subjects open to human cognition; instead, we shall see them as nonhuman agencies, which are able to interact with human agents. Thus, it can be implied that they see these nonhuman agencies having their own subjectivities. In their defence, these nonhuman agents have lived and witnessed the violent process of environmental colonialism.495 Only when we engage these nonhuman witnesses, could we

493 Ibid., p.4.
495 DeLoughrey and Handley, op.cit., p.8.

\textbf{Colonial and Postcolonial Ecologies in South Africa}

Following the above discussion of colonial environmentalism and postcolonial ecologies, this section looks at specifically South African environmental history in relation to the country’s colonial and postcolonial history. In the studies of environmental history, South Africa stands out amongst the other postcolonial countries. The main reason for that is its long historical connection with European colonialism. From more than three hundred years, beginning with the establishment of a Dutch colony (1652) and ending with Apartheid (1994), European colonists or white settlers’ “colonial” authorities had long been present in South Africa. The result is that, compared to historical studies conducted for other postcolonial countries, the issue of environmental colonialism has certainly not been overlooked in studies of the colonial and postcolonial history of South Africa. According to Jane Carruthers, “environmental history [in South Africa actually] grew out of the Marxist social history tradition and was launched in the context of the end of the apartheid state” (3-4). This shows that there is an indivisible tie between the environmental history of the country and the history of its transitional colonial period.\footnote{Carruthers, “Environmental History in Southern Africa: An Overview,” \textit{South Africa’s Environmental History: Cases and Comparisons}, p.4.} In Carruther’s overview of the environmental history of southern Africa, she draws readers’ attention to different scholars’ approaches and definitions of environmental history, especially those found in the work of William Cronon, Alfred Crosby, William Beinart and Peter Coates. Carruther provides the following summary of their views. For Cronor, environmental history looks into human societies in the context of changing ecosystems.\footnote{Ibid., p.5. Cf. Cronon, “The Uses of Environmental History,” \textit{Environmental History Review} 17.3 (1993): 4-5.} Crosby, who is famous for his theory of “ecological imperialism,” “argues that environmental history’s achievement has been to include the natural world in historical explanation” (Carruther 5). As for Beinar and Coates, Carruther concludes that they focus more on the reciprocal impacts created by the interaction between people and the rest of the world.
nature, from which it follows that environmental history is a series of dialogues over time between these two parties. What these scholars’ definitions and approaches have in common—and this is something which still strongly influences the general research orientation of South African environmental history today—is the privileging of a “human-centred” perspective. As Anthony Vital observes, environmentalism in South Africa, even after the apartheid era, still has the tendency to be “people-centred.” This perspective fits well with the typical postcolonial framework, which criticises and condemns the colonial exploitation of nature conducted by human beings. To some extent, this perspective is even the strong suit of South African criticism of environmental colonialism, for it facilitates the examination of a number of concrete environmental issues. For instance, the cases presented in the collection *South Africa’s Environmental History* (2003) vary from settlers’ cattle farming and tree plantations to the technical operation of hydrological systems and the installation of windmills. On the other hand, however, this perspective fails to take into account what DeLoughrey and Handley try to outline in their studies of postcolonial ecologies—a nonhuman perspective, and neither does it see the importance of the spatial imagination. Accordingly, South African environmental history does not necessarily pay attention to the poetic dimension in the exploration of this field of study. In general, environmental history in South Africa focuses more on the human exploitation of the natural environment, particular in a framework of global capitalism, which is related to the colonial and/or postcolonial resource management. A large number of research publications about environmental history thus highlight the impacts that white settlers had on certain regions or areas of South Africa. Beverly Ellis and Harald Witt’s studies are good examples, for they demonstrate the colonial human exploitation of the environment by drawing attention to the impacts of colonial settlement.

The studies of Beverly Ellis look at the environmental changes of Durban that occurred after the arrival of the white settlers (particularly the settlers of the British colonial era). Effects of human activity on the flora and fauna of that particular area and the environmental impacts on the landform and mineral resources are thoroughly examined.

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According to Ellis, the settlers cleared vegetation such as reed beds, white mangrove, coastal forest or bush in order to make more space for human settlement. The vegetation was also used as a source of energy. This exploitation resulted in changes to the local geographical features and had significant impacts on the ecosystem of the area. The most noteworthy exploitation of the natural vegetation was that of the timber industry: “timber was much in demand for housing, furniture and wagons. […] The bush also supplied fuel, required for domestic, military and industrial purposes” (Ellis 41). Cutting down trees and bushes in large quantities leads to permanent changes of landform and the loss of entire species of vegetation. And there were of course other human exploitations that led to serious damage to the landform, such as the drainage of wetlands and quarrying activity. In order to access Durban easily, the two main wetlands at the border of Durban were drained in the 1850s. Though the drainage certainly facilitated the access to Durban and partially improved the sanitary condition of the town, the environmental features of the area were irreversibly altered. Quarrying activity also modified the landform on a large scale. In the 1840s, when the activity had just begun, there was only need for a small quantity of stone for a few public buildings; but, as the town grew bigger, quarry stones for buildings, pavements or even for harbour constructions became more and more widespread. Within just thirty years, quarrying activity was responsible for significant modification of the regional landform.

Human activities not only modified the geographical environment (in terms of the alteration and exploitation of vegetal and mineral resources), but also had a great impact on the fauna of the Durban area. Ellis attests that from the 1850s onwards a huge part of the wildlife disappeared as a consequence of settler use and exploitation of the environment. For instance, large herbivores like elephants and buffaloes were killed for sport, bucks and bush pigs were hunted for food consumption, and hippopotamuses were shot because they destroy settlers’ gardens during their nocturnal wonderings, and carnivorous animals such as lions and leopards were eliminated because they posed a physical threat to settlers. Regarding the exploitation of fish resources, a strong colonial motive to manage Durban’s

503 Ibid., p.39.
504 Ibid., p.38.
505 Ibid., p.38.
507 Ibid., p.39.
508 Ibid., pp.43-44.
509 Ibid., p.45.
populations was tied to this particular maritime resource. In fact, Ellis indicates that from the 1860s onward, and as a consequence of the British colonial importation of Indian labour, fish resources on the coast dropped significantly, for fish were the main source of nutrition for these Indian labourers.\textsuperscript{510} In addition, settlers also caused the diminution of the bird life in the town’s environs. One reason behind this diminution was the drainage of the vleis, the marshy grounds covered with water during the rainy season.\textsuperscript{511} Another reason of this diminution was the exportation of bird collections to Western Europe, which is obviously tied to the colonial capitalism.\textsuperscript{512}

A further issue of environmental exploitation that scholars have often brought up in their research into South African environmental history is the tree plantation industry. This may at first sight appear contradictory to our common understanding of the exploitation of nature, for the aim of the industry is to grow more trees. In Harald Witt’s case study, however, he clearly identifies various dimensions of environmental exploitation related to the tree plantation industry and some other problematic issues this industry raises. According to Witt, the timber industry became noticeable as a highly profitable business in KwaZulu-Natal region as early as in the mid-nineteenth century under the British colonial rule.\textsuperscript{513} In view of the economic profits that could be made by the colonial exploitation of timber, the state not only recognised the timber industry as a national priority but also “actively encouraged and assisted the private sector to participate in the establishment of commercial plantations” (Witt 90). The major driving force behind this prioritisation of the timber business was the colonial mining industry in South Africa, as harvested wood from local tree plantations was the primary energy source for mining exploitations.\textsuperscript{514} Witt further emphasises that “no ‘other sphere of applied botany has played so direct a part in the establishment of the gold mining industry’ as the tree growing sector”\textsuperscript{515} (104-05). Beginning from 1884, the Cape government started to offer prizes for the planting of commercial tree species; in 1903 and 1909, the Natal government also followed through on the same program, giving out prizes to promote private

\textsuperscript{510} Ibid., p.45.
\textsuperscript{511} Ibid., p.44.
\textsuperscript{512} Ibid., p.45.
\textsuperscript{513} Witt, “The Emergence of Privately Grown Industrial Tree Plantations,” \textit{South Africa’s Environmental History: Cases & Comparisons}, p.91.
\textsuperscript{514} Ibid., p.90.
sector investment in tree plantations.\textsuperscript{516} “The aim was to grow trees of commercial value, with the final objective being to established a Colony that would become a timber-growing country” (Witt 95). In line with Richard Grove’s observations, Witt further notes that this zealous attempt to transform relatively unproductive farmlands into productive tree plantation areas somehow raised an evangelical enthusiasm among the local tree farmers.\textsuperscript{517} Taming the natural environment and maximising agricultural profits was an attitude both shared among these farmers and appreciated by them.

Witt’s study points out that the most prized species for private tree plantations was eucalypts. State foresters thus began to experiment with a variety of different species of eucalypts.\textsuperscript{518} One particular species, known as \textit{E. saligna}, thrived fairly well in the South African climate. Unfortunately, however, this species was also the major cause of an unintentional introduction of the Eucalyptus snout-beetle from Australia in 1916.\textsuperscript{519} According to the findings of Witt and other researchers, snout-beetles provoked significant damage to the foliage of eucalypts; and by the mid-1920s, the issue had become a national concern.\textsuperscript{520} Faced with the necessity of coming up with a posterior treatment plan for the snout-beetles, the government tried several methods which further polluted the forestry environment, “including the burning of coppice and the dusting with arsenical insecticide from aeroplanes”\textsuperscript{521} (Witt 93). Beetle-snouts’ damage to the foliage of eucalypts and further chemical pollution of the forestry areas were not the only problematic issue related to tree plantation. Moreover, Witt also shows that as the gold-mining industry was much developed in the country, it further resulted the country’s timber market becoming highly competitive. Since the eucalypts remained the major source of props fabrication for gold-mining, the eucalypts were planted as short-rotation crops.\textsuperscript{522} As a result, the short-rotating plantation had led to soil impoverishment. Additionally, the spacing between the trees was less of an issue.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{516} \textit{Ibid.}, p.95.
\item \textsuperscript{517} \textit{Ibid.}, p.98. Cf. H. Grove, \textit{Ecology}, p.45.
\item \textsuperscript{518} Witt, \textit{op.cit.}, p.93.
\item \textsuperscript{519} \textit{Ibid.}, p.93. Cf. Sim, \textit{Treeplanting in South Africa}, pp.403-04.
\item \textsuperscript{520} Witt, \textit{op.cit.}, p.93.
\item \textsuperscript{521} Cf. Tooke, “Progress of Forest Entomology,” \textit{Journal of the South African Forestry Association} 10 (1943): 5.
\item \textsuperscript{522} Witt, \textit{op.cit.}, p.105.
\end{itemize}
from the perspective of both the investors and the state.\textsuperscript{523} But denser plantations produced negative impacts, most significantly on soils, ground water and the local biota.\textsuperscript{524}

Both Ellis and Witt’s studies examine the interventions of colonial authorities in the local South African environment in detail. Their studies strongly suggest that human manipulation of nature, particularly when it is associated to a colonial capitalist interest, usually results in significant damage to the environment. Whether this human manipulation involves the consumption of natural resources (cutting down bushes and weeds for energy, or, hunting animals for food or collection) or the excessive reproduction of certain renewable resources (planting trees in short rotations and at high density), both may have harmful results on the environment.

**Colonial and Postcolonial Ecologies in Taiwan**

Following the above discussion of colonial environmentalism and postcolonial ecologies, looks at specifically colonial and postcolonial environmental issues in Taiwan. So far, my thesis has only taken Wu Ming-yi’s fictional works into account, focussing on symbols or references to the corresponding colonial or postcolonial contexts present in his novels. However, Wu’s publications are not limited only to fictions but also include a wide range of non-fictional works, such as collections of academic articles, *sanwen* 散文\textsuperscript{525}, and logbooks of specific natural environments or species. This section gives prominence to two of Wu’s nonfictional works—one deals principally with literary criticism, the other covers his observations of different geographical features related to water—, for both works articulate specific postcolonial ecologies in Taiwan. From *Ziran zhixin—cong ziran shuxie dao shengtai piping* 自然之心—從自然書寫到生態批評 [Heart of Nature— from Nature Writing to Ecocriticism] (2012) to *Jia li shuibian name jin* 家離水邊那麼近 [So Much Water So Close to Home] (2007), Wu not only comments on the Taiwanese literary development in relation to environmental history and ecological criticism; he also references some significant


\textsuperscript{525} *Sanwen* 散文 is a particular genre of Chinese literary writing, which is similar to essay writing. *Sanwen*, like the essay, is a short piece of writing which expresses an author’s view on specific theme or topic. However, in terms of its structure, *sanwen* is much looser than essay writing. It does not need to keep in line the logic of an argumentation. Moreover, like prose, *sanwen* is more often written in an ordinary spoken style, for it does not require any metrical structure.
environmental changes that occurred during the colonial history of Taiwan and highlights the existence of various forms of environmental degradation caused by postcolonial economic exploitation of nature. Furthermore, he also puts forwards some arguments and raises some questions which he considers indispensable for the discussion of ecologies in Taiwanese colonial or postcolonial contexts.

First and foremost, it is important to note that Wu raises questions about the characteristics of ecocriticism often applied in examining the postcolonial ecologies and contemporary ecological literature in Taiwan. Wu argues that the characteristics of ecocriticism remain largely restricted to a North American perspective. For instance, Scott Slovic, one of the central scholars in the field of ecological literary criticism, has brought up the notion of “wilderness” in order to delineate the characteristics of ecological literature. For Wu, Slovic’s idea of “wilderness,” which is largely shared and highly celebrated among American ecocritical scholars, does not necessarily apply to the postcolonial ecological conditions in Taiwan. As Wu points out, the notion of “wilderness” applies specifically to places that have not been inhabited or are not at all cultivated or exploited by human populations. Wu claims that in Taiwan, apart from the very early colonial period, it is impossible to find a place that fits the notion of “wilderness,” not to mention literary writings which build their imaginaries around such a notion. Post-war Taiwan is a highly populated society, and the density of population has made “wilderness” impossible.

Secondly, one can tell from Wu’s writing that he would agree with Grove’s notion of “green imperialism”; and what’s more, he also holds the view, expounded by DeLoughrey and Handley, that our interpretation of history is problematically human-centric. For Wu, the human timeframe is not the only way to interpret history, for he believes that there is both a nonhuman timeframe and a nonhuman perspective that may be brought to bear on history. In one of the chapters, where Wu speaks of different stones and pebbles shaped by creeks, rivers or oceans, he writes, “yanli jiushi shitou de jiyi [the patterns on the stones made by erosions are the memories of the stones]” (Jia 120). For some critics, this brief sentence could no doubt be read as Wu’s literary way of anthropomorphising the stones.

526 Wu Ming-yi 吳明益, Ziran zixin—cong ziran shuxie dao shengtai piping 自然之心—從自然書寫到生態批評 [Heart of Nature—from Nature Writing to Ecocriticism], p.29.
527 Ibid., p.29.
528 Ibid., p.29.
529 Ibid., p.29.
530 Ibid., p.29.
However, it can be also read as Wu’s way of understanding history and time through a nonhuman perspective. The history of an individual is often composed of the memories of some other individuals. The history of a population is often composed of the memories of a multitude of people over a long period of time. What Wu suggests here is that, in a similar way, the history of a creek, a river, a waterfall or an ocean is comprised of and can be told by the memories of the stones, for they are marked and engraved by these water forms. Using a rhetorical figure of speech, Wu is urging us to view history from the perspective of nonhuman agent, and thereby, to rethink the very notion of history. In the following passage, Wu similarly considers the perspective of nonhuman animals:

If whales and dolphins could actually pass on their stories from generation to generation, how would they describe their experiences and interactions with humans? Would there be any difference when they say something about the fishermen from Japan and from Taiwan?

如果鯨豚也真能將牠們的故事向下一代傳述，牠們會怎麼形容這百年來和人類接觸的經驗呢？而牠們對日本漁民與台灣漁民的描述，會不會也有些許的不同呢？(Jia 182)

And also,

If “lā-ā” (clams) could write history, surely they would not have missed out the memories of their ancestors, being massacred in the polluted water.

如果「喇仔」（蛤）會寫歷史的話，牠們一定不會漏掉祖先在每條溪流被毒水滅族的記憶。(Jia 70)

Wu’s rhetorical questions allow us to reconsider Harris’ notion of “engaging a profound dialogue with the nonhuman agents.” In Taiwan, it is hard to find any documentation or publication before the late nineties that would engage in a profound dialogue with nonhuman agents. As Wu points out, it was only after the late nineties, with the advent of travel logs, documents and photographs of expeditions relating to birds, whales, forests, carried out by writers and ecologists, such as Liu Ka-shiang 劉克襄, Liao Hung-chi 廖鴻基, and Chen Yu-feng 陳玉峰, that it became common to consider the perspective of nonhumans.531

It is apparent, in Wu’s rhetorical questions, that a human-centred view of history can no longer be taken for granted. Apart from seeing history from a different, nonhuman perspective, Wu wishes to show how it would be possible, as some other cultures have already done, to give an active political role to nonhumans, as has happened in Ecuador, the

531 Ibid., pp.44-45.
first country in the world to have codified the Rights of Nature in its constitution and at the same time give those rights a clear and precise content. According to Wu, the concept of TEK (traditional ecological knowledge)\(^{532}\) is all-too-often abused and falsely interpreted via a nostalgic and romanticised understanding of the aboriginals’ interaction with the natural world. Nevertheless, he believes that literary elements embodied in the aboriginal ways of understanding nature may be useful for our attempts to understand nature from a nonhuman perspective and eventually to turn those reflections into real actions. Citing Husluman Vava 霍斯陸曼・伐伐, Wu sees the possibility of taking “a tree as our government.”\(^{533}\) He comments:

> Our government is a tree! What a transcendental and romantic idea. Yet think of it twice, the idea appears to be very practical: A tree that has witnessed endless lives and deaths and has lived through the changes of the mountain, is it not the being that best understands the expectations, the pains, and the sadness of the people who live in the mountain? Is it not what “a government” is supposed to be?

> 我們的政府是一棵樹！這是多麼超越，多麼浪漫的想法，但仔細想想，又十分踏實：一棵看過無數生物生死，看過山的變化的樹，最是了解山的子民的期待、痛苦與哀傷，「政府」不就是該做這樣的事嗎？(Wu, Ziran 75)

Wu’s statements clearly join DeLoughrey and Handley’s idea of giving a poetic dimension to the spatial imagination.\(^{534}\) Though romanticised and poetised, the figure of the tree highlights the spatial imagination that is fashioned by its experience of place. Via the figure of the tree, a nonhuman agent is engaged and a nonhuman perspective respected.

Thirdly, like many other contemporary scholars who work on the natural environment, Wu also addresses a variety of issues related to globalisation and eco-cosmopolitanism. Throughout the history of Taiwan, the gravity of the environmental degradations that have been caused or provoked by the colonial capitalist system cannot be understated. Wu’s works highlights toxic chemical pollutions that occurred in different geographical environments and the rapid decline of numerous natural species. Wu reminds us that these pollutions, declines or degradations of the environment are inevitably tied to a colonial frame of mind that is re-

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\(^{532}\) The concept of TEK (traditional ecological knowledge) refers to indigenous or other forms of traditional knowledge relating to the sustainable use of local resources from specific lands, regions or areas. TEK generally takes the form a body of knowledge that is accumulated from beliefs, experiences and practices, and passed down from generation to generation via songs, stories, proverbs, and so on.

\(^{533}\) Husluman Vava 霍斯陸曼・伐伐 is a Taiwanese Bunun 布農族 writer. In Quinmian 黏面 [Facial Tattoo], he writes, “真可惜，那顆巨樹己經被打死了，否則可以讓它作我們的「政府」 [Such a shame, that giant tree was struck down, or else it could have be our 'government']”, p.66.

\(^{534}\) DeLoughrey and Handley, op.cit., p.4.
inscribed in our contemporary economic values.\textsuperscript{535} Adopting a deliberately hyperbolic style, Wu writes:

All colonisers wanted to control thoughts of the colonised people. They wanted them to be obedient and submissive. The colonisers made changes in education, costumes, housing, sometimes they even tried to replace the local vegetation and animals with other species. If it were possible, they would have changed air and water.

所有殖民者都希望控制被殖民者的想法，要他們順從、卑屈。他們從教育、服裝、房舍改造起，有時連植物乃至於牲畜都一併置換，如果可能的話，他們會換掉水與空氣。(Jia 47)

By invoking this colonial perspective, Wu is asking us to rethink our continued violent economic exploitation of the environment. He thinks there is ultimately no significant difference between our current exploitation of nature and the colonisers’ domination over the colonised people. As he recounts the colonial history of the Han people’s invasion of the areas nearby Meilunxi 美崙溪 [Meilun River] and their colonisation of Gamalan zu 噶瑪蘭族 [Kavalan tribe] in the late sixteenth century, Wu notes how the environmental features were changed and affected by the agricultural economy brought by the invasion and colonisation.\textsuperscript{536}

He further adds that in the postcolonial era, urbanization of the Meilunxi area—turning the riverbanks into a tourist attraction and aiming to gain surplus value from that change—ultimately operates according to the same mentality of colonial domination over the environment of that river.\textsuperscript{537} What’s worse, Meilunxi has been completely tamed as a “modern city river,” and it is heavily polluted by the wastewater dumped by the local citizens and factories.\textsuperscript{538} Similar arguments and evidence could easily be found in other studies in both the colonial and postcolonial periods. For instance, in the seventeenth century, there was a rapid decline of the Formosan sika deers in Taiwan due to the fact that the Dutch colonisers exported enormous amounts of deerskins to Japan.\textsuperscript{539} Also, in Chen Hsien-ming 陳憲明’s geographical research report, he indicates that Han people from the plain began to plant pears and peaches in Ba-lin 巴陵, a mountain area in the Northern Taiwan, between 1960s to 1980s.

\textsuperscript{535} Wu M.Y., Ziran, p.30.
\textsuperscript{536} Ibid., p.26.
\textsuperscript{537} Ibid., p.33.
\textsuperscript{538} Ibid., p.33.
\textsuperscript{539} Liu Tsui-jung 劉翠溶, “Taiwan huanjing yanjushi: kaizhan yige xin yanjiu shiye 台灣環境研究史：開展一個新研究視野 [Environmental History of Taiwan: Expanding a New Research Perspective],” Riben taiwan xuehui disihui dahui 日本台灣學會第四回大會 [The 4th Annual Conference of the Japanese Association for Taiwanese Studies], Nagoya (Japan), 8 June 2002, Closing Address.
According to Chen, the excessive agricultural land use in the mountain area was directly responsible for serious soil erosion and silt accumulation in the dam used for agricultural irrigation.\(^5\) Once again, the damage to the environmental in Balin confirms Wu’s point—that environmental degradations are ultimately linked to the anthropocentric and/or colonial-centric attitude that continues to reflected in our economic exploitation of nature.

\(^5\) Chen Hsien-ming 陳憲明, “Taiwan beibu gaoleng diqu nongye tudi liyong de yanjiu 台灣北部高冷地區農業土地利用的研究 [The Study of Agricultural Land Use in Northern Taiwan Highland Area],” \textit{Shida dili yanjiu baogao 師大地理研究報告} [National Taiwan Normal University Geographical Research], 12 (1986): 103-142.
2.4.2 Resources and (Post-)Colonial Expansion

From the above examinations of the postcolonial ecologies in South Africa and Taiwan, it is hard not to agree with Richard Grove that the long history of “green imperialism” has reconfigured the natural world we live in. This reconfiguration could have not been realised if the colonial empire(s) had not set about trying to achieve an biopolitical project that went hand in hand with the modifying of the colonial environment. This chapter thus studies Coetzee and Wu’s postcolonial literary works in order to demonstrate the link between colonial history, imperial expansion and the modification of the global environment. Commonly to the works of both authors, four main issues regarding the exploitation of the colonised land and natural resources are presented and questioned: (1) the impacts on the local environment of the realisation of imperial biopolitical projects; (2) agriculture and land use in the empires present in South Africa and Taiwan; (3) the association between resource management and colonial invasion; (4) the impacts of colonial expansions on animals.

Impacts on Local Environments

Critical engagement with the imperial biopolitical project is most evident in Coetzee’s early works in the 1980s, notably in his two famous novels Waiting for the Barbarians (1980) and Life and Times of Michael K (1983). Both works have been highly praised for having the audacity to stage the brutality of an anonymous imperial or neocolonial regime while South Africa was still under the inhuman and unjust censorship of the apartheid regime. In Waiting, the Magistrate’s narration tells the rise and fall of the Empire, and in Life, through the eyes of Michael K, readers perceive the neocolonial domination of the Afrikaans government. Both novels depict an imperial/colonial desire of biopolitical management; moreover, they also exhibit the impacts of this biopolitical management on the environment In Waiting, this is most evidently shown in the Magistrate’s (the protagonist) recounting of his service at the frontier of the Empire. From the Magistrate’s account, readers know that one of his hobbies is to excavating ruins. The excavation of different sites of ruins is an archaeological search. On the whole, the logic that lies beyond this archaeological search is a yearning to understand the ethnographical and anthropological genealogy of the colonised land, which ultimately are used as tools in colonial biopolitical management. In one passage, the Magistrate states:
One of my hobbies has been to excavate these ruins. If there are no repairs to be done to the irrigation works, I sentence petty offenders to a few days of digging in the dunes […]. I have succeeded in uncovering several of the largest structures to floor level. The most recently excavated stands out like a shipwreck in the desert […]. I also found a cache of wooden slips on which are painted characters in a script I have not seen the like of. […] In the hope of deciphering the script, I have set about collecting all the slips I can, and have let the children who play here know that if they find one it is always worth a penny. (Coetzee, Waiting 15-16)

As the Magistrate continues to depict the slips and timbers uncovered from the ruins, he immerses himself in his own wild imagination of an ancient lost world, hidden underneath the surface, remaining undecipherable to his knowledge. He fantasises:

Perhaps in my digging I have only scratched the surface. Perhaps ten feet below the floor lie the ruins of another fort, razed by the barbarians, peopled with the bones of folk who thought they would find safety behind high walls. Perhaps when I stand on the floor of the courthouse, if that is what it is, I stand over the head of a magistrate like myself, another grey-haired servant of Empire […]. (Coetzee, Waiting 16)

From the above two passages, readers know that through the act of excavation and decipherment of the engraved scripts, the Magistrate tries every means to construct “a map of the land of the barbarians in olden times” in his mind (Coetzee, Waiting 17). His attempt to constitute this mental map exemplifies the Empire’s desire to decipher the anthropological genealogy of the dominated colonial lands.

Drawing on the Magistrate’s detailed description of his excavation, two other things associated with colonial environmental history should be underlined—the timber industry and irrigation works. In the novel, Coetzee does not ever specify the name of the colonial regime, nor has he given out details of the settings of the story. Many readers and critics believe it is Coetzee’s intention to speak of and criticise colonial empire in general rather than focussing his criticism on a particular regime. Nevertheless, if one is familiar with the British colonial history and its environmental projects carried out in South Africa, it is more than evident that Coetzee’s text directly refers to the British Empire’s domination over its colony of South Africa. In Beverley Ellis’ study of the impact of British settlers on the environment of Durban on the East coast of South Africa, he notes that thick coastal bush from the areas of the Berea and the Bluff, as well as from the dunes of the Mgeni, were cut down to satisfy demand for housing, furniture and wagons for the settlers. Subsequently, the timber

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541 Ibid., p.16.
industry intensively exploited the local bush, since it supplied not only domestic use, but also fuel and military use.\textsuperscript{543} In view of this, Coetzee’s depiction of the Magistrate’s discovery of timber is not a coincidence, but it is author’s pondering on British Empire’s colonial history that had significantly changed the South African geographical features. And of course, the gradual extinction of the original local woods was not the only effect colonial human activity brought on the ecology of South Africa. As James Fox Wilson argued, and as Richard Grove’s study has confirmed, the rise of desiccation in South Africa was not at all natural but “[a] consequence of human action”\textsuperscript{544} (\textit{Ecology} 21). In this respect, the impact of the irrigation works on the environment was one of the most frequently discussed environmental issues. Ellis’ case study outlines that, in order to adapt to the fast population growth in the Durban area in the 1840s to 1850s (arising because large numbers of British immigrants came to settle in Durban), the white settlers had completely changed the geographical features of the area by draining the two main swamplands and enlarging the urban district.\textsuperscript{545} Undeniably, the draining of the swamps had some advantages. For instance, it had made transport access to Durban easier and had improved the sanitary conditions in the surrounding area.\textsuperscript{546} But, in exchange, the rich biodiversity, wildlife and vegetation provided by these wetlands were forever lost in the area. Though neither specific types nor locations of irrigation are mentioned in \textit{Waiting of the Barbarians}, Coetzee’s description in the text still draws implications to the Empire’s irrigational works.

In \textit{Life}, the realisation of biopolitical management relates primarily to border control and the regulation of population distribution. At the very beginning of the story, Michael K wishes to take his mother to Prince Albert in order to heal her poor health but he is unable to do so since the travel permit for which he applied had never been delivered.\textsuperscript{547} Border control and regulating the circulation of population is the most frequently used apparatus in terms of the realisation of biopolitical management. In order to understand how this apparatus functions, one can draw on Giorgio Agamben’s concept of camp and his further arguments in relation to borders. According to Agamben, camp “constitute[s] a space of exception—a space in which the law is completely suspended” (\textit{Means} 40). He further adds, “[t]he camp is the

\textsuperscript{543} Ibid., p.41.
\textsuperscript{545} Ellis, \textit{op.cit.}, p.38.
\textsuperscript{546} Ibid., p.38.
\textsuperscript{547} Coetzee, \textit{Life}, p.18.
The paradigm itself of political space at the point in which politics becomes biopolitics and the *homo sacer* becomes indistinguishable from the citizen” (*Means* 41). The original meaning of *homo sacer* comes from Roman Law. It designates a person who is banned by society and can be killed by anyone but may not be sacrificed in religious rituals. Here, what Agamben means by *homo sacer* is an individual deprived of any rights and who can thus be treated however the the relevant power or authority decides. In “camps,” individuals are managed biopolitically and they lives without having any guarantee of legal protection because they are deprived of any rights. In fact, the meaning of “camp,” as theorised by Agamben, does not simply refer to the common meaning of “camp,” i.e., a refugee camp, a concentration camp, or some other sort of physical space. Instead, it refers to a larger socio-political space or condition in which laws are suspended. Therefore, a camp can also refer to the socio-political space of a country that issues a state of emergency, or a country that is in civil war or military occupation or even ruled by a dictatorship. In those particular political environments, laws exist as an *a priori* condition but can also be suspended or not respected. One can thus draw a comparison between Agamben’s idea of “camp” and the militarily enforced apartheid regime that Michael K lives in, for there is no distinction there between common citizen and *homo sacer*. In one scene, while Michael is pushing his mother in a wagon on the motorway, a motorcyclist stops by and speaks to the two travellers with a condescending tone:

“You can’t travel outside the Peninsula without a permit. Go to the checkpoint and show them your permit and your paper. And listen to me: you want to stop on the expressway, you pull fifty metres off the roadside. That’s the regulation: fifty metres either side. Anything nearer, you can get shot, no warning, no questions asked. Understand?”

(*Coetzee, Life* 22)

The imperious demand of the motorcyclist immediately draws our attention to the particular socio-political space in which Michael K and his mother are treated as *homo sacer*. From the words of this anonymous authority, both K and his mother are regarded as subjects deprived of rights, for their lives can be easily taken without any warning or justification. Drawing Agamben’s idea of “camp” can help us better understand this particular socio-political space. Obviously, the apartheid regime in which both K and his mother live in thus conforms to “a space of exception.”

Nevertheless, in what way has such biopolitical management of population during the apartheid regime brought serious impacts on the local South African environment? In “The Reconstruction of Environmental Rights in Urban South Africa,” Ben Wisner demonstrates that there is a significant correlation between population control under the apartheid
segregation and urban environmental degradation. According to Wisner, right after the National party came to power in 1948, strict urban policies were introduced to control the access of “non-White” to the residential areas of urban zones. In the course of implementing racial segregation and balancing the “non-White” labour population in cities, the government made consecutive attempts to remove “non-White” groups or communities from the urban areas reserved for the White inhabitants. Over time, this policy resulted in illegal shack communities being built on vacant land located in rural or outlying peri-urban areas, since both migrants and non-White workers needed to be close to their jobs in cities and urban areas. Wisner also points out: “African townships have been chronically short of investment in infrastructure, planning control has lain outside these [non-White] communities” (260). People who resided or dwelled in these illegal shacks were of course deprived of access to water supplies, electricity, drainage, road infrastructures and health services. On top of these findings, Wisner furthermore adds,

This spatial pattern of extremely dense urban settlement with insufficient services has led to critical health and safety hazards. In addition to public health, fire and traffic hazards, these areas often became the site of illegal dumping of hazardous waste. Flooding, mass wastage of slopes, and air pollution due to the use of mineral coal fires for warmth and cooking where electricity is commonly absent or unaffordable are also common hazards. (260; emphasis mine)

This case shows that the biopolitical control of populations may result in important negative impacts on the local environment, especially when this control is exerted over racially defined communit(ies). In South Africa, as Wisner’s study has shown, environmental degradation such as flooding, waste and air pollution can all be accounted for by the practices of biopolitical control and racial segregation. The story of Michael K begins with his mother’s poor health, which largely coincides with Wisner’s assessment of the poor health and environmental conditions that “non-White” people endured during the apartheid regime. Though Michael’s ethnic group has never been explicitly identified, Coetzee’s text gives obvious clues indicating that Michael is a “coloured male”; both Michael and his mother are

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549 Ibid., p.260.
550 Ibid., p.260.
551 Ibid., p.260.
552 “For months Anna K had been suffering from gross swelling of the legs and arms; later her belly had begun to swell too. She had been admitted to hospital unable to walk and barely able to breath.” Coetzee, Life, p.5.
presumably in the “non-White” category. Also, it is noted that Anna had worked as a domestic servant for a retired manufacturer of hosiery, which clearly suggests that Anna and her son belong to the working or lower class. Anna and Michael’s profiles thus fit the image of those who lived in shacks at the periphery of urban zones. They are the ones who suffer from both racial discrimination and social disadvantages. Mapping these characteristics together, it is not difficult to understand why Coetzee has set out to write a story in which Anna K’s ill health plays such a key role, for it is an allusive way of criticising the environmental degradation and social injustices that result from the practice of racial segregation during Apartheid.

In Wu Ming-yi’s *Shuimian de Hanxiang*, the issue of biopolitical management is approached from a different angle. Unlike Coetzee, Wu does not attempt to retrace an anthropological genealogy of the colonised land or emphasise the biopolitical control of human life in order to show how the local environment could be affected by the realisation of imperial biopolitical projects. In fact, Wu attends directly to the question of the citizenship of the colonised people in the transitional postcolonial era. While addressing this question, Wu also offers some parallel remarks about specific agricultural products (i.e. rice) and postwar capitalist food products (i.e. chewing gum and tins of beef) that have strong colonial or postcolonial overtones in this context. The parallel discussion of citizenship and food production demonstrates Wu’s awareness of certain impacts on the local environment tied with the particular socio-political conditions of the transitional period. Obliquely, it also reveals that there was a definite link between (post-)colonial biopolitical and environmental management. While remembering his daydream about the end of the Second World War and of Japanese colonialism, the protagonist, Sanlang, poses various questions about his own political citizenship (as well as his identity). As described in the novel, Sanlang is a Taiwanese man who acquired Japanese citizenship because he had served in the Japanese military unit during the Pacific War under the Japanese imperial rule in Taiwan. Nevertheless, after the U.S. Army dropped the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, thus ending the Second World War in 1945, it was Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek (a member of the Allied Powers and leader of the Republic of China) who took over the political authority of Taiwan. The Japanese in Taiwan thus surrendered to General Chiang and a new

553 Ibid., p.70.
554 Ibid., p.6.
555 Wu, Shuimian, p.264.
556 Ibid., pp.35-36.
era of the Republic of China began. Those who had a similar political status to Sanlang—people originally from Taiwan but who later became Japanese citizens—were then given a new nationality of “Republican Chinese” and their Japanese citizenship was thereafter taken away. In describing Sanlang’s perplexed feelings towards his political identity, Wu writes:

With very poor English, the young lads brought out their identity cards, saying that they were not Japanese, but Formosans; that they were with the Allied Powers who won the War but not prisoners of war. There was a kind of uneasiness when the boys made these claims. The American soldiers patted their heads with their big hairy hands, offering these lads some chewy candies of a strange texture that were filled with sweetness. [...] The boys suddenly felt very excited that their identities were reassured by the Americans and were thrilled to be given those chewing gums and tins of beef.

But are we really with the Allied Powers who won the war? Are we not prisoners of war? [...] Who can actually prove that we are not Japanese?

少年們拿出證件，用拙劣的英語說自己不是日本人，而是福爾摩沙人，是戰勝國，而不是俘虜。說這話時少年們心裡不免有些忐忑，但美軍用他們長著長毛的大手拍拍少年們的頭，給他們一種有著甜味和奇異口感的膠糖。[...]少年們為自己被美軍確認的戰勝國身份與獲贈的膠糖與牛肉罐頭而感到興奮不已。

但我們真的是戰勝國？真的不是俘虜嗎？[...] 誰能證明你不是日本人？(Shuimian 264; emphasis mine)

Both chewing gum and tinned beef are important symbolic references in the context of the postwar exportation of American cultural and food. The two items symbolise the capitalist mass production and industrialisation of the food industry, which, in post-war America, was largely based on an economy centred on the corn and petroleum business. According to Emily S. Rosenberg, in the late nineteenth century, people easily associated images and consumption of mass-produced goods with America, especially cheap and standardised products. Chewing gum was an important example of this. Madelaine Crum, in her book review of Lizzie Collingham’s The Taste of War published in The Huffington Post, also points out that postwar American society had tried to live up to a constructed image of mass consumerism, in which red meat, especially beef steak, was part of the food culture of every

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557 Ibid., p.270.
558 Fuel and corn business that are linked to the food production are widely discussed as a problematic issue for the environment in many of contemporary American writers’ or journalists’ publications. Among these writers or journalists, they are usually in favour of vegetarianism or veganism. Cf. Anderson and Kuhn, dir., Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret (2014) and Pollan, Omnivore’s Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals (2007).
One therefore cannot neglect Wu’s choice of these two symbolic food items when addressing the question of colonial citizenship. Their insertion in the text shows Wu’s concerns and worries over postwar agricultural development in countries such as Taiwan that are submitted to American “neocolonial” domination, for this development may well bring further deterioration to the local environment of these postcolonial countries.

Wu’s observation of the colonial biopolitical and environmental management can also be shown with his provided examples of agricultural produce, notably rice. Upon Sanlang’s return to Taiwan, Wu recounts:

The boat arrived at the port after a few days journey at sea [...]. A Japanese soldier on board distributed a paper, asking the young lads to sign it and then giving it to the Chinese military officer. On the paper it says, “[1.] This person is delivered to the government of the Republic of China. 2. The Japanese nationality is removed from this person, and he now has the nationality of Republic of China.” The Chinese officer gave each one of them a train ticket and said that this ticket would allow them to travel anywhere the railway reaches, but can only be used once.

With a paper and a ticket, these young fellows were “returned” to the Chinese government.

At the station, Sanlang and his companies found a currency exchange bureau and changed a thousand Japanese yen into seven hundred Taiwanese dollars […]. He overheard a pastry vendor, saying that now the price of rice had gone up to sixteen Taiwanese dollars a kilo. Apparently, the one thousand something yen had all of a sudden become less valuable.

Wu’s attempt to draw his readers’ attention to rice and its varying prices while speaking of the “return” of these former Sino-Japanese soldiers is quite clear. Rice is undoubtedly the most essential product of Asian culinary culture and it has the most culturally significant role among other important colonial agricultural products. In rice cultivation, one can easily

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observe the colonial biopolitical and environment management. Ramon H. Myers and Adrienne Ching’s studies affirm that rice and sugar cane were two of the main agricultural exports of Taiwan during the Japanese colonial rule.\textsuperscript{561} In the colonial era, abundant production of rice was considered extremely important, since it meant not only large economic profits for the colonisers but also adequate food supplies for the needs of the colonial motherland. As Myers and Ching point out, “between 1915 to 1926, rice exports [from Taiwan] […] rose from 726,412 to over 2 million koku\textsuperscript{562}, nearly a three-fold increase. This was a timely achievement because Japan’s rice production had begun to lag behind domestic demand” (567). Myers and Ching’s studies thus attest that bountiful rice production was not solely meant for the colonised country (i.e. Taiwan) but, most importantly, it was meant to meet the demand of the colonial motherland (i.e. Japan). In the same piece of research, the authors also shows that between 1910 to 1922 (before the cultivation relied heavily on new seed, better fertiliser and water control), the main reason contributing to the rapid growth of traditional rice production was the effective management of the land-labour ratio.\textsuperscript{563} This finding demonstrates that colonial biopolitical and environmental management are two aspects that affect each other reciprocally and cannot be examined without taking account of one another.

**Imperial Agriculture and Land Use**

Apart from the above environmental problems related to the anthropological management are shown in Coetzee and Wu’s fictions, issues in regard to the agriculture and land uses of the empires are equally essential in their writings. In what follows, we will look in detail at Coetzee and Wu’s portrayals of imperial agriculture and land use. In *Waiting*, agricultural and other land uses is a central theme. The story begins with the newly arrived Colonel Joll’s investigation into the “real” reasons behind the border conflicts between the Empire and the barbarians. One possibility envisaged by the colonel is that it is lack of food that explains the border conflicts, for this is implied in the confessions of the two indigenous


\textsuperscript{562} The koku is a Japanese unit of volume. Originally, the koku was defined as a quantity of rice, which was approximately equal the amount of rice needed to feed a person for one year. A koku of rice weighs about 150 kilograms.

\textsuperscript{563} Myers and Ching, *op.cit.*, p.565.
fishermen, captured and violently tortured by Colonel Joll. The fishermen “admit” their crime of stealing sheep and horses under the intolerable suffering of physical pain. Whether the confession of these two captured aboriginals is true or not, the episode clearly show that conflicts in the colonised land were caused by the uneven distribution of food and resources. The episode also implies that most of the agricultural resources and food were primarily reserved for the Empire and the colonisers. At the end of the story, we discover that Colonel Joll’s predication regarding the barbarians’ rebellion has come true and his initial speculation regarding the uneven distribution of agricultural resources as the cause of the border conflicts is confirmed:

The barbarians come out at night. Before darkness falls that last goat must be brought in, the gates barred, a watch set in every lookout to call the hours. All night, it is said, the barbarians prowl about bent on murder and rapine. [...] Clothing disappears from washing-lines, food from larders, however tightly locked. The barbarians have dug a tunnel under the walls, people say, they come and go as they please, take what they like; no one is safe any longer. The farmers still till the fields, but they go out in bands, never singly. They work without heart: the barbarians are only waiting for the crops to be established, they say, before they flood the fields again. (Coetzee, Waiting 134)

Arranging the storyline in this manner, Coetzee’s novel thus, in an abstract sense, stages the conflicts raised by the colonial occupation and domination of the agricultural resources in an anonymous totalitarian imperial regime. Yet, at the same time, one cannot fail to notice its implicit reference to the past colonial experience of South Africa. In addition, Coetzee also demonstrates how the social structure of the colony can be easily changed via the introduction

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564 After Colonel Joll’s torture of the two captured prisoners, the Magistrate went to talk to one of them. He says, “[t]hey tell me you have made a confession. They say you have admitted that you and the old man and other men from your clan have stolen sheep and horses. You have said that the men of your clan are arming themselves, that in the spring you are going to join in a great war on the Empire. Are you telling the truth? Do you understand what this confession of yours will mean?” From the Magistrate’s questioning, readers acknowledge that there might be untruthfulness of the confessed crime. The stealing of horses and sheep and the plotting of future rebellions against the Empire may never have taken place, but the two captured aboriginals had to give in to such imposed “truth” as a result of Colonel Joll’s brutal torture. Coetzee, Waiting, p.11.

565 Many debates are drawn into discussion with regard to the setting of Waiting for the Barbarians, for the novel has deliberately chosen to describe events and people ruled by an “anonymous” Empire. However, in Hermann Wittenberg and Kate Highman’s research paper, they argue that “[Waiting for the] Barbairans is thus not reducible to an allegorical narrative that would allow Coetzee to get away with thinly disguised political messaging, but must be understood as a novel that exceeds its local context and crafts a story of a more general import. At the same time, Coetzee also acknowledged that his novel was not ‘not about South Africa.’” Wittenberg and Highman, “Sven Hedin’s ‘Vanished Country’: Setting and History in JM Coetzee's Waiting for the Barbarians,” Academia.edu, n.d., Web, 5 Sept. 2015, website accessed: https://www.academia.edu/11372275/Sven_Hedin_s_vanished_country_setting_and_history_in_JM_Coetzee_s_Waiting_for_the_barbarians.
of colonial agricultural techniques and products. For example, the Magistrate notices that, at
the arrival of the captured indigenous fishermen, the tribesmen at first showed signs of
uneasiness, but very soon displayed their contentment, for free bread had been handed to
them:

In a day or two these savages seem to forget they ever had another home. Seduced utterly
by the free and plentiful food, above all by the bread, they relax, smile at everyone, move
about the barracks yard from one patch of shade to another, doze and wake, grow excited
as mealtimes approach. (Coetzee, Waiting 20)

When they are released from the prison, some even choose not to return to their fishing
village but to stay behind and beg on the streets. Coetzee’s insertion of this scene can be
taken as a criticism of the easily achieved colonial strategy. Indeed, to conform and assimilate
the nomads or the aboriginals, agricultural techniques are commonly introduced in order to
stabilise the mobile populations in the colony. As attested in an official document published
by the Japanese colonial expatriate in Taiwan, Mochiji Rokusaburō (1867-1924), agronomy
was one of the essential subjects used in order to tame the indigenous Taiwanese and to
incorporate them into a stable social system.

It is of course not exclusively in Coetzee’s novel that one finds the literary staging of
the above-mentioned colonial strategy in relation to agricultural production and land use. Wu
Ming-yi, in Shuimian de hangxian, also speaks of certain agricultural management and land
use during the Japanese colonial period. For instance, Wu discusses a specific type of plant,
Crassocephalum crepidioides (known in Chinese as wenhuangju 紋幌菊 or zhaohecao 昭和
草), that was extensively cultivated in Taiwan during the Japanese colonial period. Wu writes:

In fact, wenhuangju does not taste nice at all. It has an indescribable weird smell. Starting
from last year, the governor’s office informed people that this particular plant can be
consumed as a food substitute, and its seeds were thus dispersed by airplane to ensure its
widespread growth. And now, on the mountaintops, there are wenhuangju thriving
everywhere. Since most of the rice is either taxed or collected by the Japanese, people
have no choice but to eat this plant.

566 Coetzee, Waiting, p.27.

567 Mochiji Rokusaburō was a colonial expatriate in Taiwan and was known by his publication of Taiwan
Shokumin Seisaku [Colonial Policies in Taiwan]. But here, the document cited is from his other publication.
Mochiji Rokusaburō, Bansei montai nikan suru tori sirabe sho 番政問題ニ関スル取調書 [Survey Book
buluo: rizhi shiqi guanzhumin jiaoyu celue de biange 國家 vs. 部落：日治時期官方原住民教育
策略的變革 [Nation vs. Tribe: Changes of the Education Policies for the Aboriginals during the Japanese
紋幌菊其實一點都不好吃，有一種難以言喻的古怪氣味。去年總督府發了通知說這種草可以拿來當代食品，並且派了飛機到處灑紋幌菊的種子，於是山上現在四處長滿了紋幌菊。由於種的米都被日本人徵收了，大家只好開始採食紋幌菊。

According to Wu’s novel, but also Chien Chin-ling’s online published resources, the spreading of wenhuangju can be traced back to the Japanese colonial rule in Taiwan during the Pacific War (1941-1945). As indicated by Chien Ching-ling, the Japanese government worried that there would be a general lack of food for the Japanese soldiers in Taiwan, hence, on the order of Emperor Hirohito, the seeds of wenhuangju were spread around Taiwan by airplanes. This is why the plant was later commonly referred to as “Hirohito plant” (zhaohecao 昭和草) or “airplane plant” (feijicao 飛機草) by the Taiwanese people. One thus sees the evident colonial link to the cultivation of this plant. Not only did the agricultural cultivation of wenhuangju arise from the needs of Japanese colonial regime, but the posterior naming of the plant shows the direct reference to this colonial history. Compared to Coetzee’s example of the distribution of bread to the indigenous people, Wu’s insertion of wenhuangju as the substitute of rice is less subtle or complex. Nevertheless, Wu’s example offers to his readers a direct criticism of the exploitation and domination of colonial agriculture.

In a way, agricultural plantation can be taken as a symbolic reference in postcolonial novels, which is useful to criticise the biopolitical-environmental management. For example, in Life & Times of Michael K, Coetzee depicts in detail Michael’s plantation and his atypical way of life on a deserted farm. One can view Michael’s life as a cultivator as an alternative movement which resists the colonial agricultural production and management, as well as the biopolitical control under the apartheid regime. It is worthwhile to cite Coetzee’s depiction of Michael in this context at length:

This was the beginning of [Michael’s] life as a cultivator. On a shelf in the shed he had found a packet of pumpkin seeds […]; he still had the mealie kernels; and on the pantry floor he had even picked up a solitary bean. In the space of a week he cleared the land near the dam and restored the system of furrows that irrigated it. Then he planted a small patch of pumpkins and a small patch of mealies; and some distance away on the river bank, where he would have to carry water to it, he planted his bean, so that if it grew it could climb into the thorn trees.

His days were divided between [...] hunting [...] and the tilling of the soil. [...] It is because I am a gardener, he thought, because that is my nature. [...] The impulse to plant had been reawoken in him; now, in a matter of weeks, he found his waking life bound tightly to the patch of earth he had begun to cultivate and the seeds he had planted there.

There were times, particularly in the mornings, when a fit of exultation would pass through him at the thought that he, alone and unknown, was making this deserted farm bloom. (*Life* 59)

On the one hand, Michael’s way of life and his farming show a resistance to the colonial agro-environmental management, which commonly emphasises the massive industrial agricultural production and favours a monocultural ecosystem. The colonial agro-environmental management is usually based on the principle that production should meet market demand and further make profits for the colonial economy. This emphasis, as Harald Witt shows in his study of industrial tree plantation in the Kwa-Zulu-Natal area of South Africa, is commonly shared among colonial farmers. “[T]he famers w[ere] probably motivated by the desire to convert unproductive and inaccessible land into productive farmland, thereby taming the natural environment and maximising agricultural profits” (98). As outlined in several environmental case studies of South Africa, colonial agricultural production—most notably the state-controlled afforestation programmes which gave rise to the timber industry—prioritises economic benefits over the sustainability and diversity of the local environment.569 Other forms of agricultural production, the sugar cane or wool industry for instance, had also, to one degree or another, has significant impacts on the ecosystems of South Africa. Georgina Thompson has documented how sugar cane plantations started to spread in the St. Lucia region (East shores of South Africa) in 1927, and the rise of this industry was mainly due to the arrival of the white settlers and the industrial capitalist agricultural model.570 The same logic applied to the farming industry.571 It is therefore not surprising to find that Coetzee made some remarks about the sheep farming and wool industry in his autobiographical fiction, *Boyhood*. As Coetzee describes, on the farm of Uncle Sam, his father’s eldest brother, there used to be a variety of animals, which were all in his grandfather’s keeping. After the death of his grandfather, “the barnyard began to dwindle, till nothing was left but sheep” (Coetzee, *Boyhood* 82). Coetzee then explains that it was due to the increase in the price of wool that


570 Ibid., p.197.

571 Ibid., p.197.
the monocultural industrialisation of sheep farming began to take the place of other traditional kinds of animal husbandry:

The Japanese were paying a pound a pound for wool: it was easier to buy a tractor than keep horses, easier to drive to Fraserburg Road in the new Stude-baker and buy frozen butter and powdered milk than milk a cow and churn the cream. *Only sheep mattered, sheep with their golden fleece.* (Boyhood 82; emphasis mine)

On the other hand, Michael’s retreat to the farm and his alienation from society also display an inconformity and a resistance to the biopolitical control of the apartheid regime. While living alone on the farm, Michael makes no attempt to establish contact with anybody. His cultivation of vegetables comes purely out of an awakening of his tie to the earth and to the meaning of life-form which the vegetation offers. He therefore has no intention to trade them. What really matters to Michael is the life of vegetables that “push[es] through the earth” (Coetzee, *Life* 65). As Coetzee recounts, one day, on Michael’s return home after his work in the fields, he met a young man who claimed to be the grandson of the farm owner, the old boss Visagie, and who had mistakenly assumed that Michael was the farm keeper employed by his grandfather.572 At first, the two men come to an agreement to take shelter under the same roof. But on one occasion when Michael is assigned to purchase daily supplies in town by the younger boss Visagie, instead of following Visagie’s instructions, Michael wonders off and decides to retreat into a cave in the mountains, not returning to the farm.573

From that moment onward, he begins to live in the manner of a plant:

He did not explore his new world. He did not turn his cave into a home or keep a record of the passage of the days. […] He would sit or lie in a stupor at the mouth of the cave, too tired to move or perhaps too lackadaisical. There were whole afternoons he slept through. […] He ate handfuls of flowers and his stomach hurt. […] In the crisp mountain water he missed the bitter savour of water from under the earth. (Coetzee, *Life* 67)

In this passage, Coetzee’s portrayal of how Michael leads his life resembles the life of a plant or vegetation. Imitating the way that a plant lives, Michael remains rooted to the spot where he stays, and nurtures himself exclusively with the nutrients he finds there. Like a plant, the thing that he is in need of and he longs for is water. Michael no longer takes part in the human society. Instead, he shares his living with the flowers and other vegetation at the mouth of the cave where he chooses to dwell. Michael’s complete estrangement from human society as well as his imitation of vegetative life pose a great challenge to the biopolitical control of


the apartheid regime. As one reads on, when Michael is captured and sent to the hospital, he neither accepts to provide a story about himself, and nor does he give any justification for why he cultivates the deserted farm or tries to lead a vegetative life at the entrance to a cave.\textsuperscript{574} These refusals can be interpreted as indicative of a determination to live outside of history. And, to some extent, his imitation of vegetative life can be understood as an alternative way of living that resists biopolitical categorisation. One can thus read Michael’s decisions as representing Coetzee’s highly critical stance towards colonial agro-environmental management.

**Resource Management and Colonial Invasion**

Comparing Wu and Coetzee’s novels, we know that Wu has not extensively discussed the relation between agriculture and land uses during the colonial periods. Nevertheless, one important difference between Coetzee and Wu is that only the latter discusses the relation between resource management and colonial invasions. Colonial invasions were mostly motivated by the desire to acquire natural resources and achieve further expansion of empire. The colonial empires—be it Japanese or British—certainly operated in this manner. According to Wu’s description in *Danche shiqieji*, the Japanese army was “yizhi weile jianli dadongya gongrongquan er duoqu ziyuan de qinlue budui [an invading troop that would rob any resource in a goal to establish the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere]” (183). As for the British Empire, its colonial invasion took the further step of undertaking the radical environmental modification of its colonies. As Wu also explains in the same novel, in order to compete with Brazil’s domination of the natural rubber market, British colonisers razed a huge part of the original wood forest in its Malaya colony, planting new species of rubber trees imported from Brazil.\textsuperscript{575} Within a very short period of time, rubber production showed significant growth: one third of the world’s rubber supplies came from Malaya.\textsuperscript{576} This clearly demonstrates that colonial invasion and expansion are tied not only to the acquisition of resources by force, but also to resource management and environmental manipulation.

\textsuperscript{574} Ibid., pp.139-41.
\textsuperscript{575} Wu M.Y., *Danche*, p.184.
\textsuperscript{576} Ibid., p.184.
In describing colonial battles fought over resource acquisition, Wu also depicts Japan’s invasion of the British colonial Malaya. As he notes, the battle was motivated by the abundant resouces of rubber and tin:

*The fact that the Japanese military force envied the natural resources of rubber and tin in Malaya possessed by the British Empire was not unknown to the British government, and so the British had launched “Operation Metador.” […] Unfortunately, however, the operation failed […]*

The British Indian Army retreated in disarray […] like a bunch of homeless men. […] At the same time, Tomoyuki Yamashita had sent out a unit to cross the forest on the east bank of Kuala Kangsar, ready to take over Ipoh city—the heart of Perak province, where bountiful resources of tin were located […].

當年英國並不是不曉得日軍覬覦馬來亞的橡膠和錫礦，因此軍方本就已規劃了一個「鬥牛士」計畫[…]。但這個計畫失敗了[…]

英印軍[…]大撤退，狼狽的情形就像是一群流浪漢。[…]

同一時間，山下奉文派遣的一支部隊正穿越瓜拉江沙以東的叢林，準備先拿下霹靂州的核心—盛產錫礦的怡保市[…]。（Wu, *Danche* 180-183; emphasis mine)

By using a thematic narration centred on the protagonist’s search for his father’s bike, Wu successfully ties in the story of Japanese colonial invasion for resources with the most widely known battle fought with bicycles. The Malayan Campaign fought between the Allied and the Axis Powers in Malaya (8 December 1941 - 31 January 1942) during the Second World War was particularly notable in the historical record for the Japanese use of bicycle infantry. The battle started with the desire of the Japanese to expand their Empire into southern Asian territory, but the main reason that triggered the battle was the Americans’ impositions of sanctions on Japan’s importation of resources, such as military supplies and petrol.577 Two chief objectives were put forward by the Japanese military force: (1) to acquire rubber, petrol and any other natural resources that could be obtained from the forests of Southeast Asia; (2) to cut off the influence of American military force and achieve the establishment of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere.578 The key factor which allowed the Japanese to defeat the British in Malaya was the sixty thousand well trained bicycle infantry they deployed. Further, it is also interesting to note that the need for these resources was not unrelated to the increasing demand for the raw materials needed to manufacture bicycles for the Japanese military.


Another important issue that Wu tries to draw his readers’ attention to is the significant exploitation of the local Malaya environment, notably by means of deforestation, which, Wu notes, had two causes: one was the need for natural resources and farmlands resulting from Japanese colonial invasion; the other was the wildfire ignited by the fighting of the colonial war. As Wu delineates, in the view of the Malayan people, trees are not regarded as mere objects. Instead, Malayans see trees as part of their identity belonging. Hence, deforestation resulted from Japanese colonial invasion, to the Malayans, was a considerable loss.

For the Malayan people, trees are homes, properties and spirits. Malayans use the tree trunks and branches to build their houses, and grind the tree leaves into paste in order to paint the walls. They pluck fruits from trees, use small branches for cooking, hide underneath the shades to avoid scorching heat, collect resin to make utensils and repair their small boats. With trees and bamboos in the forest, they make cradles and coffins, and build temples and palaces [...]. Nevertheless, many trees have died from the expansion of the farmlands as well as the wildfire set by the battle. Some Malayans thus referred to the Second World War as “the War that killed our forest.”

As is widely known, the major cause of today’s deforestation is agriculture.\(^579\) Farmers cut down trees to make more room for planting crops or grazing livestock. However, according to Michael Williams’ study, people generally make the mistake of thinking that deforestation is a recent occurrence, when in fact the activity was first deliberately performed about half-a-million years ago.\(^580\) The major reason that makes deforestation a serious issue in regard to today’s environment is the acceleration of this ancient activity: about nine-tenths of global deforestation was done after the mid-twentieth century.\(^581\) Moreover, in war, deforestation is one of the strategies used to uncover enemies and deprive them of resources. Apart from the wildfire that Wu mentions in his novel, it is well documented in history that during the Malayan Emergency and Vietnam War, British and American military forces used harmful


\(^{581}\) Ibid., p.30.
herbicides to defoliate the rainforest in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. It is thus evident why Wu tries to put forward the issue of deforestation in Danche: in depicting the despairing scene of the “death of the forest” caused by agriculture and warfare, Wu delicately weaves together the ambitious colonial invasions and the catastrophic results it had on the environment.

**Wounded Animals and Colonial Exploitation**

The environmental issues that have been considered so far deal largely with the human manipulation and exploitation of natural resources, such as forests, agricultural lands, water sources for irrigation, and so on. What has yet to be addressed within the broad area of environmental issues—and despite the significant role it plays in relation to human exploitation of the environment—are animals. Many postcolonial works represent human domination over animals in order to draw readers’ attention to colonial exploitation of the land and of the environment. To some extent, these representations may also serve to depict colonial domination over subalterns. For instance, in Linda Hogan’s _Power_, one finds a portrayal of the native Taiga tradition of panther sacrifice and its incompatibility with the values of contemporary White American society. Likewise, in Indra Sinha’s _Animal’s People_ (2007), the postcolonial industrial and economic domination of Western countries over India is symbolised by the half-man, half-animal protagonist whose deformation was a result of the chemical pollution produced by an American corporation. Similarly, representations of human domination over animals are often found in Coetzee and Wu’s works. In fact, one common theme shared in Coetzee and Wu’s writings is the “wounded animals.” These representations of wounded animals not only delineate the violent anthropocentric domination of animals but also serve to represent metaphorically the horrific domination of colonised people.

In their representations of “wounded animals”, both Coetzee and Wu focus on the specific context of colonial war(s). One possible reason for this is that the human slaughtering of animals typically becomes much more extreme and horrendous in the context of war. As is well known, in the colonial war periods, the lack of food supplies made the consumption of animal meat almost impossible. In Danche, Wu presents us with killing and eating the animals of the public zoo. As he recounts, the keeping of the zoo animals became more and more

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difficult during the colonial war that took place under Japanese rule, because of the general lack of food and resources. Moreover, as regards public safety, the government was concerned that wild animals from the zoo might have broken free from their cages as a result of bombardments and thus caused further casualties. For these reasons, in the eighteenth year of Showa 昭和 (1943), Taipei Public Zoo in Yuanshan 圓山 gathered all the zookeepers, technicians and certain biology professors to execute the zoo animals:

The zookeepers, no, actually, the animal executioners, first tricked that old brown bear with the tender eyes and a soft smile into a cage with metal bars, and then started beating its face with electric shock prods. The instinctive reflection of the bear was to bite the other end of the prod; all of a sudden, the high-pressure electricity went through its gigantic body. The body made a creepy ‘zzzzs…’ noise—like a giant tree that is cut down but not fully detached from its roots—and then, ‘bang,’ the bear fell on the floor. Yet, the bear was strong enough to tolerate the first shock, so it stood up again after a while. The executioners had to stick in the prods a second time. The bear, as its instinct told him, bit hard the prod’s end once more and got electrified. After repeating this process three times, the bear finally gave in and died.

Following this horrific killing scene, Wu further adds the unimaginable eating of the zoo animals, told by the flashback of Mr. Katsunuma, who was one of the zookeepers during the wartime:

‘The meat of lions, tigers and bear is distributed either to senators or to some people who hold high positions in the government. Nobody works in the zoo is willing to eat them. Some say the bear’s meat is too hard to chew and swallow; lion’s meat is bearable but has a funny smell. We electrified these animals instead of […] using poisons to kill them precisely because their meat is worth something. We are at war now! The flesh of a dying animal cannot be wasted,’ says Mr. Katsunuma with tears in his eyes […].

「獅子、老虎和熊的肉都分配給市議員和一些高層人士，動物園裡沒有一個人願意吃。聽說熊肉硬到無法下嚥，獅子肉則勉強可以吃，不過腥味很重。會使用電擊而不是毒殺，就是為了珍惜這些獸肉，現在是戰爭時期啊！死去動物的肉不能浪費。」勝沼先生的眼角有淚閃動⋯⋯(Danche 283)

Not only were the animals in the zoo turned into dishes on politicians’ plates, the consumption of unusual animal species captured in the wild also became the norm. Wu notes that as a result

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583 Wu M.Y., Danche, p.282.
of the Japanese monopolization of rice and food resources, no food cultivated by the local Taiwanese was actually shared or consumed among these locals.\textsuperscript{584} Instead, the food was taken away by the Japanese. Hence, the locals who lived by the rivers began to catch and eat turtles till one day no more turtles could be found.\textsuperscript{585}

Undoubtedly, Wu’s description of the killing and eating of zoo animals has a sentimental dimension and arguably also involves their anthropomorphisation. Indeed, his description could quite reasonably be criticised as an anthropocentric and romantic interpretation of animals, rather than as an accurate phenomenological portrayal of their actual mental states. Nevertheless, what is important is not the anthropomorphisation of the animals, but Wu’s focus on the \textit{brutal slaughtering of atypical animals taking place in exceptional circumstances}. The mass killing of turtles and the execution of bears or lions for food, framed by a specific historical background, serve as a reminder that, under certain circumstances, human killing and consumption of animal flesh loses certain defining aspects of culture. In these instances, humans themselves are similar to animals who would simply hunt and kill other animals for survivals, and morality or ethics is longer a primary concern. In this sense, Agamben’s view on the human-animal distinction is apparently right, for the distinction between humans and animals is an \textit{ethical} one rather than a biological or ontological one. As Matthew Calarco claims, “one of the chief merits of \textit{The Open} is that it helps us to see that the locus and stakes of the human-animal distinction are almost always deeply \textit{political and ethical}” (94; emphasis original).

In Coetzee’s \textit{Life}, the same kind of atypical animal-eating is also depicted, in this case in the context of the civil war that took place during the apartheid era. As indicated in the text, people suffer from difficulty to obtain food supplies since there is a war going on in the country. In a short conversation exchanged between Michael K and the young boss Visagie, who has mistaken Michael for his grandfather’s farm keeper, Michael’s reply somehow implies the possibility that he had consumed birds or lizards under certain circumstances.

‘Michael, there is nothing to eat!’ the grandson complained. ‘Don’t you ever go to the shop?’ […]

He thinks I’m truly an idiot, thought K. He thinks I am an idiot \textit{who sleeps on the floor like an animal and lives on birds and lizards} and does not know there is such a thing as money. (Coetzee, \textit{Life} 62; emphasis mine)

\textsuperscript{584} \textit{Ibid.}, p.282.
\textsuperscript{585} \textit{Ibid.}, p.282.
When the young master Visagie suggests that they should go fetch the goats left wondering on the farm for eating, Michael declines the idea by stating that these goats have gone wild and that they would never be able to catch them. In assuming his role as “farm keeper,” Michael goes out and shoots some sparrows and a dove with his catapult for the young master. Further, when Michael brings the birds to the young boss Visagie, he makes an odd remark which even makes the bird-eating sound more eerie:

[Michael K] brought the dead birds to the front door and knocked. The grandson [...] came to meet him. ‘Very good,’ he said. ‘Can you clean them quickly? I would appreciate that.’

K held up the four dead birds, their feet together in a tangle of claws. There was a pearl of blood at the beak of one of the sparrows. ‘So small you don’t taste it as it goes down,’ he said. ‘You wouldn’t get yourself dirty, not even your little finger.’ (Coetzee, Life 63)

Michael’s peculiar diet of sparrows, doves, (and possibly lizards as he strangely implied in his previous statement) can be compared to Wu’s portrayals of atypical animal-killing and -eating. In fact, both authors try to represent the “abnormal” animal consumption that occurs during colonial wartime because they wish to: (1) emphasise the colonial violence imposed on both humans (especially the subalterns or the colonised people) and animals; (2) raise questions about our anthropocentric view in distinguishing the subjectivity of an animal and of a human by relativising the suffering of human beings (i.e., hunger and starvation) and of animal beings (i.e. massive and brutal killing) in the specific colonial or (post-)colonial war contexts.

The questions raised here are also addressed in Coetzee’s Elizabeth Costello, though in Elizabeth it deals with a deeper level of moral inquiry. At the end of the speech that Mrs Costello delivers in Appleton college in the U.S.A., she makes some closing remarks about human insensibility and indifference to the practice of animal-killing and -eating; and, in this practice, she believes that there exists an inherent banality of evil. She thereby raises the problematic issue of the act of killing and further challenges her audience by drawing a comparison between the Nazi killing of Jews and the killing of animals:

I [Costello] return one last time to the places of death [of animals] all around us, the places of slaughter to which, in a huge communal effort, we close our hearts. Each day a fresh holocaust, yet, as far as I can see, our moral being is untouched. We do not feel tainted. We can do anything, it seems, and come away clean. (Coetzee, Elizabeth 80)

586 Coetzee, Elizabeth, pp.62-60, 176.
The remarks, as one would have predicted, are not greatly appreciated. Not only do some members of the audience, including Costello’s son, her daughter-in-law, and a bearded man who raises a question at the end of her speech (which may represent the point of view of certain readers), find it difficult to accept Costello’s reasoning, but the family of the holocaust victims also feel offended by the reduced and vulgarised analogy between animal-killing and the massacre of Jews.\(^{587}\) Costello, however, takes the issue to heart. Whether Costello is capable to recognise her syllogism of equalising a human life to a cattle’s life or not (as Mr. Abraham Stern has suggested in his letter to Costello), her claim urges us to reconsider the notion of sympathy and the *wrongness* in the act of killing itself can plausible be applied to animal killing and eating.\(^{588}\) After the speech, Costello confronts her son once more in all sincerity to address the same issue from her moral conscience. This time, her statements insist more urgently on the brutality of animal killing in association with the horrific image of the killing of Jews:

> It’s that I [Costello] no longer know where I am. I seem to move around perfectly easily among people, to have perfectly normal relations with them. Is it possible, I ask myself, that all of them are participants in a crime of stupefying proportions? Am I fantasising it all? I must be mad! Yet every day I see the evidences. The very people I suspect produce the evidence, exhibit it, offer it to me. Corpses [of animals]. Fragments of corpses that they have bought for money. […]

> It is as if I were to visit friends, and to make some polite remark about the lamp in their living room, and they were to say, “Yes, it’s nice. Isn’t it? Polish-Jewish skin it’s made of, we find that’s best, the skins of young Polish-Jewish virgins.” And then I go to the bathroom and the soap wrapper says, “Treblinka — 100% human stearate.” Am I dreaming, I say to myself? What kind of house is this? (Coetzee, *Elizabeth 114-15*; emphasis mine)

Costello’s aggressive statements remind us in a way of Jonathan Swift’s famous essay, *A Modest Proposal* (1729), which satirically presents the possible selling and eating of Irish children to rich English gentlemen and ladies.\(^{589}\) Costello’s statements produce the same satirical effect. On the one hand, her statements ridicule the way that we treat animals in everyday life with an imagination of preposterous scenes. Her imagining of “making soaps out of human fats or lamp covers out of human skins” surely captures our attention and provokes responses from the general public. Yet, on the other hand, compared to Swift’s

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\(^{587}\) *Ibid.*, pp.81-82, 94.


Costello’s statements appear to be more powerful and shocking to her audience and to Coetzee’s readers, for the analogy is made between a violent historical fact and an on-going reality. Her statements bring into question the very existence of animal slaughterhouses, the ethical limits of scientific experiments on animals, and the industrialisation of animal by-products production. For Costello, in the past, the killing of animals, in some way, had “dignified” reasons and purposes; but in today’s world, this practice has no longer such a defining aspect. She asserts:

In the olden days the voice of man, raised in reason, was confronted by the roar of the lion, the bellow of the bull. Man went to war with the lion and the bull, and after many generations won that war definitively. Today these creatures have no more power. Animals have only their silence left with which to confront us. Generation after generation, heroically, our captives refuse to speak to us. (Coetzee, Elizabeth 70)

Indeed, in today’s world, there is only their silence remained to confront us, particularly when we put animals in submission to the industrial and economic exploitation. This exploitation is essentially linked to the colonial capitalist model of civilisation, which has been continuously practiced throughout the colonial era and beyond. As mentioned earlier, Coetzee has given a good example of monocultural sheep farming during South African Apartheid in order to demonstrate the problematic logic of the industrial capitalist agricultural model. Essentially the same criticism is presented in Wu Ming-yi’s work, the difference being that Wu has explored the issue in more detail and has exhibited more concretely images of wounded animals. In Danche, two kinds of wounded animals—elephants and butterflies—are chosen to demonstrate human domination and exploitation of animals in the colonial periods. Moreover, these two kinds of wounded animal also to some extent represent the colonial domination over subalterns. The presence of elephants in the story occurs through Basuya’s tape-recording of his memory of the Battle of the North Burma. Upon joining the Silver Wheel Unit, Basuya, a Taiwanese Tsou aboriginal, was enrolled to fight for the Japanese emperor. According to Basuya, the reason elephants were valued as good commodities in wars was that they have a high tolerance for extreme weather as well as a nearly impenetrable skin, which prevents them from dying of gunfire; they were thus widely deployed to transport supplies. Elephants, in Wu’s portrayal, thus become the paradigmatic wounded animal reference to show the human exploitation and domination of the animals.

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590 Coetzee, Boyhood, p.82.
592 Ibid., p.217.
A particular male elephant that Basuya was very fond of was called “Ah mei,” though he was also known by most of the Taiwanese as, “Lin Wang 林旺,” following his renaming in 1954 by General Sun Li-jen 孫立人, who served the Kuomintang government. In the chapter entitled “Limbo,” Wu describes both the unconscious and the memories of elephants (notably that of Ah mei) in the form of a dream. Living through wars and then undertaking a long journey of migration—from Burma to Mainland China then to Taiwan—, these psychologically tormented and physically exhausted creatures become perpetually trapped in the rage and anger associated with their memories of the wars of the colonial period. These memories of the colonial past, shared by and marked on bodies of soldiers and wounded elephants, are something they cannot escape for the rest of their lives. Wu can thus be said to have depicted the elephant to intensify the immense sorrow and pain that the colonised people and the animals of wartime had endured.\(^{593}\)

Another wounded animal that Wu depicted is the butterfly. In a parallel plot line to the main story of *Danche*, Wu inserted a meta-fictional story about the making of a butterfly-painting\(^ {594}\) written by a fictive character, Sabina.\(^ {595}\) Intrigued by Sabina’s short story, the protagonist begins to carry out research into the subject of butterfly-painting in Taiwan, and he discovers that during the colonial periods the catching of butterflies supported a huge industry involving specimen-collecting and butterfly-painting. As Wu recounts, both Japanese and Taiwanese traders sold enormous amounts of the processed Taiwanese butterfly specimens to Japanese entomology researchers.\(^ {596}\) At the highpoint of butterfly exportation, in the post-war era, more than 500,000 butterflies were sold annually to an American company in just one order.\(^ {597}\) And, as the butterfly industry matured over time, more techniques were developed to process powders made from butterfly scales for imprinting; and a variety of commodities, including umbrellas, postcards, porcelains, and so on, were imprinted with these

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\(^{594}\) Butterfly-painting is painting made with butterfly wings. The craftsman makes a sketch of a scenic view or of a worldly famous artwork, then arranges and attaches butterfly’s wings on the sketch to complete the painting. See Wu Shing-tsz 吳幸慈, “Taiwan puli diqu hudie chanye fazhan 台灣埔里地區蝴蝶產業發展 [The Development of Butterfly Industry in Puli, Taiwan],” MA thesis, p.86-95.

\(^{595}\) Wu M.Y., *Danche*, pp.104-06, 110.


powders. The industry continued booming during the KMT colonial period—between 1960 and 1975, thousands of millions of butterflies were killed and exported each year—, becoming one of the most important economic sources of foreign currencies. Wu’s account of the rise of the butterfly industry in Taiwan, as well as his detailed depiction of the cruelty involved in processing the captured butterflies, shows once more the dark side of the colonial exploitation of animals.

The imprinting technique for powdered butterfly scales uses resin, a sticky, organic substance abstracted from fir or pine trees, as glue to attach butterfly wings to paper. When the resin is completely dry, the powdered scales of the butterfly will remain on the paper. Ibid., p.121.

Ibid., p.122.
3.1. The Concept of “Animan”

3.1.1. The Linguistic Boundary and Animal Subjectivity

In part I, the problematic ontological distinction between the subjectivity of humans and that of animals was discussed, particularly from a philosophical perspective. Recent or contemporary continental philosophers such as Levinas, Derrida and Agamben have all taken this problematic issue into account in their philosophical thinking. In this chapter, the main focus is on the relationship between animal subjectivity and language. With this in mind, it is necessary briefly to present a summary of the arguments of Agamben already addressed in detail in chapter one. Subsequently, the discussion will cover several scientific studies, focusing on those dealing with hypotheses and conducted experiments regarding animals’ capacity for language, reason, cognition, and so on. Near the end of this chapter, the question of anthropocentrism versus anthropomorphism shall be raised and discussed in order to re-examine the linguistic boundary that is generally perceived so far in the subjectivity of the animals.

**Agamben: The “Openness” of Animals**

As argued in chapter one, Agamben’s notion of infancy and his criticism of our appropriation of language have shed light on our anthropocentric understanding of the subjectivity. Agamben’s concept of infancy not only debunks anthropocentric thinking, but also serves to elicit new theoretical concept(s) in the domain of animal and philosophical studies, including the concept of what I propose to call the “animan” —a figure that is portrayed as neither animal nor human and that can possibly destabilise the boundary of the human-animal relationship—which will be addressed later in this section.

Agamben asserts that, in the Western philosophical tradition, it is supposed that there is a distinctive ontological difference in the subjectivity of human and that of animal beings, that is to say, a “caesura” which separates animality from humanity. This “caesura” is traditionally identified and typically defined by beings’ ability to acquire a language system.
Agamben explains that humans generally see this “caesura” as *existing within themselves*, such that the “caesura” also separates them from their own animality. It is this separation that further allows humans to distinguish their subjectivity from that of animals. Agamben argues that this view of the “caesura” is in fact problematic since it is based on an *anthropocentric view* of the usage and the concept of language. He states:

> All living beings are in the open: they manifest themselves and shine in their appearance. But only human beings want to take possession of this opening, to seize hold their appearance and of their own being-manifest. Language is the appropriation, which transforms nature into face” (Agamben, *Means* 90; emphasis original).

Agamben holds the view that animals are, in fact, always already “in language.” He draws on the notion of infancy to express the idea that animals are in fact similar to human infants, and that “[they] do not enter language, [since] they are already inside it” (Agamben, *Infancy* 59). The distinctive feature, which differentiates humans and animals in relation to language, is that humans’ use of language as an appropriative means to represent themselves and make manifest their being; on the contrary, animals are inside language, but they do not tend to use language in the same manner. Hence, we humans often assume—from our anthropocentric viewpoint—that animals *lack* language. In addition, as Matthew Calarco points out in his discussion of Agamben, since animals are considered beings that lack language, people presume that they have no ability to break with their instinctual and environmental milieu. This “inability” has in many aspects reduced animals to the status of inferior beings with respect to humans.

Also, from a more empirical perspective, results of in-depth studies of many different species of animals, has clearly demonstrated it to be an anthropocentric misconception that animals’ lack language. In some case studies, linguistic and animal-behaviour scientists have to a large extent demonstrated that primates which share more distinctive characteristics similar to humans—including chimpanzees, bonobos, chlorocebus (also know as vervet monkeys)—have both a good command and understanding of human language. Additionally, they have also shown that even various non-primates—such as dolphins, parrots, dogs and rats…—could either acquire a language system of their own or possess sufficient amount of “human vocabulary” (whether these vocabulary are actual “words” in human language or “signs”), as well as particular kinds of reasoning behind these items of

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600 Agamben, *The Open*, p.16.


vocabulary, to communicate and interact with humans.\textsuperscript{603} More specific cases related to animals’ usage and understanding of language and reason will be shown in the next section, but here the aim is to point out the fact that zoological studies have demonstrated that many animals do have the common ability to acquire a language system.

Another important aspect of Agamben’s theory of animality concerns his objection to Heidegger’s analysis of animals. In Heidegger’s philosophy, the animal’s “openness” to the world is very limited compared to that of humans. Agamben puts forward the criticism that Heidegger’s thinking in regards to animal “openness” has relativised animals on a hierarchical scale according to which they are inferior to humans: “[o]nly man, indeed only the essential gaze of authentic thought, can see the open which names the unconcealedness of beings. The animal, on the contrary, never sees this open”\textsuperscript{604} (\textit{The Open} 58). Since animals do not have this essential gaze and cannot understand the “as” in the manner that human beings can, the world is in some way concealed to them. In other words, for Heidegger, animals are “poor in world.”\textsuperscript{605} Agamben points out that Heidegger reached this conclusion regarding the poverty in world of animals based on a disagreement with Rilke’s view of the distinction between animals and other beings that are neither human nor animal. As a matter of fact, Heidegger believes that animals do have accessibility to the world—since animals do react at the moment when they are “stimulated” in what he calls their disinhibiting circle—but only that kind of accessibility is restrained. This aptitude, in Heidegger’s terminology, is “animal captivation.”\textsuperscript{606} A stone or an airplane, says Heidegger, is in a state of complete “worldlessness,” for it has neither the motility nor excitability that would allows it to interact or relate to its surrounding environment.\textsuperscript{607} Contrary to animals and other non-animal-non-human beings, Heidegger thinks that we humans possess a capacity for what he calls “pre-ontological cognition,” which allows us to understand the “as,” prior to the establishment of any explicit ontology (i.e., a theory of Being). It is this pre-ontological cognition that explains why the world of human beings stands in “unconcealment.” All in all, Heidegger believes that there are no “beings” for animals, only triggers that then cause their disinhibition or instinctual reactions. Heidegger offers the examples of the lark and the moth, suggesting that both the lark’s jubilation toward the sun and the moth’s suicidal embrace of flame

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{603} \textit{Ibid.}, pp.129-37.
\item \textsuperscript{604} Heidegger, \textit{Parmenides}, pp.159-60.
\item \textsuperscript{605} Heidegger, \textit{The Fundamental Concept of Metaphysics}, pp.268-70.
\item \textsuperscript{606} Agamben, \textit{The Open}, pp.59-60.
\end{itemize}
demonstrate their captivation to their respective disinhibiting mechanisms.\textsuperscript{608} This is why Heidegger thinks that animals’ “openness” to the world is limited. Having explicited Heidegger’s reasoning, Agamben then raises some issues it presents and goes on to put forward his argument about animals. He sees that the main problem in Heidegger’s thinking is his self-contradicting attempt to define the border between animal and man, which strives to pinpoint down the paradoxical ontological status of the animal environment.\textsuperscript{609} Agamben argues that even though Heidegger has concluded that animals cannot see the open, he is in fact wavering between two opposite positions. On the one hand, Heidegger thinks highly of the value of the \textit{unio mystica} [mystical knowledge] (also interpreted as nonknowledge by Agamben), the unmatched passion or an intense forcefulness that animals (in this case the lark and the moth) exhibit toward their disinhibitors. This kind of animal captivation shows a more intense openness than any kind of human knowledge.\textsuperscript{610} Heidegger considers that this mystical knowledge possessed by animals gives them the accessibility to the essence of life \textit{but it remains fetal and destructive}.\textsuperscript{611} On the other hand, Heidegger believes that animal’s poverty in world reflects “a problem internal to animality itself.” As he asserts,

\begin{quote}
\textit{Animal’s poverty in world [is] a problem internal to animality itself}. For with the animal’s being open for that which disinhibits, the animal in its captivation is essentially held out in something other than itself, something that indeed cannot be manifest to the animal either as a being or as a non-being. (Heidegger, \textit{The Fundamental} 282; emphasis original)
\end{quote}

Taking Heidegger’s ambiguous attitude into account, Agamben thus argues, “[in fact,] the animal is at once open and not open [...]. [I]t is neither one nor the other: it is \textit{open in a nondisconcealment}” (\textit{The Open} 59; emphasis original). He explains this as follows: “the animal experiences in its being exposed in a nondisconcealment […] That is to say […] the animal in some way feels its own not-being-open” (Agamben, \textit{The Open} 60). For Agamben, this knowing-itself-being-exposed-in-a-nondisconcealment immediately \textit{shortens the distance between animal and man and between openness and non-openness}, whereas Heidegger originally sets out to prove the opposite.\textsuperscript{612} To conclude, one can see that Agamben’s critical reading of Heidegger’s stance with respect to animality eventually destabilises the meaning of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[608] Agamben, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.58-60.
\item[609] \textit{Ibid.}, p.59.
\item[610] \textit{Ibid.}, p.59.
\item[611] Heidegger, \textit{The Fundamental}, p.255.
\item[612] Agamben, \textit{op.cit.}, p.61.
\end{footnotes}
the boundary between humans and animals. In one way or another, Agamben’s philosophical thinking has created a rupture in the anthropocentric thinking embodied in the Western metaphysical tradition.

Language Experiments with Animals

Agamben’s theory works as a paradigm for us to understand subjectivity from a non-anthropocentric perspective; nevertheless, it remains in the philosophical realm. The following section focuses on language experiments conducted in scientific and cognitive research that have been carried out on different species of animals. These experiments further demonstrate that, in reality and in practice (so not solely in theory), animals do have access to language or to the language system, in which case a constitution of their subjectivity via language is possible. The main references and cases drawn on here come from David Premack’s language experiments on chimpanzees and Yves Christen’s thorough comparative analysis of various studied cases of different animal’s linguistic behavior.

In discussions of animal subjectivity, two critical questions are generally raised and they often become the central research themes in the scientific domain: (1) do animals have language? and (2) can animals reason? These two questions are essential, and they are sometimes combined in the discussion under the rubric of “animal intelligence.” Although this thesis will offer a detailed discussion of these two questions, it should be clearly noted that it does not intend to confuse the content of these two issues by focusing on the more general notion of “animal intelligence.” The objective is to show that, both in theoretical approach and in scientific practice, it is possible to demonstrate the subjectivity of animals, provided one acknowledges alternative ways of looking at their perception and use of language(s). The thesis will engage in extensive analysis and discussion of Premack’s research, even if his basic research objective is to understand “the intelligence” of apes in comparison with that of human beings. In fact, Premack’s research depends on a scientific methodological approach of the language-teaching and language-learning of the chimpanzees, and he is more interested in finding out if human intelligence stands alone or if it shares some grounds with our primate relatives. To that question, Premack concludes that humans have no cognitive neighbours and that our intelligence is unique.\(^{613}\) Whether one finds Premack’s conclusion convincing or not, one thing that needs to be outlined here is that the objective of

\(^{613}\) Premack, *Intelligence*, p.2.
this thesis is not to prove “the level of intelligence of animals” via any scientific scales or tests that human scientists have devised. So, while Premack’s research results are extensively referenced in the text, they are meant to be taken only as supporting evidences of the argument of this thesis—that animals’ subjectivity can be demonstrated via their employment and understanding of language.

Since Premack’s research focusses on the question of the “intelligence” of apes, it does not directly consider animals’ ability to use or to comprehend language. His primary research strategy is to compare the child-adult relationship of chimpanzees to that of human beings. For Premack, this comparison between apes and humans is appropriate because the two species demonstrate similar learning process and patterns. Premack asserts that in the process of acquiring intelligence, whether the adults try to enforce or intervene in the process of learning is irrelevant, for both the young primates and young human beings acquire skills and intelligence in life through the process of observation.614 The younger ones will eventually end up acquiring the same skills as the adults in the same group, regardless of whether they are forced to learn it or not. From this comparison, Premack introduces Burrhus Frederic Skinner and Noam Chomsky’s different positions regarding the subjectivity and cognitive development of both human and nonhuman animals.615 In Skinner’s view, everything is learned and the acquisition of intelligence is posterior; hence, language is not the unique element or the primary criterion in the acquisition of intelligence.616 In other words, both humans and nonhuman animals are able to acquire intelligence without the language system. On the contrary, Chomsky “argues that language is unique and syntax is built into the nervous system”617 (Premack 4). Chomsky’s position suggests that it is impossible to learn or to acquire intelligence without having access to language. It follows that, in order to prove that animals have intelligence, one must first prove that they have access to the language system. Premack does not side with either of these stances, for he believes both propositions can be true on its own terms. But Premack nevertheless wishes to put forwards these two arguments because he considers that they both emphasise the role of language in relation to cognition and subject-formation (whether of a human or an animal).

615 Burrhus Frederic Skinner (1904-1990) is an American psychologist, behavriorist and social philosopher. Noam Chomsky (1928-) is a renowned American linguist, analytic philosopher and cognitive scientist.
In the course of his research, Premack raises the following questions: (1) How does other (nonhuman) species perceive the world? (2) What concepts do they have? (3) If, like us, other animals invent theories about the world, what form do these theories take? These questions, in one way or another, already presuppose an anthropocentric viewpoint. Moreover, one can further claim that such questioning, philosophically speaking, already disposes a Heideggerian understanding of animals. In view of this, what my thesis finds interesting in Premack’s work is rather such interrogations as: (4) Is it possible to characterise the intelligence of another species, if it is not possible to “talk” to that species? and (5) Do any species other than man engage in causal inference (i.e., relation-agent-object)? Premack’s responses to these questions are certainly noteworthy, for they prove that access to language is not solely limited to human beings. Indeed, from these responses we learn not only that it is possible to characterise the intelligence of nonhuman animals, since the findings show that humans are able to “talk” to other nonhuman animal species (what Premack means by “talking” is successfully communicating and exchanging meaning, rather than responding by means of verbal articulation in the form of specifically human languages), but also that there are other species than humans that can engage in causal inference. Indeed, his study of chimpanzees shows that these animals have a good command of language because they can both respond to questions and express themselves by organising or rearranging given vocabulary in sentences with correct syntax. Moreover, Premack’s studies also prove their ability to engage in causal inference. As Premack himself observes, while trained chimpanzees lack the righty signs to express their ideas and thoughts, they tend to use abstract nonverbal sequences to achieve the same purpose. One of Premack’s experiment is documented as follows: “after poking [a] knife into the apple, some of the [chimpanzees] turn to the plastic words and write ‘Elizabeth apple cut’ or ‘Peony apple insert,’ descriptions by Elizabeth and Peony of their own immediately preceding behavior” (6).

618 Premack, op.cit., p.4.

619 Ibid., p.4.

620 An example is Premack’s description of their training process and situation with Sarah, a female African-born chimpanzee. Sarah, through her different training phases, has learned the concept of the language vehicle. Trainers put words on pieces of plastic and adheres magnets at the back to interact and communicate with her. The plastics pieces can be adhered and re-arranged according to Sarah’s liking on a magnetised board. In her training, not only does Sarah demonstrate the ability to formulate sentences such as “Mary [the trainer] give Sarah banana” in accordance to a correct syntax, but also, on occasions, she shows that she can correct her own errors if the trainer reminds her that the formulation of the sentence is incorrect. Ibid., pp.25-29.
words are not present, the chimpanzees appear to use abstract nonverbal sequences in the same descriptive way as they use words” (6). Premack further adds that chimpanzees respond well to nonverbal interrogations because they have the ability to recognise representations of their own behaviours as well of the behaviour of others.\textsuperscript{621} In addition, he claims that other non-primate animal species may also possess this ability (although he raises doubts whether \textit{all} of them have this ability).\textsuperscript{622} This recognition of the mental representation is fundamental to the grounding of semiotics, and it shows that nonhuman animals indeed have access to language(s). As Premack himself declares,

\begin{quote}
If a species (such as chimpanzee) has the capacity to recognise representations of various conditions, it is virtually certain that it can be taught language, or at least the most basic language function. (7)
\end{quote}

Another important point that Premack raises in his studies and which can be further used as a counter-argument to anthropocentrism is our presumption of human’s exclusive access to language. He claims that this presumption is based on a false belief that we do not imagine and cannot accept that a normal human being \textit{does not} have language.

\begin{quote}
We reject as a premise the possibility that a normal person may not have language. In fact, there are hundreds of thousands of human beings who are language deficient in sufficient degree to require therapy. [...] The most we say along these lines is that someone is not “very verbal,” by which we do not intend a serious condition. (Premack 13)
\end{quote}

Henceforth, withholding such position, humans dispose and assert an anthropocentric view on animals and can hardly imagine their accessibility to language.

In Yves Christen’s studies, various cases have been summarised with a view to showing that animals do indeed have the ability to use and/or to understand language(s). In his book, \textit{L’Animal est-il une personne?}, he discusses specific scientific case studies about the linguistic behaviours and cognitive process of a wide range of animals, including chimpanzees, bonobos, dogs, rats, parrots, and so on. The way that Christen presents these cases is by directly addressing the research processes and the test results, and the summarising the inferred meanings of these research tests. Here, I would like to first present some basic categories useful for studying animals’ relationship with language(s) and their subjectivity. In particular, one can summarise the following ways in which the cognitive ability of animals can be demonstrated and their subjectivity manifested through their relation to language: (1)

\textsuperscript{621} \textit{Ibid.}, p.7.
\textsuperscript{622} \textit{Ibid.}, p.7.
their understanding of mental representations, (2) their skills of deduction (i.e. logic), (3) their ability to distinguish different languages, (4) their construction of sentences in accordance to syntax (i.e. the manifestation of reasoning), (5) their recursivity, and finally (6) their desire to communicate.

In regard to animal’s perception and understanding of mental representations, it is, as Premack’s studies have pointed out, usually primates, our closest living relatives, who are tested to see whether they possess this ability. Despite Premack’s suggestion that other non-primate species may also have this ability, research experiments are more likely to be carried out on primates. Similar experiments have also been carried out on bonobos and chlorocebus (a type of medium-sized primates from the family of Old World monkeys, also called le singe vert [green monkey]). According to Christen, Sue Savage-Rumbaugh’s experiments on bonobos have shown that bonobos respond well to human language. Instead of teaching the bonobos specific coded languages, she simply speaks to them in the manner that one talks to children in English, and her findings prove that these animals understand the meaning of her words. (Her most successful case study is with the bonobo named Kanzi).623 In addition, the linguistic experiments conducted on these animals are not limited to the simple or stereotypical model of questions and answers. This approach allows bonobos to make statements or responses related to the addressed contexts and in specific situations, instead of simply making the banal demand: “give me a banana.”624 Another interesting fact that needs to be noted regarding the linguistic ability of bonobos is that, without being trained or taught, they can produce an individual sound that corresponds to each individual specific circumstance. Christen thus draws a conclusion that they are fully capable of producing their own language.625 This feature is not, however, exclusive to bonobos, but is also by other primates, such as green monkeys. Christen shows that chlorocebus have an alarm system that demonstrates their access to language, for they produce individual sounds that represent each of their major predators.626 This finding indicates the existence of semantic signals in these


624 Christen, op.cit., p.120.

625 Ibid., p.122.

626 Ibid., p.124.
animals even within their own natural habitat; furthermore, it also demonstrates that green monkeys possess clear mental representations of each of their natural predators.\textsuperscript{627}

The skill of deduction is most notably shown in the experiments conducted on a dog whose name is Rico. In year 2004, when Rico was ten years old, it was proven that Rico had the capacity to memorise about two hundred human words.\textsuperscript{628} Although Rico’s vocabulary is far less than a child of the same age, his understanding of these two hundred words largely excels any other trained dogs that have been subjected to linguistic experiments in laboratories.\textsuperscript{629} What is extraordinary in Rico’s command of language is not his incredible memory of human vocabulary, but the logic he applies to deduce the meaning of new words. Rico can in some cases immediately understand the meaning of a new word. If one sends Rico to fetch something the one single item in the room that he does not recognise, he can deduce that the hitherto unknown word corresponds to the object he is meant to be looking for.\textsuperscript{630} Moreover, it has further been shown that Rico is capable of remembering this “new word” (which correlates to the initially unknown item he was meant to fetch) learned from the experience.\textsuperscript{631}

Another interesting point regarding animals’ use of and relation to language is their ability to distinguish between different languages. For many researchers in animal cognition and linguistics, hypotheses regarding animals’ learning of human language are usually explored experimentally using only one single language, which is often the native language of the host researcher. Through his experiments, Frank Ramus has discovered that tamarins (a squirrel-sized New World monkey that belongs to the family Callitrichidae in the genus Sanguinus) have the ability to recognise different types of human languages. Ramus’ findings outline that the tested tamarins can distinguish Japanese from Dutch, although they do not “speak” either of these languages.\textsuperscript{632} Ramus’ language experiment shows that these little primates’ ability to identify languages is similar to that of human infants at an early stage of language learning. Despite the fact that human infants of a certain age cannot actually

\textsuperscript{627} Ibid., pp.124-25.
\textsuperscript{628} Ibid., p.129.
\textsuperscript{629} Ibid., p.129.
\textsuperscript{631} Christen, \textit{op.cit.}, p.130.
articulate words to communicate with the adults, they are able to understand what the adults say. Yves Christen derives the following conclusion from Ramus’ experiment:

This observation suggests that the primates’ brains already possess general proprieties to the hearing system which pre-exist in the development of human language.

Cette observation suggère que le cerveau des primates possède des propriétés générales propres à leur système auditif qui préexistent à l’apparition du langage proprement humain. (138)

Surprisingly, this ability is not exclusive to tamarin monkeys. In fact, Juan Toro and his colleagues also carried out the same experiment on rats, training the rats to listen to phrases and sentences in Japanese and Dutch.\footnote{Toro, et al., “Effects of Backward Speech and Speaker Variability in Language Discrimination by Rats,” Journal of Experimental Psychology: Animal Behavior Processes, 31 (2004): 95-100.} Their result shows that the rats know how to distinguish the rhythms and the structures in presented phrases belonging to either one or the other of the languages.\footnote{Christen, op.cit., p.139.} These tests regarding the ability of animals to distinguish different languages once more prove that, in reality, animals possess language.

Apart from animals’ ability to distinguish different languages, their construction of sentences in accordance with grammatical rules is also one of the important aspects that we should take into consideration, for correct use of grammar is a manifestation of logic and reasoning. Irene Pepperberg has exhibited the exceptional and remarkable case of an African grey parrot, Alex.\footnote{Pepperberg, Alex Studies. Cognitive and Communicative Abilities of Grey Parrots (1999).} According to Pepperberg’s finding, the parrot does not only have a cognitive capacity equivalent to a five-year-old child, but it can also distinguish the “same-different” concept that is embodied in the semiotic system, which is quite an extraordinary discovery in the history of animal cognition.\footnote{Christen, op.cit., p.136.} Alex knows how to object by saying “no” when people bring him an item he does not desire. Moreover, in respect to its cognitive awareness, if one puts in front of Alex a green triangle and a green circle and asks him what are the common theme shared between the two items, he knows very well that the answer is “colour.”\footnote{Ibid., p.136-37. Cf. Pepperberg, op.cit., p.448.} These findings indicate that Alex the parrot possesses the capability to internalise a semantic system that is usually used only by human beings and can further give logical answers by following the grammatical rules of that system. In addition, Alex has demonstrated the ability to invent new vocabulary. For instance, when he was presented with...
an apple and was asked what it is, because Alex had never seen an apple beforehand, he answered, “bannery” out of his knowledge of the words “banana” and “cherry.” Alex’s invention of new vocabulary may be seen as a significant breakthrough in the studies of animals’ cognition and linguistic behaviours for two reasons. First of all, it proves that animals can in fact process engage in logical thinking processes (i.e. reasoning). Secondly, the ability to “create” has long been regarded as one of the most distinguished features of human beings—and one that differentiates us from nonhumans. Alex’s example overthrows this premise and obliges us to consider seriously the possibility that animals may have the ability to “create” or “invent.” In a way, it also challenges how we perceive animals and their subjectivity when compared to ours, for the art of creation is no longer reserved only for humans. Alex’s example may be challenged as an exceptional case, not representative even of the cognitive abilities of his species, let alone of all animals. However, other studies on various species of cetaceans—especially dolphins—also emphasise the creativity of animals, since they are qualified as the most “talented” in language among all mammals. To a certain extent, their way(s) of producing or imitating sounds can even be said to be “poetic.”

Recursion is one of the critical and challenging issues that animal linguists and researchers have to confront, for several results have indicated that a large number of animals do not use recursion. Even primates are said to have difficulty in understanding recursion; that is to say, they have problems when it comes to comprehend the repeated application of a recursive procedure, especially with numbers. According to Marc D. Hauser and his colleagues’ studies on the numeric understanding of animals, various different species of animals, even great apes like chimpanzees, have a very different understanding of numbers and exhibit different forms of logic from humans. For example, rhesus monkeys can only understand numbers individually: they first grasp the meaning of one, and then two, three, four. On the contrary, human cognition proceeds differently, for we understand that there exists a general logical order for those numbers, so beyond four, a child can easily understand...

638 Ibid., p.137.
639 Ibid., p.133.
640 Ibid., p.133.
642 Christen, op.cit., p.146.
that there follows five, six, and so on up to infinity. It is thus generally concluded that this capability of general logic of numbers (i.e. recursion) is something unique to human beings. Nevertheless, Yves Christen contests the conclusion drawn from Hauser’s studies via a recent discovery of Timothy Gentner, who identifies the ability of recursion in the common starling, also known as the European starling (a medium-sized passerine bird in the starling family).643 These birds, as pointed out by Gentner and Christen, do not ignore the art of recursion, since the sounds they produce correspond to the recursive sequence of “rattle rattle warble warble.”644

Finally, when one discusses animals’ linguistic behaviours and cognition, it is unavoidable to address their desire for communication. Different studies show that animals, whether primates or non-primates, many of them have the desire to communicate. Sophie Yin’s prominent research on dog barking behaviours aimed to understand the animal’s desire for communication. Yin raises the question in order to learn why wolves do not bark yet dogs do it very often, bearing in mind that wolves and dogs share very similar genomes (and can even be claimed as the same species). From her spectrogram analysis of 4600 barking sounds, produced by ten dogs of six different races, she discovers that these sounds correspond to different situations.645 Furthermore, she can even identify 80% of them as belonging to precise contexts via the spectrograms.646 These produced sounds of barking, according to the algorithm specifically designed to carry out this examination, are proven to have significations and meanings, but they depend on the individual contexts when a sound is emitted. Hence, the barking does not only express dogs’ affections towards us or their emotional states; on the contrary, it actually contains rich semantic meanings for communication.647 This example shows that the brains of some mammals already have an inherent structure for use in communication.648 Francine Patterson’s research project on a female gorilla, Koko, shows similar findings. To her surprise, one day, Koko spontaneously

644 Christen, *op.cit.*, p.147.
made a sign to her trainer that she had a toothache.\textsuperscript{649} Moreover, on a provided scale of ten, she could even quantify the pain that she endured at that instance. This voluntary impulse to communicate with other beings should be considered an important characteristic when one wishes to look into animals’ subjectivity in relation to their use of language. To conclude very briefly, let us recall Yves Christen’s statement that language is an instruction of communication and cognition, which we humans share with all other primates and various types of mammals.\textsuperscript{650} All in all, the presented examples of different language experiments on animals enable us to acquire a nonanthropocentric point of view and thereby also to perceive animal subjectivity differently. In a similarly way to what Agamben proposes, perhaps, from here, we can begin to both imagine and conceptualise a subjectivity that is not human.

\textbf{A New Perspective: On Anthropozoomorphism}

The main aim of this chapter is to debunk the anthropocentric thinking inherent in the traditions of Western philosophy. To do this, it is essential to address the differences between anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism. Only by identifying the differences between these two terms, can one rethink the problematic linguistic boundary, which has so far been commonly perceived as separating our subjectivity from animals.

Anthropomorphism is often entangled with anthropocentrism. However, anthropomorphism should not be confused with anthropocentrism. These are two separate ideas, though both rely largely on humans’ way of thinking. While anthropocentrism is a human-centred way(s) of valuing or thinking, anthropomorphism—projecting specifically human traits onto nonhumans—involves certain human values and/or interpretations, yet it does not necessarily prioritise human-centred value. On some occasions, anthropomorphism may even be motivated by a non-anthropocentric desire or attempt to “give voice” to animals or other nonhumans. So far, the discussion has only focused on animals, thus my discussion of anthropocentrism versus anthropomorphism will only take into account the examples of animal beings rather than other types of nonhuman kinds.

In \textit{Postcolonial Animal Tales from Kipling to Coetzee}, Jopi Nyman points out that cultural representations of animals can be examined in a colonial context, in which case one immediately sees that the cultural representations of animals under colonialism consistently


\textsuperscript{650} Christen, \textit{op.cit.}, p.151.
exemplifies an anthropocentric attitude. As Nyman brilliantly summarises, during the colonial era the construction and imagination of the “human being” was understood in a binary paradigm of sex, race, and culture. In keeping with this, Nyman also claims that “the use of the animal is always embedded in issues of human identity” (8). In other words, the image of a “human being” was established via the relative understanding of man versus woman, white versus black, culture versus nature, and human versus animal. Drawing on Donna Haraway’s reading of Edward Said’s Orientalism and her ideas of the cultural construction of the animal, Nyman agrees with Haraway’s notion that Western academic representations of the so-called “Non-West” follow the same logic of how humans generally represent animals. For Haraway, “primatology reproduces the work of Orientalism in its attempt to mark off the human from the animal” (8). For Nyman and Haraway, it is not only a process of Othering, for, in this process, the representation of both animals and non-Westerners are always undertaken from an anthropocentric perspective. This degenerated representation of nonhuman animals and non-Western populations is also brought to light in Robert Young’s colonial history studies. In the nineteenth century Europe, Young asserts, the central discourse in relation to anthropological and ethnic studies was whether human beings belonged to one or more species. He further states that the Victorians actually believed that the non-white population in other parts of the world was in fact closer to apes and monkeys, since, contrary to the European white colonials, these non-white people did not embrace a Cartesian subject—one capable of rational thought and whose boundaries are clearly defined.

The basic definition of anthropomorphism from Cambridge Dictionary Online is “the showing or treating of animals, gods and objects as if they are human in appearance, character or behaviour” (n.p.). Such showing or treating of animals as possessing characteristics of human beings may involve human-centred values. But, as argued earlier, anthropomorphism does not always imply an anthropocentric attitude, and sometimes it could even be applied to outline the non-anthropocentric idea of “giving voices” to animals or other nonhuman beings. Nonetheless, when anthropomorphism is used as literary device, the anthropomorphic animals in the texts often serve to give moral lessons or to express the author’s particular political ideas or worldview. For examples, childrens’ books and satirical writings such as La

651 Nyman, Postcolonial Animal Tale from Kipling to Coetzee, p.7.
653 Young, Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race, p.8.
654 Ibid., p.12.
Fountain’s *Fables* (1694), Beatrix Potter’s *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902), Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726) or George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* (1945), all carry certain moral values or political criticisms. For this reason, anthropomorphism has been primarily read as aligned with anthropocentrism. Especially in the literary domain, it often explicitly assumes an anthropocentric perspective.

My intention lies at introducing the idea of anthropozoomorphism. Unlike anthropomorphic beings, which usually represent human characteristics in animal form, anthropozoomorphism designates not only the transformation of an animal into a human being but also the transformation of a human into an animal (whether this transformation is a complete one or a partial one). Anthropozoomorphism entails a new paradigm as regards our understanding of animals. Firstly, anthropozoomorphism is the process whereby a human character undergoes a transformational process or a metaphoric phase through which they are turned into an animal. This transformation or metamorphosis does not only have an effect on the character’s appearance but may also bring impact(s) on the perception or understanding of that character because s/he is forced to adopt a new relation to the external world, subjected to the change of his/her appearance. For instance, in Franz Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* (1916), Gregor Samsa goes through the experience of turning into a giant dung beetle overnight. Waking up with a body of a giant insect, Gregor’s initial reactions are based on his “human” social and familial relationships with his kins and his employer. (In the first instance, he is still thinking of some possible ways to make things work out, despite the fact that he has become a giant dung beetle.) Gradually, Gregor is obliged to acknowledge the limits of his bodily appearance and submitted himself to a different relation to the world. In some respects, Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* and its “anthropozoomorphic” character have influenced his intellectual successors, of which Coetzee is one. Not only does Coetzee constantly inserts atemporal and aspatial Kafkaesque settings into his various novels, but he also directly cites Kafka’s created character, Red Peter the ape, in *Elizabeth Costello*. It would thus seem...

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655 I would like to underline that, in relevance to my thesis’s topic, I only speak of the possible manifestation of anthropozoomorphism in literature.

656 Franz Kafka is best known for his creation of the setting in *The Trial* (1925), in which the main character, Josef K, is summoned to a trial that takes place at an unknown space and an unspecified time. Coetzee’s writing is largely influenced by Kafka and thus readers often see the same Kafkaesque settings, notably in Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), *Elizabeth Costello* (2003), and *The Childhood of Jesus* (2013).

657 Red Peter, a fictional ape character created by Kafka. In one of Kafka’s famous short stories, “A Report to an Academy” (1917), Peter the ape presents himself in front of a scientific conference to convince the participants that he has now accomplished his learning to behave like a human. Peter even argues that his
reasonable to say that Kafka’s anthropozoomorphism has exerted at least some influence on Coetzee’s postcolonial eco-literature. From his earlier publications in the eighties (Life & Times of Michael K and Foe) to his later works around the year of the new millennium (Disgrace and Elizabeth Costello), Coetzee portrays characters that fall between the categories of the animal and the human (i.e. Michael K and Friday) and then moves on to describing the way human “experience” may include penetrating the psychological state of various nonhuman species. For example, both David Lurie and Mrs. Costello use their imagination in order to empathetically and philosophically understand the state of mind of a nonhuman being. Lurie extends his comprehension of his daughter’s suffering of the violent rape to the sufferings of the dogs that need to be put down in Bev Shaw’s clinic. As for Costello, she argues philosophically, from her position as a writer, to imagine the lived existence of a nonhuman entity.

To write that book I had to think my way into the existence of Marion Bloom. […] In any event, the point is, Marion Bloom never existed. Marion Bloom was a figment of James Joyce’s imagination. If I can think my way into the existence of a being who has never existed, then I can think my way into the existence of a bat or a chimpanzee or an oyster, any being with whom I share the substrate of life. (Coetzee, Elizabeth 80; emphasis original)

The sympathetic imagination is one of the most distinctive features of anthropozoomorphism. To anthropozoomorphise a being means to exercise the sympathetic imagination to comprehend nonhuman animal others, and perhaps, in some ways, represent them via this sympathetic understanding.

The technique of anthropozoomorphism is of course no exclusive to Coetzee writings, for it is equally present in Wu Ming-yi’s postcolonial ecological fiction. Part of the reason for this is that Wu’s creative writings have been influenced by his reading of Coetzee’s works.658

In Wu novels, he has applied the sympathetic imagination to different species of animals on many occasions. From the turtle of Shuimian de hangxian 睡眠的航線 [Routes in a Dream] and the sperm whales in Fuyanren 複眼人 [The Man with the Compound Eyes] to the elephant in Danche shiqieji 單車失竊記 [The Stolen Bicycle], various nonhuman animals are anthropozoomorphised by the talented young Taiwanese writer. Shitou, a female turtle that is used to replace the distintegrated foot of the bed, is capable of dreaming the dreams of the

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658 This influence can be seen in Wu’s novel, Shuimian de hangxian, for Wu has directly quoted Coetzee’s Waiting for the Barbarians. Wu M.Y., Shuimian, p.71.
parents of the protagonist, Sanlang. By entering their dreams, Shitou is able to feel and experience the sentiments of Sanlang’s father and mother when they dream. Equally, the sperm whales in Fuyanren and the elephant in Danche also demonstrate similar ability. The sperm whales—which are the metamorphosed beings of the spirits of second sons of Wayo Wayo—are said to emit a heavy and hopeless monotone so powerful that their despairing “groans” even make people feel pains in their chest. Reading Wu’s depiction of the unconscious of Ah mei (the elephant who lived through wars and witnessed countless deaths and sufferings), one acknowledges that the unconscious of the elephant is in fact interwined with the unconscious of the soldiers who fought in the wars that Ah mei survived. The immense pains and sorrows that Ah mei felt was in fact a reflection to that of the soldiers. As argued above, Coetzee’s application of anthropozoomorphism highlights humans’ sympathetic imagination of the animals, for it emphasises humans’ capacity in penetrating the psychological state of animal beings. Wu, however, on those anthropozoomorphised occasions, allows his animal characters to narrate or speak their stories to the readers directly from their points of view. Arguably, Wu’s animal characters may be said to typify common anthropomorphism. Nevertheless, what makes Wu’s depictions of the animals different from common anthropomorphism is that Wu's animal characters not only characterise human traits but they also have the sympathetic imagination and the capacity to penetrate the psychological state of humans. These narrations hence further reverse the paradigm of anthropocentrism.

From the above examples, one understands that in order to debunk the anthropocentric thinking which is inherent in the tradition of Western philosophy, it is not only important to distinguish anthropocentrism from anthropomorphism, but it is also necessary to adopt an anthropozoomorphic way of thinking, as exemplified in the postcolonial ecological writings of Coetzee and Wu.

659 Ibid., pp.58-60.
661 Wu M.Y., Danche, pp.315-16.
3.1.2. Literary Representations of the “Animan”

The above discussion has covered the philosophical and scientific debates regarding the subjectivity of animals. Towards the end of the last chapter, the ideas of anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism were thoroughly dealt with, and further, the notion of anthropozoomorphism was invoked as particularly relevant in this context, for it facilitates the debunking of anthropocentric thinking. As stated earlier, anthropozoomorphism has the following features: (1) It consists in the process of transformation of human(s) to animal(s) and vise versa; (2) It draws on the sympathetic imagination qua literary technique. In some cases, the sympathetic imagination is trying to access the state of mind of nonhuman animals. In other cases, it is rather the animals themselves that display sympathetic imagination with respect to humans. Another important consequence of anthropozoomorphism is that it gives rise to the figure of what I call the “animan” in postcolonial ecological literature, understood as a fluid subjectivity that crosses the subjectivity of the animal with that of the human, thereby contesting anthropocentric thinking. This chapter introduces the concept of “animan” as this concept has arisen from the use of anthropozoomorphism, in particular in the works of Wu Ming-yi and J.M. Coetzee. Some examples have already been mentioned in the last chapter, but these will now be explained in more detail.

The “Animan”: A New Understanding of Subjectivity

As discussed above, Agamben has shown that a rupture may be created in the anthropocentric machine characetrised by Western metaphysics, and, further, that the boundary used to understand the human-animal relationship can be destabilised. This section thus draws attention to Agamben’s argument, via a discussion of the idea of the “animan,” a concept inspired by Agamben’s problemetisation of humanity and animality, as well as by the comparative reading of Coetzee and Wu’s postcolonial ecological writings. The word “animan” designates a figure or a character that is sometimes portrayed as neither animal nor human, and at other times, as a hybrid of the two. An “animan” can take both animal and human forms, whether physically or spiritually. On some occasions, an “animan” can first take the form of a human being and then transform into an animal. On other occasions, an “animan” is presented simply in the form of a human being, but having the ability to access
the non-human realm. In keeping with this corporal and psychological fluidity, the “animan” has closer bonds and relationships to nature and to the surrounding environment. In addition, in keeping with Agamben’s argument, the “animan” often practices or exhibits their particular language skills in order to challenge or cross the traditional boundary thought to separate animal and human subjectivity. In both Coetzee and Wu’s novels, one finds “animan” characters. This section presents a thorough analysis of the “animan” charaacters of these two writers and which serve to contest the subjectivity that is understood and embodied in the anthropocentric framework. Though the “animan” character is generally a fictional construct and is often exclusive to the literary domain, it could still help us to develop a new perspective regarding the crossing over of the traditional anthropocentric animal-human boundaries.

The “animan,” as fictional representation that is applied to challenge the subjectivity assumed in the Western anthropocentric traditions, is a common figure in Wu’s fictional writings. In Coetzee’s novels, however, the figure of the aninan is more often tied to a postcolonial backdrop, hence, the frequent image of a “wounded animan” (instead of simply an “animan” figure). I therefore intend to assert a separate discussion of “wounded animan” characters in later paragraphs.

Both in Fuyanren and Danche, Wu has successfully portrayed “animan” figures, thereby challenging our anthropocentric perception of how the borders of subjectivity are commonly defined. In Fuyanren, the most distinctive “animan” characters are immediately presented with the imaginary tribe people of Wayo Wayo. As Wu begins with the story of Atile’i and the island of Wayo Wayo, one learns that, through the particular way Wayo Woyoans combine human and animal traits, they are in fact a specific type of “animan.” The Wayo Wayoans can be seen as the reification of the “animan” concept, for not only does their physical representation problematise the boundary between human and animal, but also their very ontology challenges the anthropocentric perspective on the difference(s) between animal and human beings. The Wayo Wayo people are described as having bodies like humans but speaking like birds and leading their lives like creatures in the sea. On some occasions, the Wayo Wayo people may transform into certain types of animal, notably the sea creatures. On other occasions, their bodies display distinctive features only found in animal beings. Some examples of this include the following; the spirits of the second sons of the Wayo Wayo, who have been sacrificed for Kabang, the Sea God, turn into sperm whales at dawn; a Wayo Wayo person who commits suicide in the sea turns into a jellyfish; and when a Wayo Wayo man
dies, his corpse will become part of a coral reef. Similarly, as the Sea Sage recounts the ancient tales of the Wayo Wayo tribe every evening by the trees, he warns the youngsters as follows:

If you are so careless as to eat an *asamu* [a type of fish that has black and white stripes on its body], you will grow a ring of scales around your navel, a ring of scales that you could never finish peeling off your whole life long.

如果你不小心吃掉[阿薩摩]這種[黑白相間的]魚，肚臍旁邊就會長出一圈鱗片來，一輩子都剝不完。(Wu, *Fuyanren* 18; The Man 10)

One thus recognises the physical transformability between animal and human forms of the Wayo Wayo people.

Regarding their ontological understanding of the world, the Wayo Wayo people express this understanding through their distinctive language. Readers may notice that, apart from creating an “animan” figure, Wu equally tries to depict something akin to what Agamben calls the “open” through the “language” of the Wayo Wayo. As noted earlier, Agamben is critical of the notion of “language” as it figures in our anthropocentric understanding of human and animal subjectivity. He holds the view that both animals and human infants are always already *in language*. Here, I would further add that, while elaborating his view on the question of Being in his early publication, Agamben approaches this philosophical question in relation to the facitility of language, or what he terms *communicability*:

We can communicate with others only through what in us—as much as in others—has remained potential, and any communication […] is first of all communication not of something in common but of *communicability* itself. After all, if there exists one and only one being, it would be absolutely impotent. […] And there where I am capable, we are always already many. (Means 10, emphasis mine)

For Agamben, it is *not* the fact that person A can discuss idea X with person B—and thus share opinions and exchange thoughts—that is important, but rather the very possibility that one can exchange or communicate with another. What Agamben means by “*communicability*” or the “possibility of communication” could sometimes be falsely interpreted as the moment someone uses “language” to articulate his or her thoughts. In such a case, “language” is strictly applied to human employment of words and phonemes to represent and transport their

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663 When referring to the “language” of Wayo Wayo, I shall place the word “language” in scare quotes in order to demonstrate its difference from our usual anthropocentric understanding of the concept.

ideas and thoughts. Agamben’s “communicability” means more than that, for he thinks that every being’s “being-in-presence” (it could be the presence of a stone, of a bird, of the wind, etc.) unceasingly constitutes a thought or an idea in the human mind.\footnote{665} Language, however, only comes in at the final moment when the content of thoughts needs to be transmitted to another. This is why he asserts that where one is capable of thought (or where this “possibility” occurs), we are already many. Being, for Agamben, is always plural or many since every organic entity on earth has a potentiality (or this capability) to communicate. Agamben’s understanding of Being thus also explains his understanding of language. To put it in another way, he sees language as a vehicle that transmits thoughts and ideas at a defined moment when these thoughts and ideas need to be articulated; thus, language has an implied boundary that excludes being’s “being-in-presence” (the presences of a stone, a bird or the wind, etc.). And often, language is regarded as a property unique to humans (for we consider that only humans have the faculty of language).

In order to break the boundary (i.e. language) that separates humans and animals, Wu’s Fuyanren looks for what lies beyond language and also for what lies beyond the human. Wu’s ambition is to constitute an entirely new “system of communication” via an imagined “animan” tribe on earth.\footnote{666} In other words, he is looking for a language that does not attempt to represent nature or to transmit thinking and ideas to communicate, but is itself “nature.”

The “language” of the Wayo Wayo has some specific characteristics that destabilise our common conception of language. First and foremost, abstract forms of thinking can hardly be found in the Wayo Wayoan ways of expression. In greetings concerning each other’s well-being, Wayo Wayoans do not ask “how are you today?” because the implied abstract notion to define — “good or bad”— does not exist in their “language.” Instead, they would ask, “i-Wagudoma-silisaluga [Is the weather fair at sea today]?”; and to which the other party is obliged to reply “i-Wagudoma-siliyamala [Very fair]” (and with no exception to other forms

\footnote{665} One can potentially argue that Agamben’s view here is similar to the way how Eduardo Khon sees in the semiotic system of Quichua.

\footnote{666} With more-than-ten-years experience teaching and living in Dong Hwa University in Hualian (a province at the east coast of Taiwan), Wu has the geographical advantage of being in a place where is mostly populated by the Taiwanese aboriginal tribes (including Amis, Paiwan…etc.) Not only has Wu conducted academic research into the traditions, mythologies and languages of Taiwanese aboriginal tribes, particularly in relation to their philosophy of nature, but he also had the chance to take on expeditions around the Pacific Ocean with the aboriginals and other experts/writers of marine life. Wu’s sci-fi novel surely borrows elements from these traditions and mythologies; nevertheless, one cannot say that he did not make efforts to create a new universe. See Wu’s interview with Yang Zhao 楊照. “Yangguang shufang: wumingyi tan Fuyanren 陽光書坊: 吳明益談《複眼人》[Sunshine Bookstore: Wu Ming-yi on Fuyanren],” Dailymotion, uploaded by Kaylene Kitchens, 4 Sept. 2015, website accessed: https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x34ny51.
The images and signs taken directly from their natural surroundings—including ecological beings and natural phenomena—are their thoughts. Secondly, metaphors, metonyms and personifications do not apply as concepts because the Wayo Wayoans do not understand the meaning of poetic ways of expressions. The words they utter and the sounds they make may only appear to the Wayo Wayoans as observations of nature or as deductions regarding the natural surroundings with which they co-exist. This explains why, phonetically, the “language” of the Wayo Wayo sounds like the tweeting of seabirds. Contrary to Atile’i’s (the protagonist) conception of language, Alice, a female human character who saved Atile’i’s life, sees the Wayo Wayoan “language” as the embodiment of poetics.

“Yigasa [The sun] has its own light, and Nalusa [the moon] borrows its light.” “Aiya, but this is poetry,” Alice cried out. But Atile’i still didn’t understand what poetry meant.

Alice’s efforts to make poetry known to Atile’i did not succeed, but rather confused Atile’i. For the Wayo Wayo islander, one does not need hermeneutics to understand the Wayo Wayo “language.” As Atile’i’s once said,

[T]o Wayo Wayo islanders[,] words can be smelled, touched, imagined, and closely followed with [one’s] gut the way [one] follows an enormous fish.

If one agrees with the statement that a language expresses the way that a certain group of beings (whether human, nonhuman, or a human-animal hybrid) imagines the universe, the distinctive characteristics of Wayo Wayoan “language” would seem to imply that nature itself has subjectivity. Through Wu’s science-fictional writings, readers not only glimpse the world of nature and the sea, more importantly, they also become witnesses to the process of the constitution of the nonhuman animal subjectivity through exposure to a “language” that directly articulates nature. Indeed, Wu chooses to employ the genre of science fiction

668 “The tonality of the Wayo Wayoan language was sharp and sonorous, like [songs of the seabirds], with each utterance ending in a light trill and a plop, like a hungry seabird that swiftly dives and breaks the waves in search of prey.” Wu M.Y., The Man, p.12
669 This part of the translation is my own translation from Wu’s texts in Chinese, but cross-referenced with Darryl Sterk’s translation.
precisely because its imaginative versatility makes the “crossing of the boundary” possible. The literary imagination thus allows the constitution of new forms of subjectivity.

Taking the colonial periods of Taiwan as the backdrop to his novel Danche shiqieji, Wu once more invokes various “animan” figures. In this instance the figure of the “animan” does not arise in the context of fictional tribespeople, but rather in groups of real people during the colonial Asian Pacific War and the later transitional period. The “animan” figures that Wu introduces in Danche include a Karen elephant trainer from Southeast Asia, a Japanese colonial school teacher, a retired “Chinese” Kuomintang military man, and a Hokkien-speaking Taiwanese girl. As argued above, in order to challenge the subjectivity understood in the anthropocentric framework, Wu’s “animan” figures normally typify the physical transformability between animal and human; moreover, these “animen” also put forward a new form of subjectivity through their “boundary-crossing” communicability. In Danche, this communicability plays a greater role in delineating the “animan” figures. The Karen elephant trainer, Bina 比奈, possesses several distinct ways of communicating with the elephants he trained for use in the Burmese war during the Japanese colonial expansion in Southeast Asia. Two different ways of communicating with these elephants are described: one is to give out orders by articulating precise words or by making whistling noises with leaves; another is to signal to the elephants using gestures, stares, or a particular vibrating sound emitted from the trainer’s throat and abdominals and which is undetectable by normal human ears. The former emphasises communication with coded language(s) and the later outlines nonverbal forms of communication. Obviously, to acquire the skills required to do the later, it is first necessary to have a specific corporal tie and emotional connection with the elephants. Bina is an “animan” precisely because, in order to communicate with the elephants, he must to some extent become an elephant himself (through the sympathetic imagination). Occasionaly, with a gentle touch of Bina’s fingers on the knees of the elephants, the giant creatures could grasp his thoughts. These nonverbal communications are highlighted here because they signify the crossing of the linguistic boundary between animals and human beings. As Bina at one point says,

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670 Karen people 克倫族: refers to a number of individual Sino-Tibetan language speaking ethnic groups. They reside principally in Karen State, today’s Republic of the Union of Myanmar, which was known as Burma in the past. Karen people are known for their skills at training elephants.

671 Wu M.Y., Danche, p.220.

672 Ibid., p.220.
I am not allowed to teach [other people] the nonverbal communications with the elephants. Once upon a time, the elders of all elephants entered the dream of the ancient Karen trainers, warming them not to unveil the secret of the elephant’s language. They say: though elephants are willing to submit to Karen people’s commands, once Karen people break the rule and betray the forest and the elephants, elephants will always be against the Karen people. […] Many elephant trainers know only verbal language to instruct the elephants, and they are incapable of using their bodies to emit the sounds that only elephants could perceive but are deaf to human ears. […] Those are the second rate elephant trainers, they have no emotional connections with the elephants.

後者他不能教[別人]。因為象的長老曾進入克倫族馴象師的祖先的夢裡，告訴他們說：我們把象的語言洩漏給你，可不是要你告訴別人。象雖然願意暫時聽人的命令，但如果克倫人背叛森林與象群，象就將與克倫人對立。⋯⋯很多騾象人只懂得部分的口令，他們無法用身體的共鳴發出讓象感受得到、人類卻聽不到的聲音。⋯⋯那只是二流的騾象人而已，和象沒有感情交流。（Wu, Danche 220-21; emphasis mine)

Two things should attract our attention in Binaï’s speech. Firstly, the linguistic boundary traditionally seen as a unique feature of human beings is deconstructed in Wu’s representation of the Karen “animan” figure, Binaï. It suggests that nonhuman animals like elephants have access to the linguistic realm; in addition, they may even possess their own language. Secondly, readers come to know that communication with the nonhuman animals is not only possible, but also that it requires an emotional or corporeal connection between the two parties.

Other “animan” figures that Wu portrays share similar traits to the communicability of the Karen elephant trainer. Both Laozo 老鴿, the retired “Chinese” Kuomintang military man, and Orii sansei 折井老師, the Japanese colonial elementary teacher, possess the ability to communicate with the particular animals they interact with. Laozo dispalys an extraordinary communicating skill in interpreting the twittering of a light-vented bulbul (also called Chinese bulbul, a small bird that is commonly found in Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, Japan and Korea) that often stands on Laozo’s shoulder. Laozo believes that the bird is the incarnation of a dead Japanese soldier who was probably bombarded and buried under his yard by accident.673 Though insisting that the bird has never uttered a word, Laozo however appears to understand perfectly what is on the bird’s mind.674 It is from this little bird that Laozo learns about a ruined tunnel filled up with water in the basement of an old deserted building in the countryside.675 Apart from Laozo’s ability to communicate with the bird, Wu further adds in a striking scene that exhibits “animan” figures. After being informed by the bird of the ruined

673 Ibid., pp.76-77.
674 Ibid., p.78, 84.
675 Ibid., p.83.
tunnel in the deserted building, Laozo semi-obliges Abbass, one of the main characters, to undertake the journey together in exploring the tunnel with diving equipments. In the tunnel, both Laozo and Abbass are astonished by the disfigured half-human-half-fish kind of beings.  

By reflex, Abbass gives his goggles a clear wipe because an abundant quantity of fish entered his eyesights. [...] But when he looks again, he realises that those creatures are not fish, they are a crowd of men. These half-naked (some completely naked) “fish-men” [...] are holding various kinds of weapons. [...] Their skins are not intact, it looks as if they are cut open by something. [...] Some of the wounds are deep and wide, one can see directly the grey bones and pale muscles inside.

Orii sensai is described as having similar communication skills with animals. An orangutan (a great ape exclusive to Asia and native to Indonesia and Malaysia) named I-lang was originally kept in the school zoo at the Japanese National Language Elementary School of the General-Governor of Taiwan (Taiwan zongdufu guoyu xuefang xiaoxue 臺灣總督府國語學校附設小學) where Orii sensai taught during the Japanese colonial rule in Taiwan. After I-lang had broken out of his cage several times, he had to be transferred to Taipei Yuanshan Public Zoo for safety reasons. Nevertheless, with all the efforts that the Yuanshan zookeeps put in, they still failed to make I-lang go into the transporting cart on the day of his transfer. Only when Orii sensai appeared in front of I-lang’s cage, did I-lang’s attitude somehow change.

Orii sensai looked at I-lang in front of the cage, and then he touched I-lang’s shoulders. Suddenily, I-lang became a little bit shy. Orii sensai opened the door of the cage, offered I-lang his hands. In return, I-lang also reached out to him with his long fluffy hands. [...] When Orii wanted to put him into the metal transporting cart, I-lang buried his head deep into Orii’s chest. Orii sensai felt sorry for forcing I-lang to go into a cart without its own odor and riding the bumpy roades to the zoo. He thus suggested that he would take I-lang to the Yuanshan zoo himself. Hand in hand, they walked to the zoo along Chi-shi Avenue.

676 Ibid., pp.78-79, 88-89.
677 Ibid., p.271.
678 Ibid., pp.271-72.
In this specific context, although Orii sensei did not actually “speak” (or give orders through verbal articulation) to I-lang, his gestures and emotions were successfully transmitted as a type of “language,” for they made I-lang understood that other people meant no harm to him, but simply wished to take him to a new environment. From this human-animal interaction, one can say that Orii sensei, like Laozo and Bina, has the ability to communicate with other nonhuman animal beings, and, for that reason, he can also be regarded as an “animan.”

The last figure that Wu presents in Danche, and which may be interpreted as an “animan”, is A-yun 阿雲. A-yun is the fictional protagonist of a short story created and written by Wu’s own fictional character, Sabina. According to Sabina, the character of A-yun was inspired by her memory of her mother.\(^\text{679}\) A-yun is described as a girl who can identify butterflies by their scents and odors. Very early in her childhood, A-yun helped her father capture butterflies for sale during the long period when they were in high demand. A talent of hers that nobody knew about was that she can easily sense the odor of a male butterfly.

A-yun has a special gift that cannot be perceived by human eyes. She can know about the sex of a butterfly without using her needle to pull open the wings. This is a secret that she keeps for herself. She never tells anyone that she can smell the scent of male butterflies. That smell is like someone suddenly grabbing her by the arms, making her shiver.

This unusual ability may not immediately strike readers as signifying that A-yun can be regarded as an “animan” figure, for she uses neither words nor gestures to “communicate” with the butterflies, and she also does not possess the ability to physically transform into animals, as some of Wu’s other characters do. Nevertheless, A-yun does have a certain corporal fluidity which manifestes the distinctive “animan” quality of her subtle bodily connection with male butterflies. As Wu explains:

\(^\text{679}\) Ibid., p.237.
At first, A-yun was not aware of her ability to smell the odors of male butterflies. She simply recognised a peculiar smell when certain butterflies pass her by or when she pinches the heads of certain butterflies in order to make them unconscious. It is a smell that is difficult to describe, like the scent of a dying flame of a match. [...] In the beginning, A-yun did not find this ability special. But she gradually discovered that this particular scent makes her armpits and her hands sweat. Occasionally, the hairs on her body also experience a peculiar change. All of these make her nervous.

而阿雲可以嗅聞出雄蝶的氣味。起初她自己並不知道,只是覺得某些蝴蝶飛過,或在捏暈牠們時都會發出一種很難描述的味道,就像是火柴快要完全熄滅前一刻的煙的氣味。 [...]一開始的時候阿雲並不覺得特別,後來她發現,這種氣味會讓她腋下開始冒汗,手掌也跟著溼潤起來,有時身上的汗毛也會幾起不可思議的變化,這讓她緊張。 (Danche 116-17)

Compared to Wu’s other “animan” characters, such as the Wayo Wayo people or the “fish-men” living in the tunnel of a basement, A-yun is not a physically transformed “animan” figure. However, her corporeal sensitivity to these butterflies can be seen as a display of her physical connection with these nonhuman animals, but also as an unconventional mode of communication with them, for she can detect the male butterflies. In nature, for finding mates, it is usually the female butterflies that detect the pheromones of the male butterflies. A-yun’s special talent suggests that she has the ability of a female butterfly. Therefore, in this sense, one can surely count her as an “animan” figure.

The “Wounded Animan”: Resisting Colonial Environmental Domination

The “animan” figure, which may be seen as an embodiment of Agamben’s philosophical deconstruction of the anthropocentric machine, is found frequently amongst Wu Ming-yi’s fictional characters. These “animan” figures serve primarily to remind us that nonhuman subjectivity could be glimpsed through the process of anthropozoomorphism. In addition to this, one can also easily identify the “wounded animan” figures in Wu’s novels, as well as in Coetzee’s. This section draws attention to both authors’ representations of “wounded animen” because these particular figures not only allow us to glimpse nonhuman subjectivity but also constitute a form of resistance to colonial environmental domination. In other words, the “wounded animan” displays a postcolonial resistance in the form of animal-human amibigity.

The examples of “wounded animen” can be found once again in Coetzee’s portrayals of Michael (in Life and Times of Michael K) and Friday (in Foe). As analysed in chapter two,
both Michael and Friday’s physical appearance exhibit the colonial “wounds,” as the former is portrayed with an harelip and the later is without tongue and genital. Yet, in what sense can one qualify Michael and Friday as wounded “animen”? Indeed, in the physical aspect, neither Michael nor Friday go through a transformation from human to animal form, like Kafka’s Gregor in *Metamorphosis*, and nor do they possess the ability to communicate with nonhuman beings, as some of Wu’s “animan” figures do. For Michael, his “animanity” lies rather in the way that his changing diet represents a progressive interior transformation from humanity to animality. As mentioned earlier, at the beginning of the story, Michael comes across as an ordinary nobody who plans to journey to Prince Albert with his mother. Losing his mother on their way, Michael eventually settles temporarily on an unkown farm where he discovers an abandoned house, some unused seeds, and a flock of goats that have gone wild because of the lack of human presence. While dwelling on the farmhouse and cultivating the seeds he discovered nearby, Michael does not aim to fulfil the normal role of a typical farmer. He does not see himself as the possessor of the farm but simply a “cultivator” of the unknown land. Therefore, rather than appropriating the place as his own, he takes shelter in the house like an insect quietly occupying the corner of a room. He sleeps on the floor, uses no electricity and burns no firewoods to warm himself or to cook.\(^{680}\) It is only when Coetzee introduces the encounter between Michael and the grandson of the original farm owner, who comes to seek shelter at the deserted farmhouse, that we come to acknowledge the actual state of living of Michael is rather close to an animal’s survival.\(^{681}\) As Coetzee shows in the novel, even though Michael understands the notion of money and the meaning of commodity exchange, in reality, he does not engage himself in practices or activities in relation to his socio-economic environment. His actual living condition approximates to that of an animal. Moreover, as mentioned in the analysis of my previous chapter, from a short conversation exchanged between Michael K and the young boss Visagie, one learns about Michael’s peculiar diet of sparrows and doves (and possibly other small-size reptiles). Coetzee’s delineation of Michael emphasis K’s animality and ultimately it shows K’s transformation from a man to an animan. Another point worth mentioning in this context is Michael’s resistance to speech, which links back to his harelip presented at the beginning of the novel.\(^{682}\) As analysed in the previous chapter, Michael’s harelip stands for two things: (1) the denial of his entrance to the Symbolic Order (as Smuel Durrant has pointed out) and (2) Coetzee’s attempt to demonstrate a

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\(^{681}\) Ibid., p.62.

\(^{682}\) Ibid., pp.3-4.
dysfunctioning language system. Nonetheless, one can also see Michael’s harelip as a colonial “wound,” which has been carried since his birth and which cannot be cured unless Michael and other members of South African postcolonial society are committed to treating it. This wound reinforces Michael’s gradual retreat from the language system. After he is captured and admitted to the military hospital, facing the presence of the “colonial oppressors”—represented by the two medical officers who tried to force Michael to recount his story and obtained personal information about him and his harelip—, Michael withdraws into silence. If we can say that Michael’s retreat into silence is a form of resistance to the colonial imposition of language and capitalised History, Michael then successfully enacts the role of “wounded animan” in challenging both human and colonial subjectivities.

As argued earlier, Friday in Coetzee’s Foe can also be seen as a “wounded animan” figure. Employing a postmodern re-writing of a classical of the colonial canon, Robinson Crusoe, Coetzee’s depiction of Friday is very different from that of Defoe. Challenging the structuralists’ definition of the subject as essentially linguistic by removing Friday’s access to the symbolic realm, Coetzee creates an “animan” figure without tongue and without voice. Friday’s status as an “animan” comes across in Susan Barton’s remarks about his scattering of flower petals in the sea. For Susan, this gesture allows her to understand how Friday fluently combines elements of both humanity and animality.

Friday was not fishing. After paddling out some hundred yards from the shore into the thickest of the seaweed, he reached into a bag that hung about his neck and brought out handfuls of white flakes [flower petals] which he began to scatter over the water. […] So I concluded he had been making an offering to the god of the waves[.] […] Hitherto I [Susan Barton] had given to Friday’s life as little thought as I would have a dog’s or any other dumb beast’s — less, indeed, for I had a horror of his mutilated state which made me shut him from my mind, and flinch away when he came near me. This casting of petals was the first sign I had that a spirit or soul—call it what you will — stirred beneath that dull and unpleasing exterior. (Coetzee, Foe 31-32; emphasis mine)

In Susan’s mind, Friday is more associated with a beast or an animal, and yet, at least at this moment, she recognises Friday as a “human.”

Friday not only represents the “animan” figure, but the fact that he has no tongue and no genitals also symbolised the violence of colonial domination. When Susan exchanges words with Cruso, asking how Cruso punishes his slave, Cruso replies with dignity and pride, claiming that Friday does not need to be punished, for he has known no other master and so
follows every instruction Cruso gives out. Though Susan presses on to challenge Cruso’s statement—pointing out that Friday’s missing tongue must relate to some sort of physical abuse exercised by Cruso—, Cruso denies being the cause of Friday’s wound.

“Yet Friday has lost his tongue,” said [Susan Barton], the words uttering themselves. “Friday lost his tongue before he became mine,” said Cruso, and stared at me in challenge. (Coetzee, Foe 37)

Here, Coetzee wants to remind us that, despite the fact that physical torture and punishment may be absent in the master-slave relationship between Cruso and Friday, it does not mean that the colonial domination and exploitation of Friday’s wounded body is cancelled out. One should pay attention to Cruso’s wording here—“Friday lost his tongue before he became mine”—and realise that, regardless of whether Cruso has personally exercised the physical torture or not, Friday has submitted or been subjected to colonial ownership and domination, as manifest by the wound to his “animan” body. In another scene Susan again talks about Friday in a way that makes clear the unimaginable violence of colonial domination. Susan draws a comparison between the absence of Friday’s tongue and the absence of his genitals:

I have told you of the abhorrence I felt when Cruso opened Friday’s mouth to show me he had no tongue. What Cruso wanted me to see, what I averted my eyes from seeing, was the thick stub at the back of the mouth, which ever afterwards I pictured to myself wagging and straining under the sway of emotion as Friday tried to utter himself, like a worm cut in half contorting itself in death-throes. [...] In the dance nothing was still and yet everything was still. The whirling robe was a scarlet bell settled upon Friday’s shoulders and enclosing him; Friday was the dark pillar at its centre. What had been hidden from me was revealed. I saw; or, I should say, my eyes were open to what was present to them.

I saw and believed I had seen, [...] but could not be brought to believe till he had put his hand in the wound. (Coetzee, Foe 119-120)

As many critics has observed, this passage of Susan’s monologue is widely recognised as her association of Friday’s loss of tongue with castration and sexual impotence. Both the tongue (means to articulate, to construct a subjectivity, and to engage oneself in the Symbolic Order) and the genital (means to reproduce, to create a new life, and to pass on history) of the “animan” are cut off. The castration of Friday’s sex echoes the silencing of his voice. Friday, as a “wounded animan,” has been rendered completely impotent by his colonial oppressors.

683 Coetzee, Foe, p.37.
As the story develops, the continuity of colonial domination is exemplified by Susan’s ownership or guardianship of Friday. Without any possible means to protest or to articulate his will, both Cruso and Susan Barton consistently treat Friday as a colonised subject. When Susan and Cruso are rescued by an English ship, Susan asks the captain to look for Friday in order to bring him back to the civilised world. She says, “[h]e is a Negro slave, his name is Friday, […] I beseech you to send your men ashore again, inasmuch as Friday is a slave and a child, it is our duty to care for him in all things” (Coetzee, Foe 39). Susan Barton’s choice of words—“Friday is a slave and a child”—calls for critical analysis in two respects. (1) One can examine Friday’s treatment as a child in the light of Agamben’s critique of the anthropocentric definition of the boundary between animals and humans. As noted previously, Agamben believes that it is our anthropocentric view that forbids us from recognising the fact that animals as well as infants are actually in language. Moreover, our belief that animals are different or inferior beings comes from this fundamental linguistic break. (2) Through Susan’s words, Coetzee stages this fundamental linguistic break, which grounds our view of animals as inferior others. Both Susan’s statement and her insistence suggest that there is a need (or even a “duty”) for colonial civilisation to guide this “animan” in becoming a “full human being.” For her, it is by civilising Friday’s behaviours and thoughts that one could eradicate all the traces of “animality” within Friday; hence, her job as an “adult/coloniser” can finally be accomplished.685

In addition, another way of looking at Coetzee’s representations of the figures of Michael K and Friday is: one could potentially argue that Michael K and Friday are not wounded “animen”, but wounded “men,” who, because of their wounds, become animals, and thus animen. In this sense, Coetzee’s characters’ transformation into “wounded animen” is very different from the way of Wu’s characters’ “animen”-becoming. Wu’s “animen” characters—including Laozo, Orii sansei, A-yun and the two Sages of Wayo Wayo—become like animals through gaining some animal quality (for examples, abilities to communicate, smell, etc.), whereas Coetzee’s characters become “animen” through losing some aspects of one’s humanity. Philosophically speaking, these two ways of becoming “animen”—one is through gaining traits while the other is through losing traits—correspond to different ways of perceiving the human/animal relationship. The first way of becoming animals suggests that the quality inherent to animals is something “more than human.” The second way of

685 On several occasions in Foe, Susan attempts to “civilise” Friday by teaching him the meanings of words and the concept of language. Coetzee, Foe, pp.56-57, 79, 142.
becoming animal is reminiscent of Heidegger’s idea that we can only access animal subjectivity through subtracting various features of our own.

To discuss Wu Ming-yi’s creation of the “wounded animan,” we can once more refer to the representation of the Wayo Wayo tribe in *Fuyanren*. As pointed out earlier, the “animan” figures are most clearly embodied by the fictional people. But, to further understand the “wounded animan” figure, it is instructive to note Atile’i’s telling of his ancient tribal story about how the Wayo Wayo people come to exist. Among the Wayo Wayoans, there live two wise men regarded as the leaders of the tribe, the Sea Sage and the Earth Sage. Readers then discover that the Sea Sage character is a full incarnation of the “animan” concept, for his body is itself a *hybrid* of animal and man.

One day, who knows how many years later, a gigantic bird arrived on the island. It started preening its feathers, and out fell seven baby birds. Each of these baby birds became the leader of a tribe. The birds taught our ancestors the skills they would need to survive on land. When the birds left, they each left an eyeball behind, one for every tribe to guard and watch over. One stormy day, the seven eyes all split open at once. Two of those eyes hatched arms, two legs, one a head, one a torso and one an organ of increase. And the spawn of the seven eyes then combined into a swarthy giant of a man, a man with a sorrowful man who called himself: the Sea Sage.

The Sea Sage was well-endowed: he never closed his eyes, not even while sleeping, like a fish. … He could … foretell the mood of the sea. … [H]e had to listen carefully to the news brought back by every seabird, every gust of wind and every little shell.

一天，一隻巨大的鳥飛到島上，用嘴喙梳理自己的羽毛，掉下了七隻小鳥。這七隻小鳥各自帶領一個家族，教導我們祖先在陸上謀生的新技能。鳥離開的時候，各留下一顆眼珠，要七個家族分別看守。在一個雷電交加的日子裡，七顆眼珠同時裂開，兩顆各孵出一條腿，一顆孵出頭，一顆孵出軀幹，一顆孵出生殖器⋯⋯七顆眼珠拼湊成一個黝黑，面色憂愁的男子，男子自稱掌海師。

掌海師天資很高，眼睛像魚一樣在睡覺時也不會闔上⋯⋯他甚至能測知海的心情愉快或是悲傷，興奮抑或憂愁⋯⋯[他]宣稱要仔細聽到每隻海鳥、每道海風、每枚貝殼帶來的訊息。 (Wu, *Fuyanren* 203; *The Man* 167)

The Sea Sage, whom Atile’i describes in this passage, is clearly a kind of animal-human hybrid. However, one should not make the mistake of thinking that it is only the physical appearance of the Sea Sage that crosses the boundary between animal and human modes of being. More importantly, it is also the Sea Sage’s knowledge and capability to communicate with other ecological beings (for he listens to the seabirds, the winds and the shells) that embodies this crossing over. The capacity for communication of this “animan” figure thus realises what Agamben sees as the “openness to nondisconcealment” of animals.
In addition, Wu portrays these “animen” as “wounded” figures in order to show the anthropocentric exploitation of animal beings and the natural environment. After the Sea Sage and the Earth Sage foresee Kabang’s destruction of the Wayo Wayo Island, there comes a gigantic tsunami accompanied by an enormous amount of garbage from the pacific trash vortex. The last scene before the two Sages are perished completely by the coming of the tsunami describes their significant corporal suffering.

At the approach of the great garbage tsunami, the two Sages were sitting at either end of the island, one of them facing the sea, the other facing away, both watching everything happen with their eyes wide open. The Sea Sage’s eyes began to bleed from exertion, while the Earth Sage grasped the ground until the joints of his fingers shattered. When the wave smacked into the island, their bodies were instantly ripped apart, and even though they were both firm of will, they couldn’t help howling in agony. (Wu, Fuyanren 358; The Man 298-99)

In anthropomorphising natural calamity into an apocalyptic event, Wu binds the suffering of the wounded “animen” figures with humanity’s excessive abuse of the natural environment. A week after the island is largely destroyed by the tsunami and all the Wayo Wayoans have perished, Wu describes that on the shore of Valapariso in Chile, the dead bodies of several hundreds of sperm whales were discovered. “[W]ith grim eyes, cracked skin and crushed ribs [牠們的眼神絕望，皮膚乾裂，肋骨已被一壓碎],” the spirits of the second sons of Wayo Wayo are washed up to the shore (Wu, Fuyanren 358; The Man 299). Once again, the immeasurable damage that humans have done to nature is anthropozoomorphised by the “wounded animen” of the Wayo Wayo. In Fuyanren, the “animen” are not simply wounded, but rather killed, which ultimately reveals a stronger form of violence. One can even interpret the death of the two Sages and the whales as a symbolic death of “animanity.” To a certain extent, the symbolic death of “animanity” can also be seen as how Western metaphysics failed to take into account of the possible boundary-crossing between animals and humans. With the representations of “wounded animen,” both Wu and Coetzee try to articulate a resistance to the colonial domination and environmental exploitation, even though the attempt of resistance does not always bring fruitful results. As recounted in the story, the tsunami garbage patch eventually destroys the animen. The two Sages do everything they can to resist it, remaining “firm of will,” which even make their eyes bleed and their knuckles break. Tragically, their failure shows that this resistance turns out to be futile.
3.2. Subjectivity of the Ecological Other

3.2.1. Towards a “Subjectless Object” or a “Life-form Object”?

In part I, understanding the subjectivity of nonhuman non-animal others was raised as a problematic issue. Scholars working from various theoretical perspectives and in various disciplines have addressed it, including for example, object-oriented ontologists and speculative realists (Timothy Morton, Levi Bryant, Alfred Whitehead and Steven Shaviro), or anthropologists (Edurado Kohn). These thinkers may, in some cases at least, be said to lay the philosophical and scientific ground for the exploration of beings who are neither humans nor animals. In this particular chapter, the focus will be on the ontological status of ecological others, with a view to demonstrating how beings that fall outside of the category of humans or animals could possibly possess their own subjectivities. In this regard, it is necessary first to show the divisions between various different kinds of nonhuman non-animal others and provide a clear definition of the general notion of what I call the “ecological other”. Secondly, the discussion will include a review of criticisms against current epistemology’s take on nonhuman beings or objects. These criticisms are essential to the argument of the ontological status of ecological others, since they allow us to reconsider the new philosophical approach or paradigm offered by adopting a non-anthropocentric perspective. Finally, the ultimate question—do ecological others possess subjectivity?—will be addressed, and through a comparison of different scholars’ viewpoints, I will also present my own stance and response to the question.

Divisions of Nonhuman Non-animal Others

This thesis not only deals with philosophical questions regarding nonhuman animals but also addresses similar issues regarding other ecological beings, i.e. organic and inorganic things in nature. But it should be highlighted that the inorganic beings considered here include only natural inorganic matter, such as air, water, and stones. Hence, human-made artefacts,
especially synthetic objects such as plastic bags, chemical pesticides, etc. are not included in this category. The main reason to emphasise this point is that many scholars—notably Levi Bryant (ontological realism of objects), Jane Bennett (vital materialism), and Steven Shaviro (speculative realism)—who have explored the new horizon of nonhuman others beyond the category of animals have tended to focus on all non-animal entities, regardless of whether they are natural or artificial.

While there exist many different philosophical approaches to the study of nonhuman non-animal others, the division of these others is not always clear or consistent. If we look at their theoretical arguments which address nonhuman non-animal beings, we find that most of the proposed arguments apply the general terms “objects” or “things” when they speak of the ontological and the political aspects of nonhuman non-animal beings. (Even though some of these theorists do of course recognise that there are differences among various objects and things, they do not necessarily put forward a specific division or categorisation when forming their arguments.) However, I consider that the distinction between different types of objects and things are important since it is these differences that create various kinds of links and affects (or build various kinds of “affective” relations) to the world.

Before further elaborate different theoretical/philosophical approaches with regard to the subjectivity of nonhuman and non-animal beings, it is important to briefly introduce the notion of “affect” and explain why it is essentially relevant to the subjectivity of these beings. The notion of “affect” was originally proposed by Spinoza. For Spinoza, “affect” (affectus, usually translated as “emotion”) is the modification or variation produced in a body (including the mind) by an interaction with another body which increases or diminishes the body’s power of activity.686 In a way, one can argue that the original Spinozist notion of “affect” is more appropriate to human’s bodily experience. In Vibrant Matter, Jane Bennett states that she borrows Spinozist notion of “affect” but emphasises that her interpretation of an “affect” is not specific to human bodies.687 As she points out, “I want to […] focus less on the enhancement to human relational capacities resulting from affective catalysts and more on the catalyst itself as it exists in nonhuman bodies” (Bennett xii). In fact, Bennett equates affect to materiality; for her, this power of affect is neither transpersonal nor intersubjective but


687 Bennett, Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things, p.xii.
impersonal. She believes that whether it is an organic or an inorganic body, a natural or a cultural object, they all are affective. She further claims: “the agency of the things [can] produce (helpful/harmful) effects in human and other bodies” (Bennett xii). Hence, we have two different ways to understand the notion of “affect.” Whereas Spinoza regards “affect” is mostly reserved to human’s experience, Bennett considers it as the equivalence to materiality. My take on of the notion of “affect” is closer to Bennett’s proposition, yet I disagree with Bennett on the intersubjective aspect of “affect.” I argue that “affect” can be intersubjective. If an object (whether it is natural or cultural) or a body (whether it is organic or inorganic) has the agency to produce effects in a human body or a body of a nonhuman kind, it imperatively calls forth the encounter of subjectivity in that human or nonhuman being. Subsequent to that encounter, the subjectivity of the object or the body itself will likewise arise.

Here, let us return to the theoretical approaches mentioned above in order to make clear the current philosophical debate regarding the subjectivity of nonhuman and non-animal beings.

Nonhuman and Non-animal Others

- Organic beings
trees, plants, flowers, fungus...

- Inorganic beings / objects
stones, water, air, sand, ecosystem...

- Human-made artefacts
wooden chair, stone-made table, metal shield...
plastic bags, chemical pesticides...

The diagram above helps to illustrate the various different positions takes by contemporary theorists with respect to objects and things. Jane Bennett, for instance, who speaks of the “political ecology of things,” is inclined to include all types of different beings—organic or inorganic, natural or man-made—under the broad category of “things.” Some examples of things discussed in her arguments include worms, metals, edible food, plastic bags, and trash.

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688 Ibid., p.xii, 61.
689 Ibid., p.xii.
It is true that, at one pint, Bennett remarks that to acknowledge nonhuman materialities as participants in a political ecology is not to claim that everything is on an equal footing or that everything deserves equal attention or treatment, since there are various kinds of beings and they all possess different degrees of power. Nevertheless, her general category of “things” does not necessarily offer a solid ground for her arguments and nor does it show a consistent view of the philosophical aspects of the objects she explores. Her examples can be easily challenged with the counter-argument that to put worms, wooden spool, or garbage in the same basket and conduct a comparative study on them risks precluding a thorough examination of the subjectivity (or lack of it) of these various different things, since some of them are organic beings, and others are obviously inorganic or synthetic artefacts. The differences will in turn lead different “things” to produce different affects and build different relations with the world around them, in which case including these different things in the same philosophical framework without drawing clear distinctions between them is itself a problem.

The absence of a clear account of different categories of things and objects can also be identified in Levi Bryant’s proposed theory. Bryant, who defends an ontological realism of objects in *The Democarcy of Objects*, has neither given a clear account of what sort(s) of “objects” he wishes to defend, and nor has he provided concrete examples in his arguments. Indeed, he has made it clear that his primary investigation is the philosophical/ontological aspect of objects rather than the scientific aspect of it. Nonetheless, from Bryant’s arguments, readers are able to grasp that he has concentrated almost exclusively on with nonorganic man-made artefacts, since his argument chiefly attacks the empirical knowledge of objects which is obtained exclusively from an anthropocentric perspective that is much valued by epistemology. For Bryant, there is a need to call forth a transcendental realism of objects in order to turn away from this anthropocentrism. The following paragraph thus opens the discussion on the problematic issue of epistemology, taking different scholars’ positions into consideration.

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A Challenge to Epistemology

In the first chapter of this thesis, some problems with epistemology that are raised by Steven Shaviro in his criticism of Descartes and Kant have been briefly discussed. As a matter of fact, current theoretical debates which concern posthumanism or the philosophy of nonhumans commonly share a similar criticism of epistemology, whether the theoretical focus is on animals and natural beings, or, on nonhuman objects/artefacts and cyborgs.

Levi Bryant’s criticism of epistemology is drawn here because it allows us to easily understand the problematic anthropocentric attitude which is incorporated in the setup of epistemology. For Bryant, it is this anthropocentric attitude that forbids us to see the crucial role that nonhuman actors play in knowledge-production. Bryant explains very thoroughly on what ground that epistemology came to be valued, as well as why the epistemological approach is closely tied to anthropocentrism. In Bryant’s view, the question of objects has never been dealt with in a way which would make objects the centre of the discussion. Instead, he thinks that “the moment we pose the question of objects we are no longer occupied with the questions of objects, but rather with the question of the relationship between the subject and the object,” and it is inevitably a matter of “representations” (Bryant, *The Democracy* 14). With all the arguments formulated around “representations,” there arises the debate between realism and anti-realism as the basic question of philosophy. According to Bryant, these two competing worldviews have given rise to an epistemological understanding of our relationship to objects. He asserts,

As a consequence of the two world schema [realism and anti-realism], the question of the object, of what substances are, is subtly transformed into the question of how and whether we know objects. The question of objects becomes the question of a particular relation between humans and objects. This in turn, becomes a question of whether or not our representations map onto reality. Such a question, revolving around epistemology, has been the obsession of philosophy since at least Descartes. (Bryant, *The Democracy* 16; emphasis original)

Bryant further notes that Western philosophy has maintained the tradition of privileging epistemology since Descartes with the question of knowledge becoming the centre of Western philosophy. Starting from the periods of the Renaissance and Enlightenment, Europe has continuously witnessed “the birth of capitalism, the erosion of traditional authority in the form of monarchies and the Church, the Reformation, the rise of democracy, and the rise of the new

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692 Bryant, *The Democracy of Things*, p.16.
sciences,” all of which ultimately favour a development of epistemological questioning (Bryant, The Democracy 16). Following these historical movements, the world today has become a pro-science world. And the pro-science crowd has argued that only science could offer us the true representation of reality. Moreover, with this epistemological pursuit and scientific understanding of the world, our society is inclined to think highly of epistemological realism (which is exactly what Bryant criticises).

On the other hand, Bryant also brings in the questions of ethics and politics, for he considers that the debates swirling around epistemology are fundamentally tied to these questions. Adopting Sir Francis Bacon’s view of knowledge, Bryant argues:

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\text{[K]nowledge is power [\ldots]. [K]nowledge is [\ldots] power in the sense that it determines who is authorized to speak, who is authorized to govern, and is the power to determine what place persons and other entities should, by right, occupy within the social order. (The Democracy 17; emphasis mine)}
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Bryant’s argument shows that one finds a clear anthropocentric perspective on nonhuman objects. In addition, he also thinks that there exists an apparent hierarchy that places humans over nonhuman objects, and that this derives ultimately from the political aspect of epistemology. The possessors of knowledge, i.e. human beings, have the authority to speak and to designate places for nonhuman beings. This is why Bryant does not agree with epistemological realism, which focuses on our representation and knowledge of objects. Instead, he defends an ontological realism, which refuses to treat objects as constructions of humans but deals with the being of objects themselves. To put it in other words, he is in favour of thinking a “subjectless object” rather than an object in opposition to a subject. Not only does Bryant condemn the current epistemology for its anthropocentrism, but he also criticises the way that it typically excludes nonhuman actors when thinking of collectives. As Bryant notes, we often ignore the role that nonhuman actors can play in knowledge-production. He further claims that we should not suppose that collectives only involve humans, since nonhumans are also engaged in collectives. Signifiers, meanings, signs, discourses, and narratives are the agencies that involve human beings in collectives, with regard to the formation of social organisation. Nonetheless, he outlines, other asignifying elements—in the form of technologies, weather patterns, resources, diseases, animals, and

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693 Ibid., p.17.
694 Ibid., pp.18-20.
695 Ibid., p.18.
natural disasters—that are also present in these collectives, even if that presence is often disregarded.697

Steven Shaviro, who has criticised the bifurcation of nature from a speculative realist’s point of view, shares the same critique of epistemology. However, though both Bryant and Shaviro (and other scholars who argue from the perspective of “objects” and “things”) begin their criticisms by attacking the impact of Cartesian thinking of cognition on Western philosophy, Shaviro’s argument focuses more on the aspect of how the bifurcation of nature has been reinforced by epistemology and by our attachment to phenomenology. As he claims,

Most Western philosophy since Descartes, and especially since Kant, has reinforced the bifurcation of nature because it is centred on the questions of cognition. It privileges epistemology (which as the question of how we can know what we know) at the expense of ontology (which directly poses the question of what is). (Shaviro 3)

Unlike Bryant, Shaviro does not propose to put forward a completely different paradigm to undermine the current epistemology, which is to think exclusively from an object-oriented ontological (or onticological) perspective. (Bryant, in fact, emphasises the possibility of thinking a “subjectless object,” which ultimately means to abandon the subject/object dualism that is inherently anthropocentric.) Instead, Shaviro suggests that we need to “deprivilege” epistemology. Shaviro states,

Epistemology must be deprivileged, because we cannot subordinate things themselves to our experiences of them. I do not come to know a world of things outside myself. Rather, I discover—which is to say, I feel—that I myself, together with things that go beyond my knowledge of them, are all alike inhabitants of a “common world.” (3; emphasis original)

For Shaviro, the anthropocentric blindspot is not that we cannot think or see outside of the box of our human perspective, but that we do not try to “feel” things that go beyond our knowledge of them. Thus, in order to deprivilege epistemology, our emotional agency is called forth. In short, drawing a conclusion from both philosophers’ arguments, they have presented sound arguments in challenging the current epistemology. Most importantly, their arguments have assisted in exploring new ways of thinking the subjectivity of ecological others.

697 Ibid., pp.23-24.
Subjectivity of the Ecological Other

The above paragraphs examine Bryant and Shaviro’s criticisms of the problematic aspects of nonhuman “objects” and “things” when seen in a current epistemological perspective. Here, the final question that one should take on board in examination is: is it possible for an ecological other to possess subjectivity? This section attempts to answer the question by drawing notably the arguments of Jane Bennett, since her philosophical position is most pertinent to answer this question.

Traditionally in Western philosophy, subjectivity is regarded as the property of an entity that has the ability to perceive its Being and furthermore reflect or ponder on its Being. As argued above, this definition is grounded in Cartesian epistemology. Here, in alignment with Bennett and Shaviro’s ideas, this thesis proposes to view subjectivity: (1) as spontaneously arising through relations, and especially through “affective relations”; and (2) as coming into play when a being is able to self-organise. The reason why we are able to claim that an ecological other possesses subjectivity, or, that its subjectivity is self-constituted is because an ecological other has the following features: first and foremost, it is fundamentally active in the sense that it has “affective” ability to influence or produce effects on other(s). Drawing attention to the analysis of Wu Ming-yi’s Diedao [The Dao of Butterflies] (2003) put forward by Lee Yu-lin, a contemporary Taiwanese literary critic, one is able to understand why this subjectivity of the ecological other can come to rise through “affective relations.” As Lee claims,

Additionally, certain ecological others—notably natural beings—demonstrate self-organisation. For instance, a tree as an ecological other not only has an active role in nature as
a whole, but it also effectuates an “affective” relation with other beings. It uses sunlight to photosynthesize and provides nourishment for its leaves or fruit to grow and its flower to thrive. When the tree dies, it is decomposed and its decay can also nourish the earth, which eventually benefits other plants in the surrounding area. First of all, the life cycle of the tree shows the self-organisation of this ecological other and also its participation in the self-organisation of a bigger ecosystem. Secondly, this process is affective in a Bennetian-Spinozist way because the “encounter” between the tree and the sunlight as well as the tree and the earth gives rise to what Spinoza would call, “happiness” [le sentiment de joie], which is ultimately a type of “affective relation.” Indeed, if one agrees with Bennett’s adoption of the notion of “affect” from Spinoza, one would be able to see that the interactions between the tree and other beings in nature are “good”, and thus “affective.” Equally, an object like a wooden wardrobe made from a chestnut tree can also be counted as an ecological other, and one can claim that it possesses subjectivity. It is true that, unlike a natural organic being (i.e. a tree or a flower), this wooden object does not have the ability to self-organise. However, one cannot deny that it can effectuate an “affective” relation with other beings. Before it has been turned into a wardrobe, the chestnut tree already had “affective relations” with other beings in nature. Once it is turned into a wardrobe, this ability to bring about “affects” on other beings does not simply disappear but it is manifested differently. The chestnut wardrobe could potentially effectuate an “affective” relation with its maker or its owner, or simply, with its beholder. Its previous “affective relations” (when it was still in its original state as a tree) with other natural beings will also be revealed in front of its beholder. The appearance of these previous “affective relations” is what we perceive as the texture and the memory of the tree’s life lives on in this ecological being.

Bennett, though seeing herself as vital materialist, is fairly close to Steven Shaviro’s (speculative realist) philosophy of objects and things. In fact, both of these two scholars’ arguments are in favour of subjectivity found in nonhuman non-animal ecological other. To start with, both Bennett and Shaviro are keen on adopting the position of Bruno Latour

698 One can refer to Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza in order to understand how this encounter gives rise to an “affective relation.” As Deleuze brilliantly elaborates Spinoza’s notion of affect: “[u]n mode existant se définit par un certain pouvoir d’être affecté. Quand il rencontre un autre mode, il peut arriver que cet autre mode lui soit « bon », c’est-à-dire se compose avec lui, ou au contraire le décompose et lui soit « mauvais » : dans le premier cas, le mode existant passe à une perfection plus grande, dans le second cas, moins grande. On dit suivant le cas que sa puissance d’agir ou force d’exister augmente ou diminue, puisque la puissance de l’autre mode s’y ajoute, ou au contraire s’en soustrait, l’immobilise et la fixe. Le passage à une perfection plus grande ou l’augmentation de la puissance d’agir s’appelle affect, ou sentiment de joie; le passage à une perfection moindre ou la diminution de la puissance d’agir, tristesse.” Deleuze, “Sur,” n.p.
(Latour has never explicitly expressed the idea of the self-constituting subjectivity of nonhuman entities in his work but there is indeed an implied alignment to such idea). Especially for Bennett, although she does not make strong claims for eliminating the binary discourse of nature/culture and subject/object, she highlights her preference for the concept of “actant” regarding the nonhuman entities.\textsuperscript{699} She paraphrases Latour as follows:

\begin{quote}
[A]n actant is a source of action that can be either human or nonhuman; it is that which has efficacy, can \textit{do} things, has sufficient coherence to make a difference, produce effects, alter the course of events. It is ‘any entity that modifies another entity in a trial,’ something whose ‘competence is deduced from [its] performance’ rather than posited in advance of the action.\textsuperscript{700} (Bennett viii, emphasis original)
\end{quote}

Moreover, as pointed out earlier, Bennett also tries to bind her adoption of Latour’s concept of “actant” with Spinoza’s notion of affect. According to Bennett, if we draw on Spinoza’s notion of affect, we will be able to understand that there is an affect that can be produced by various different kinds of beings, whether these beings have organic or inorganic bodies or whether they are natural or cultural objects.\textsuperscript{701} Thereafter, what Bennett tries to put forward is in fact an argument which advocates the “force” of things or matter. Subsequently, subjectivity of these nonhuman entities is one critical aspect that needs to be addressed if one recognises the existence of the “force” of things. Bennett evoke Latour’s notion of “actant” in order to put forward a positive ontology of things, or in her own term, “of vibrant matter.”\textsuperscript{702} As she carries on affirming her admiration of Latour’s effort to develop a vocabulary that addresses different modes and degrees of affectivity, she also outlines her attempt to theorise the subjectivity of nonhuman objects and things. Not only does she wish to demonstrate “the active powers issuing from nonsubjects,” but she also wants to argue that there is life, self-interest, will and agency in those nonhuman things.\textsuperscript{703}

In order to prove the “active powers” and the subjectivity of nonhuman things, Bennett presents several accounts of “thing-power”—from debris and Kafka’s Odradek’s nonorganic life to legal actant and walking, talking minerals. According to Bennett, “glove, pollen, rat, cap, stick,” these beings that shimmer back and forth between debris and thing, have the power to command her attention of their own accord and in their own right. She states,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{699} Bennett, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.viii, 94-95.
\item \textsuperscript{701} Bennett, \textit{op.cit.}, p.xii.
\item \textsuperscript{702} \textit{Ibid.}, p.x.
\item \textsuperscript{703} \textit{Ibid.}, p.ix.
\end{itemize}
[S]tuff exhibited its thing-power: it issued a call, even if I did not quite understand what it was saying. [...] [I]t provoked affects in me: I was repelled by the dead […] rat and dismayed by the litter, but I also felt something else: a nameless awareness of the impossible singularity of that rat, that configuration of pollen, that otherwise utterly banal, mass-produced plastic water-bottle cap. (Bennett 4, emphasis original)

Bennett belives that there is an energetic vitality inside each of these things (things that we consider as debris), of which we commonly conceive as inert. She argues, “[i]n [an] assemblage, objects appeared as things, that is, as vivid entities not entirely reducible to the contexts in which (human) subjects set them, never entirely exhausted by their semiotics” (Bennett 5, emphasis original).

Apart from these examples of debris or waste, Bennett also invokes an interesting literary figure in her argument: Kafka’s Odradek, a wooden spool of thread that Kafka personifies. According to Kafka’s description, Odradek can laugh and run. It behaves like an active organism, for it moves deliberately and speaks intelligibly. Odradek, in Bennett’s view, “exercises an impersonal form of vitality” (7). This kind of nonhuman but self-rising vitality can exist, according to Bennett, is precisely because this inorganic matter is able to “self-organise.” Citing Manuel De Landa, a Mexican-American philosopher, Bennett not only demonstrates how Odradek is able to break the boundary of our ontological definition of things but also shows how it is possible to view Odradek as an object that has subjectivity.

Even the humblest forms of matter and energy have the potential for self-organisation beyond the relatively simple type involved in the creation of crystals. […] When put together, these forms of spontaneous structural generation suggest that inorganic matter is much more variable and creative than we ever imagined. (De Landa16)

From this passage, we learn that Odradek is an inorganic object that exhibits its creativity and variability, and Kafka’s personification of this character certainly offers his readers an opportunity to grasp such vitality generated by a nonhuman thing. Therefore, it is logical to understand why Bennett’s example of Odradek is able to show the subjectivity of ecological other. To a certain extent, she is even tempted to claim that Odradek is more like a subject than an object.

Returning to Latour’s idea of the actant, Bennett puts forward an account of a “legal” actant in order to show how the “active powers” of actants can actually produce effects in our

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704 Ibid., p.5.
705 Ibid., pp.7-8.
706 Ibid., p.7.
reality, especially in a juridical aspect. (One can also say that the “legal” actant produces “affective relation” with its beholders.) There are two examples that Bennett provides: one is the gunpowder residue sampler which was used in a homicide trial in Baltimore, another is the legal concept of “deodand.” Bennett recounts her memory as a jury member: she had witnessed the gunpowder being applied to one of the hands of the accused murderer a few hours after the shooting; it had thus provided the jury its microscopic evidence that the hand of the accused had either fired a gun or been within a very close range of a gun firing. The gunpowder—or, as Bennett refers to, the “witness”—eventually became vital to the verdict of the trial. Bennett thus sees this object as a “legal” actant. In her defense, Latour’s term of an actant recalls “a source of action; an actant can be human or not, or most likely a combination of both” (Bennett 9). She further adds, “[a]n actant is neither an object nor a subject but an ‘intervener’” (Bennett 9). Arguably, this particular example may be seen simply as Bennett’s personal experience or her subjective/intersubjective interpretation. But Bennett then adds the notion of “deodand” in order to strength her argument regarding the existence of non-human legal actants. The notion of “deodand” is a figure of English law; it refers to the non-human recipient of a legal sentence in cases of accidental death or injury. The law specifying the concept of deodand dated roughly from the 11th century and it was not abolished until 1826. Here, Bennett gives some examples:

[T]he carving knife that fell into human flesh or the carriage that trampled the leg of a pedestrian—became “deodand” (literally, “that which must be given to God”). (9)

In theory, a deodand was supposed to be lost to the crown as a penalty of its wrongdoing. But, in practice, the juries often assessed the value of that deodand, and the owners were expected to pay a fine equal to the value of it. At the first glance, one might think that, by definition, the notion of deodand could only work while the idea of God is generally accepted, for the notion itself is a conceptual derivation of the Christian religion. Nevertheless, in terms of real practice, the deodand(s) is in fact not far away from certain contemporary legal phenomena. For instance, when a malicious dog bites a passenger on the street or when a specific ecosystem is disturbed by the introduction of a pollutant, it is often the owner (of the dog) or the entreprise (responsible for the pollution) that is held responsible in a court of justice. One thus perceives that the idea of a “legal” actant is altogether possible. Moreover, in some

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707 Ibid., pp.8-9.
708 Cf. Latour, op.cit., p.75.
respects, the “active power” of things is already recognised in our legal system without us realising it.

The last example that Bennett addresses is that of walking, talking minerals. It may sound strange to imagine minerals having a life-form that allows them to walk and talk. In Bennett’s view, however, it is not only our perception of objects that needs to be challenged, but also our view of the status of human actants. As she states,

I have been trying to raise the volume on the vitality of materiality per se, pursuing this task so far by focusing on nonhuman bodies, by, that is, depicting them as actants rather than as objects. But the case for matter as active needs also to readjust the status of human actants: not by denying humanity’s awesome, awful powers, but by presenting these powers as evidence of our own constitution as vital materiality. (Bennett 10)

Bennett further concludes that these powers possessed by humans are also a kind of thing-power. What Bennett advocates is that “humans are composed of various material parts (the minerality of our bones, or the metal in our blood, or the electricity in our neurons)” (10). Of course, Bennett is well aware that it is difficult to view these materials as lively and self-organising elements, but she insists that “under the direction of something nonmaterial, [there is] an active soul or mind” (Bennett 10). In order to demonstrate this, she encourages her readers to adopt the perspective of evolutionary time. Citing once more De Landa’s account, she asserts,

Soft tissue (gels and aerosols, muscle and nerve) reigned supreme until 500 million years ago. At that point, some of the conglomerations of fleshy matter-energy that made up life underwent a sudden mineralization, and a new material for constructing living creatures emerged: bone. It is almost as if the mineral world that had served as a substratum for the emergence of biological creatures was reasserting itself. (De Landa 26)

Bennett therefore claims, in the longer time-span of evolution, mineral material appears to be the active power, and animal (and therewith also human) beings, on the contrary, are merely its product. This is why she states, “we [human beings] are walking, talking minerals” (Bennett 11; emphasis original)

To conclude, my thesis would mostly agree with Bennett’s position, whose views on objects and things share many similarities with Latour’s idea of actants. Moreover, it also

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710 Bennett, op.cit., p.10.
711 Ibid., pp.-11.
712 Ibid., p.11.
agrees with her adoption of Spinoza’s concept of “affect” on the issue. This thesis argues that the ecological other (as defined in the preceding paragraphs) has a similar ontological status (though not exactly the same) and could thus also have a similar legal status to what Bennett describes. That is to say, it is possible that the ecological other may combine Latour’s concept of actant and Spinoza’s idea of affect, providing that such nonhuman non-animal beings can spontaneously constitute real affect(s) by itself. What this means is that, while both organic and inorganic beings are capable of producing affects, real affects can only be generated by natural beings or things that are principally made of natural beings. As pointed out earlier, Bennett fails to make clear distinctions of the nonhuman non-animal beings she uses in her argument, hence in some respects, her argument exhibits problems, particularly with respect to manmade artefacts.

In responding to Bennett’s account, I would agree with her argument that things and objects have their own subjectivity, but only those that originally come from nature (or at least a large part of it is made of/consist of natural beings). A synthetic object, on the contrary, is not possible to have subjectivity or to perform the act of self-organisation. To give some specific examples, natural organic beings such as earthworms, trees and flowers undeniably possess the ability to self-organise. And even natural inorganic beings such as minerals (marbles and crystals), waters (rivers and oceans), and air (hurricanes and typhoons), are capable of self-organisation. The reason behind such statements is that, as Bennett (and De Landa) claims, if one looks from a broader perspective of our time-spam of the evolutionary process, one could easily understand that even metals and minerals have the powers to move, to shape and to construct. To re-quote De Landa, “[i]t is almost as if the mineral world that had served as a substratum for the emergence of biological creatures was reasserting itself” (26). These natural but inorganic beings are thus, in a sense, affective and “creative.” For instance, via his “hylomorphic” model, Gilbert Simondon has shown how raw matter is able to constitute “form” and thus give rise to the “embodied life” of a crystal. This is why Bennett sees Simondon’s hylomorphic model as a kind of material vitalism. Similarly, James Lovelock, the most famous contemporary earth system scientist and the author of the Gaia hypothesis, has provided scientific data to demonstrate the role of living and non-living entities (which include humans, animals, nonhuman organic and inorganic natural beings) in

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715 Bennett, op.cit., p.56.
maintaining a stable, or relatively stable, atmosphere. It is thus not difficult to see natural beings as having subjectivity. Man-made artefacts such as an iron shield, a hand-made woollen cloth, a hand-carved wooden table, or a bicycle fabricated with different types of metals should also have their own subjectivity because the materials that they are made from are ultimately coming from nature. And these materials remain part of the earth system. In giving different forms to these materials with human technè one does not change these materials’ capability to affect or to perform self-organisation. Furthermore, in a metaphorical sense, binding human technè with these materials even reinforces the idea of subjectivity found in the nonhuman non-animal ecological other. On the contrary, synthetic objects such as a nylon swimsuit or a plastic water bottle cannot be counted as having self-constituting subjectivity (even though, to some extent, these objects might be able to produce affects). Their existence does not involve a “creative” aspect since they do not have the ability to self-organise. They are “created” rather than “creative.” Hence, in an ontological perspective, these nonhuman, man-made synthetic objects should not be considered as having the same status as other nonhuman natural beings/objects.

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3.2.2. Literary Representations of the Ecological Others

In Coetzee and Wu’s literary works, it is easy to acknowledge their ceaseless efforts to provide vivid representations and exquisite descriptions of animal others. This is especially true of Coetzee, who is often viewed as being in alignment with other writers or philosophers working on animal ethics. Nonetheless, it should be acknowledged that both writers’ works have also taken account of nonhuman non-animal others. This chapter deals exclusively their representations of different kinds of ecological other, notably on the subjects of their vitality, their subjectivity and their intersubjectivity with human beings.

The Vitality of Ecological Others

As Jane Bennett argues in her book, *Vibrant Matter*, the vitality of nonhuman non-animal objects or matter is the most fundamental source for identifying the subjectivity of these objects or matter. Like many other ecological writers, both Coetzee and Wu refer to different kinds of natural beings, such as water, trees and stones. Among these references, different forms of water are the commonly cited natural inorganic beings in their works, for water offers a powerful image that exhibits the “life-form” of nature. In Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians*, he recounts the “growth” of the lake and its interaction with the neighbouring environment (i.e., with other natural beings). On a journey across a desert, the Magistrate says to himself, “[e]very year the lake grows more brakish as the river eats into its banks and sweeps salt and alum into the lake. […] What will become of the settlement if the lake grows into a dead sea?” (Coetzee, *Waiting* 64; emphasis mine). Coetzee’s wording is significant here. In Coetzee’s portrayal, the river takes on the role of an actant, for it “eats” into the banks and “sweeps” salt and alum in to the lake. Moreover, instead of saying that the lake “becomes” more brakish or that it “turns into” a dead sea, Coetzee inserts the verb “grow,” reinforcing the image of the lake as a life-form entity, which is capable of growing in size and altering its content. In a different passage, Coetzee delineates an ecosystem that is disturbed by human interference and describes affects it produces on its environment.

Someone has decided that the river-banks provide too much cover for the barbarians, that the river would form a more defensible line if the banks were cleared. So they fired the
brush. With the wind blowing from the north, the fire has spread across the whole shallow valley. [...] They do not care that once ground is cleared the wind begins to eat at the soil and the desert advances. (Coetzee, *Waiting* 89-90)

According to Coetzee’s description, a military strategy of burning down the shrubs of the river-banks applied by the Empire in its battle against the barbarians has a great impact on that particular environment. However, the outcome whereby the land is slowly turned into desert is also largely attributed to the affective relation between the wind and the soil. If there were no wind, the place where the shrubs were burnt down would remain only as dry land, but it would not turn into desert. It is precisely the affect of the wind has turned that particular environment into desert. Thus, one cannot simply disregard the affective relation that exists between natural beings.

A similar kind of vitality is present in Wu’s *Jia li shuibian name jin* 家離水邊那麼近 [So Much Water So Close to Home], a nonfictional collection of essays recounting reflections on different water sceneries (mostly in Taiwan). His essays address various topics related to rivers, creeks, oceans and seas, including their distinctive geographical features and biospheres, specific cultural or anthropological references, the colonial-environmental history, and so on and so forth. In *Jia*, Wu finely describes the vitality of water:

> Every stream has its own sadness, anger and beauty that move people, especially when it comes out at the mouth of the river. Here, the fresh water meets the seawater [...]. At high tide, the seawater slowly fills up the river, the level of salt at the very end of the downstream is therefore raised. At low tide, the river flows into the sea, hence the level of the salt drops. If there is strong wind at low tide, it is very likely that the seawater still runs towards the river, causing the “welling of water at the surface.” This flow runs against the tide at the bottom, which is pulled by the lunar gravitation, henceforth the water forms two currents running against each other, manifesting two different powers. [...]
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> The will of the sea and the will of the river are [therefore] shown at the mouth of the river.

Wu’s description should not be simply taken as an attempt to personify the natural environment. His detailed explanation of the current formation by the gravitational tides allows us to see how powerful vitality in water manifests itself as an affective force. As in Lee
Yu-lin’s analysis of Wu’s works, affect can here be found in inorganic natural entities. 717 Hence, the will of the sea and the river should not be overlooked.

Other than water, two further types of natural inorganic beings may demonstrate the vitality of the ecological other—stones and minerals. As Wu claims, the stones that are often seen as “lifeless” are the ones that embed various different lives. 718 “Shitou yuanshi xihe shengming de yincang zhichu 石頭原是溪河生命的隱藏之處 [Stones are the hidden source of the life of streams],” Wu states (Jia 38). As for the minerals, Wu shares a similar view with Bennett and De Landa, considering that minerals share a certain kind of life-form with other living beings on earth. He refers to Rachel L. Carson’s findings and states,

Whether it is a fish, an amphibian, a reptile, a bird, or a mamal, the blood that runs in the veins of these creatures has the same salty taste as the ocean. The proportion of sodium, potassium, and calcium in our blood is almost the same as the blue water in the sea.

無論是魚類、兩棲動物、爬蟲類、溫血鳥類還是哺乳動物，每一種生物血管內所流的血液，都和海水一樣帶有鹹味，我們紅色的血液裡所含的鈉、鉀、鈣，含量和比例幾乎和藍色的海水相同。719 (Wu, Jia 126)

On the one hand, Wu’s nonfictional writing has shown us the vitality of natural inorganic beings. On the other hand, in his fictional writing, he also draws on example of natural organic being which demonstrates such kind of vitality. In Fuyanren, Wu offers the example of bayan trees to show his readers the liveliness of natural organism. In the story, an aboriginal girl invites Alice (one of the female protagonists) to the forest to see the “walking nanrong trees 會走路的楠榕樹” “move” around because their aerial roots keep growing and expanding; over the course of the years, the trees thus slowly move from one place to another. 720 Wu of course has chosen a literary way in his portrayal of these bayan trees, but it successfully exhibits the active nature of these living organisms.

Wu and Coetzee’s writings have both considered natural beings in terms of their affective force and vitality. Wu has additionally explored the idea that man-made objects may

718 Wu M.Y., Jia, p.38.
720 Wu M.Y., Fuyanren, p.192.
demonstrate this vitality. The most remarkable example is the old bike in *Danche shiqieji*. The story centres around the protagonist’s quest to finding the lost bike of his father (who has also disappeared with the bike). In one passage, Wu describes the moment when the protagonist, Mr. Chen, retrieves the lost bike and feels the affects that the bike produces in him:

> I stand in front of the bike, nervously reaching my hand towards its seat post. I feel like holding a girl’s hand for the very first time, because I know it is where the serial number was seared on the bike. […] The moment that I touch the number, I am convinced that there must have been some sort of inexplicable force which allows me to see this bike once more. The uneven surface where the number was inscribed is like a chain of undulating mountains. “04886,” that is the number of my father’s Lucky brand bike. After several decades, *the lightly faded enamel logo exhibits a mild but tough kind of quality.* […] Riding the bike, I try to feel how the bike has changed its character in the last twenty years.

The form, the quality and the character of the bike *invoke* the corporeal memory of the protagonist. The lost bike plays the role of an actant, using the affective force generated by its minerality to call forth Chen’s bodily memories.

During his quest, the protagonist becomes devoted to learning the history of bike industry in Taiwan as well as to individual stories related to the old bikes that he had come across, including those of their owners. The affects produced by the antique bikes thus come to take a significant place in the composition of the story. Wu further portrays the different “characters” of the bikes, as experienced by Chen, but also Chen’s acquaintances, who share the same passion for bikes or who have a particular attachment to a certain bike. For Wu, these bikes are shaped not only by man’s craft, by time, by the climate of a specific place, and by the habits of their users.\(^{721}\) The rust on the bikes became particularly indicative of their singularity and character.

> The coating of electroplating will come off over time. Time is therefore the measurement of fine skills and quality materials of electroplating. […] If we pay much attention to the rust of each individual bike, we could learn about the climate of certain regions, the habits of a bike owner, and the stories of that bike. […] Throughout the cleaning and repairing process, each individual piece will be dismentaled, polished and reassembled. Thus, the

\(^{721}\) Wu M.Y., *Danche*, p.328.
distribution and the shade of the rust will be imprinted in the memory of the owner. For the owner, that is how the bicycle gets to be “recognised.”

電鍍是會隨著時間而剝落的，時間會考驗電金鍍技術與材料的良窳。⋯⋯仔細計較每一輛車的鏽蝕狀況，就可以發現某些地區的氣候條件、車主習慣，或車輛的遭遇。⋯⋯在清潔與修復的過程中，由於每個零件都親手拆解、擦拭、組裝，因此那鏽的分布與深淺，會牢牢的被記憶起來，對擁有者來說，這才算是「認得」某輛車了。

(Danche 328)

One should not think that the bike is “recognised” by its owner only in a passive sense, as if the bike is an object and can only be regarded by a subject (i.e. the owner or a human being). In fact, the bike has an active role because the material of the bike—in this case, the metal—takes up the role of an actant and allows the bike to develop its singularity in interacting with the climate, man’s artistry, and his/her habits. Its character is therefore formed via the vitality of this mineral materiality and its affect is produced via its relations with humans and climate.

The Subjectivity of Ecological Others

Earlier I referred to Jane Bennett, suggesting that the vitality of ecological others is the fundamental source in identifying the subjectivity of nonhuman non-animal objects or matter. But there are other ways to discern the subjectivity of ecological others. Wu Ming-yi, in both his fictional and nonfictional writings, has addressed this issue. On the one hand, Wu approaches the issue by drawing our attention to the idea of memory, and on the other hand, by taking into consideration the point of view of aboriginal culture.

In Jia, Wu speaks of the memory of nonhuman ecological beings. As argued in chapter two, memory—whether individual or collective—is closely tied to the construction of a history or a narrative. Thereafter, it is ultimately linked to the formation of subjectivity, despite the fact that such subjectivity formation can be a posterior construct. In Jia, Wu gives several examples of this, including the memories of black-capped chickadee birds, of clams, of stones and of the sea. Referring to the scientific studies of Fernando Nottebohm’s, Wu notes that new tissues of hippocampus²²² in the brain of a black-capped chickadee bird grow every year in October. Thanks to this process, the bird is capable of registering new information in

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²²² The hippocampus is a major component of the brain of human beings and other vertebrate animals. Its function is related to short and long-term memory registration.
order to adapt to the new environment brought about by the changing of the seasons.\textsuperscript{723} Wu interprets this in the following way:

This means, upon encountering the new environment which confronts their old memories, the old tissues of hippocampus in the brain of black-capped chickadee birds gradually die out, and the new tissues begin to form, in order to accommodate new memories.

這意味着面對周遭環境與舊有記憶衝突時，黑冠山雀腦中的海馬神經元的舊細胞就會衰退，新細胞則會增生，以便容納新的記憶。（Jia li 118）

Wu’s example shows that memories are not exclusively reserved for human beings; nonhuman entities may possess the same intellectual capacity. Some may respond that it is obvious that the capability of accessing and registering memories is shared by many birds and other animals, for they are sentient beings. However, it is less obvious that nonhuman non-animal beings could possess memories. With this in mind, it is important to note that Wu offers other examples that do not concern the category of sentient beings. For instance, while expressing his criticism of the re-opened clam farms in one of the Taiwanese provinces, Wu suggests that clams—which do not possess brains—nevertheless have memories of their own. By pointing out the problems posed by the re-created clam farming for the tourism industry, Wu criticises that this aquicultural imitation of natural reproduction (i.e., imitating clam reproduction in clean rivers) in no way benefits nature, but only human self interest. It is absurd that, rather than restoring the clean water of rivers so that clams can continue to reproduce naturally, people continue to pollute the rivers with toxic emissions and raise clams in artificial clam farms. Wu therefore asserts that, if these clams were able to write their history, they would not have left out their memory of being wiped out by the toxic pollutants emitted in the rivers they once inhabited.\textsuperscript{724} Last but not least, Wu also includes the memories of natural inorganic objects among his examples, He names two natural inorganic objects—a stone and the sea—in order to demonstrate his argument. Referring once more to Carson’s argument, he writes,

With regard to the question of whether the sea has its own memory, Ms. Carson would certainly say, “yes, it does.” She would say that the memory of the sea is a collective kind of memory. It is marked on every detail of the geological movements and evolutionary process; it is also marked on a school of fish, on molluscs, on the currents of ocean or on a rock.

\textsuperscript{723} Wu M.Y., Jia, p.118.

\textsuperscript{724} Ibid., p.70.
I pick up a black stone by the seashore. Saying that the stone is black is not quite accurate. In fact, it is an ensemble of different layers of gray. There is almost no marking on the stones. But if one looks closely, one would find that there are very light traces of seawaves. The geologists would say that these traces reveal the petrological markings of the stone. They are the markings that are left by the erosion of the sea. […] Petrological markings are the memory of the stone.

關於海是不是也有記憶這樣的問題，卡森女士（Rachel L. Carson）必然會回答有。她會說海的記憶是一種集體記憶，留在地質變動與演化的每一項細節上；留在魚族、軟體動物、海流，或一枚石頭上。

我在海岸撿起一枚黑色的石頭，說是黑色的並不準確，應該是一種不同層次灰色的總合。石頭上雖然幾乎沒有紋路，但仔細一看會發現類似海的波紋。地質專家會說那就是它的岩理，以及它承受海的侵蝕所留下的痕跡。岩理就是石頭的記憶。（Wu, Jia 120; emphasis mine)

The memories of these inorganic beings do not, however, reveal themselves in the same way as the memories of a person or an animal. Yet, one cannot deny that there are memories manifested in these ecological others. Thus, in Wu’s sci-fi novel, Fuyanren, he speaks again of the memories of seas, waves and stones. “[One] could still say that [the sea] remember things: the waves and the stones all bear the traces of time. […]也可以說海有記憶，海上的浪與石頭，都必然存在著時間的刻痕。” (Wu, Fuyanren 72; The Man 55).

As suggested earlier, Wu has also approached the issue of subjectivity by taking the perspective of aboriginal cultural into consideration. According to Bruno Latour, it is only Western philosophy and culture that have posited a binary division between culture and nature. Non-Western cultures have never envisaged a clear-cut distinction between nature and culture; hence, non-western anthropology could help us to view natural beings quite differently. In this respect, Wu Ming-yi has a similar point of view to Latour and he advances some aboriginal cultural references regarding the subjectivity of ecological others. In Fuyanren, the imaginary aboriginal tribe, Wayo Wayo, of which Atile’i is a member, believes that the sun and the moon have their own characters and that mountains have a healing power. Wu also refers to the cultures of Taiwanese aboriginal tirbes. For instance, Dahu, who is from the Bunun 布農 tribe, was reminded by a village elder that he must not forget to talk to the sky, the forest, the stars and the clouds. And it is said that, the singing of Hafay

725 Latour, Politics, pp.42-43.
726 Wu M.Y., Fuyanren, p.107, 320.
727 Wu M.Y., Fuyanren, p.137.
(a lady from the Amis tribe) is similar to *the weeping of a plant*.

Although these examples are, in one way or another, poeticised by Wu, aboriginal cultural references are still quite important for acknowledging the subjectivity of nonhuman ecological others. They demonstrate that natural beings—whether organic or inorganic—are able to take up the role of actant. Henceforth, these ecological others can be said to possess a subjectivity of their own.

**Intersubjectivity between Ecological Others and Humans**

Intersubjectivity between ecological others and human should also be taken into account because, through intersubjective experience, we are able to prove the existence of subjectivity of nonhuman non-animal ecological others. In both Coetzee and Wu’s works, one can find good examples of intersubjective experiences that not only take place between ecological others and humans but also among ecological others themselves.

In Coetzee’s *Life & Times of Michael K*, emphasis is placed on the intersubjectivity between human beings and ecological others. In this work, human’s participation in natural cycles is staged by Coetzee’s description of the death of Michael K’s mother. The event of scattering human ashes on the earth not only points to human participation of the natural cycle, but it also marks an intersubjective encountering between humans and ecological others. As mentioned earlier, K’s mother passed away on their journey to Prince Albert. Holding onto her ashes, K is not sure at first what he should do. But he soon realises that the ashes need to be returned to mother earth:

The time came to return his mother to the earth. He tried to dig a hole on the crest of the hill west of the damn, but an inch from the surface the spade met solid rock. So he moved to the edge of what had been cultivated land below the damn and dug a hole as deep as his elbow. He laid the packet of ash in the hole and dropped the first spadeful of earth on top of it. Then he had misgivings. […] So he extracted the packet from the hole, taking the responsibility on himself, and set about clearing a patch a few metres square in the middle of the field. There, bending low so that they would not be carried away by the wind, he distributed the fine grey flakes over the earth, afterwards turning the earth over spadeful by spadeful. […] This was the beginning of his life as a cultivator. (Coetzee, *Life* 58-59).

The long passage which describes how K decides to scatter his mother’s ashes over the earth is noteworthy because it explains the fact that Coetzee regards highly the natural cycle with

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which humans must engage. The ashes of K’s mother returning to the earth also suggest the idea of “mother earth,” which immediately invokes an image of nurturing “motherhood” from nature. Michael K’s determination to becoming a cultivator is thus not a coincidence but a consequence of his subjectivity being called forth through an encounter with the subjectivity of the “mother earth.”

An intersubjective encounter between an ecological other and a human does not only emerge from Michael’s symbolic gesture of returning his mother to the earth, but also from the portrayal of Michael’s personal characteristics. In the first part of the novel, Michael clearly tries to commune with (or even “to become”) natural organic and inorganic entities. At first, Michael shows a great interest and attachment to vegetation. As Coetzee recounts,

It is because I am a gardener, [Michael K] thought, because that is my nature. […] The impulse to plant had been reawakened in him; now, in a matter of weeks, he found his waking life bound tightly to the patch of earth he had begun to cultivate and the seeds he had planted there. (Life 59; emphasis mine)

This short passage indicates both Michael’s appreciation of his life as a cultivator and his desire to form a bond with the earth and its seeds. Later, Michael finds that this desire gradually alters. Implicitly, he then expresses an appreciation of the qualities of minerals—dryness, hardness, yellow and red—such as those of stones and sand. And he also wishes to commune with other inorganic beings.

I have lost my love for that kind of earth, he thought, I no longer care to feel that kind of earth between my fingers. It is no longer the green and the brown that I want but the yellow and the red; not the wet but the dry; not the dark but the light; not the soft but the hard. […] I am becoming smaller and harder and drier every day. (Coetzee, Life 67)

Both passages reveal an intersubjectivity between human and ecological others—be it earth, seeds, stones or sand. Moreover, apart from Michael’s own attempts to commune with these ecological others, in the second part of the novel, the medical officer’s narrative on several occasions connects metaphorical references to stone and insect to Michael’s peculiar state of existence. For instance:

He is like a stone, a pebble that, having lain around quietly minding its own business since the dawn of time, is now suddenly picked up and tossed randomly from hand to hand. A hard little stone, barely aware of its surroundings, enveloped in itself and its interior life. […] An unbearing, unborn creature. I [the medical officer] cannot really think of him as a man[.] (Coetzee, Life 135; emphasis mine)
And furthermore, in the medical officer’s diary, he writes in a first person voice addressing Michael:

You are like a stick insect, Michaels\textsuperscript{729}, whose sole defence against a universe of predators is its bizarre shape. You are like a stick insect that has landed, God knows how, in the middle of a great wide flat bare concrete plain. You raise your slow fragile stick-legs one at a time, you inch about looking for something to merge with, and there is nothing. Why did you ever leave the bushes, Michaels? That was where you belonged. You should have stayed all your life clinging to a nondescript bush in a corner of an obscure garden in a peaceful suburb[.] (Coetzee, \textit{Life} 149-50)

Surely, one can take the references of stone and stick insect at a purely metaphorical level. However, these metaphorical references at the same time also echo Michael’s insistence on accessing or assuming the subjectivity of nonhuman non-animal ecological others. Thus, one may claim that they have reinforced the notion of intersubjectivity between humans and ecological others.

On the other hand, this intersubjectivity is not limited to the relation between humans and ecological others. Even among ecological others, there is the possibility of intersubjective exchange. In \textit{The Lives of Animals}, Coetzee refers to Ted Hughes’ poem about salmon and speaks, from an ecological perspective, of the intersubjectivity among the nonhuman natural others. He asserts, “[i]n the ecological vision, the salmon and the river-weeds and the water-insects interact in a great, complex dance with the earth and the weather. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts. In the dance, each organism has a role” (Coetzee, \textit{The Lives} 53-54). The role of each organism is no doubt an active role, behaving like an actan as Bennett and Latour describe. Moreover, the statement shows that Coetzee’s view on nature is close to that of James Lovelock. Both consider that, whether living or non-living, every being has its own role and significance in nature. Coetzee’s idea about a “dance” comprising different organisms can be interpreted as the intersubjective experience between the salmon, the river-weeds and the water-insects, so on and so forth.

Coetzee’s ecological reference to Hughes’ poem about salmon and its intersubjective encounter with other nonhuman entities focuses more on natural beings. Wu, however, not only speaks of the intersubjective encounter between humans and non-animal ecological others, but also tries to explore intersubjectivity between natural organic beings and man-

\textsuperscript{729} Note that in the novel, Michael is referred to as Michaels by the medical officer because it is how his name was falsely registered when Michael was admitted into the hospital. Medical officer’s insistence of using the first name “Michaels” shows that the grand narrative over-writes the personal narrative of Michael K.
made artefacts. In *Danche*, Wu tells the story of “a battle of a tree (shu de zhanyi 「樹的戰役」)” during the Sino-Japanese War. According to Wu’s description, the giant bayan tree involved in this battle “protects” the Chinese soliders from the attacks of their Japanese enemies by providing them with hiding spots and an essential drinking water supply. If it were not for this bayan tree, the soliders would have had no chance to survive.

Where the troop had settled […], there was a giant bayan tree. And it made a perfect vantage point for the military personnel. […] Commander Li Ke-ji ordered […] the soliders to set up rifles between the branches. […] The soliders thus humorously named the tree “the Li hamlet.”

The Japanese army tried to attack the tree with ceaseless efforts, […] but they ended up loosing the battles every time when the squatters of the tree counterattacked. […]

It so happened to be the dry season […]. Every morning, the first thing that the “inhabitants” of the Li hamlet did was to collect every dewdrop on the leaves of the tree with their rain cloth.

Wu’s description ascribes an active role to the tree, for the tree provided essential resources for the Chinese soliders. To a certain extent, one can even say that it has provided a temporary home for these soliders. In addition, even in the eyes of the Japanese army, this giant bayan tree can also be qualified as a subject because it is “the tree” that the Japanese soliders attack but not the Chinese soliders who are sheltered by the tree. Only by bringing down the giant bayan tree, can the Japanese army win this battle. Wu’s depiction hence demonstrates an intersubjective experience between the tree and both the Chinese and Japanese soliders.

What is even more interesting in Wu’s portrayal of this particular tree is the intersubjective experience between the bayan tree and the man-made bike. Towards the very end of the story, Abbass (the son of Basuyai, a Taiwanese Tsou aboriginal who had participated in the Sino-Japanese War) recounts his journey to the place where the battle of the tree had taken place; the magnificent sight of “a tree holding onto a bike” expresses this intersubjective experience.
Heading out of the village, about an-hour walk, I arrived at the edge of a forest. From afar, I could see very clearly the giant bayan tree. […] Though not quite fluent in English, a man told me with confidence that this tree is able to “capture the souls that are ascending to Heaven” […]. He pointed at its leaves and branches, so dense and thick that one can barely see the sky through. There I saw a bicycle frame, dangling on the tree.

Abbass’ description is not the only account of the intersubjectivity between these two ecological others. The intersubjective encounter between the tree and the bike is once more evoked in a grotesque daydream of the narrator. Peddling the recovered bike of his father, the narrator daydreams about the bike intertwining with the tree.

I follow the Oyashio Current, riding south. […] I ride onto a forested island, following the roots to its insular heart[.] […] Then I’m captured by a tree, which sends its roots through a gap in the hub and chain ring, through screw and screw hole, through the five tubes of the frame’s two triangles, through the valves to the inner tubes, coming full circle before sprouting leaves along each steel spoke.

This grotesque scene demonstrates the material vitality of a nonhuman manmade object, and at the same time, outlines the affects that take place among different kinds of ecological others. Although the intersubjectivity of these specific ecological others only exists in Wu’s fictional representations, one should not disregard the credibility of his examples, for they undoubtedly explore a new perspective regarding our relation to nonhuman non-animal ecological others.
3.3. Ethics of Nonhuman Others

3.3.1 Ethics Towards Animal Others

While addressing topics related to the subjectivity of animal and ecological others, important questions of ethics are inevitably raised. This thesis has for the most part treated separately nonhuman animals and other non-animal ecological beings as regards the question of subjectivity. However, in regard to the ethical questions related to these ecological beings, my arguments will show that we have to think of these ethical questions as a whole, that is to say, that we ultimately need an ethics capable of encompassing, rather than keeping separate, the categories of both animal and non-animal ecological others. Hence, the final part of my thesis will conjoin the discussion of ethical questions for both animal others and non-animal ecological others.

Derridean Philosophy and Animal Ethics

To address the topic of animal ethics in the context of contemporary continental philosophy, reference to Derrida’s philosophy is all but inevitable. In regard to classical continental philosophy, which begins with the phenomenology of Edmund Hurssel, a number of important philosophical figures—such as Heidegger, Levinas, Deleuze or Agamben—have treated the question of animal others. Derrida, however, was the only one among these key thinkers to have proposed some truly groundbreaking thoughts on the subject of animal others. It is after Derrida that continental philosophy has undertaken a sustained examination of the question of animal others, a development made possible by the new and profound perspectives opened up by Derrida’s thought. Before Derrida, both Heidegger and Levinas had elaborated their philosophical reflections on animals, yet both philosophers had contextualised animal others in relation to their understanding of the human (Dasein for Heidegger, the ego and the infinite other for Levinas). Derrida, by contrast, proposes that we begin from the animal other, and then follow this animal other. He suggests that we start with our experience of being looked at by an animal other in our nudity. For Derrida, it is by
returning the gaze of this animal other—while naked—that we are able to grasp our human Dasein. This in turn explains why, after Derrida, a sustained attempt has been made to include animals in philosophical discourse.

In *The Animal that Therefore I Am*, Derrida deploys a pun regarding the French word, *suis*, which, in its the conjugated first-person form, designates the meanings both “am” and “follow.” He says, “[i]f I am (following) this suite [*si je suis cette suite*], […] I move from ‘the ends of man,’ that is the confines of man, to the ‘crossing of borders’ between man and animal” (*The Animal* 3). In crossing this border between man and animal, Derrida thus comes to “surrender to the animal, to the animal in itself, to the animal in [him]” (*The Animal* 3). As argued earlier, the crossing of the borders between humans and animals is also essential to Agamben’s philosophical position. Agamben believes that there is a caesura tied to our understanding of language, which divides humans and animals. But the truth is, even before Agamben, such crossing was already presented in Derrida’s thinking. Derrida advocates the crossing of the border that we impose between us (humans) and them (animals). Similarly to Agamben’s viewpoint, Derrida believes that, with regard to Western philosophy tradition’s understanding of subjectivity, animals are deprived of language and are hence condemned to muteness and to the impossibility of subjectivity. With his philosophical stance based on the perspective of the animal other, Derrida develops also an ethical regard to animals. Like many other critics and philosophers, Derrida draws Jeremy Bentham’s notion of utilitarianism into his discussion. Derrida points out that in Bentham’s question—“can they suffer?” – it is important to note that the ability to suffer is “no longer a power but a possibility without power, a possibility of the impossible” (*The Animal* 27; emphasis mine). Exactly because this suffering is a possibility of the impossible, one has to call forth the question of *pathos*, the pathetic.730 *Pathos* is the quality of evoking pity or sadness; as Derrida further notes, it also calls for sympathy and compassion.731 Hence, Derrida directs us to look into the animal “genocides” that have been and continue to be enacted by human beings. He refers to the Nazi massacre of Jews, gypsies and homosexuals, in order to compare it to the slaughtering of animals in abattoirs.732 The cruelty of the animal slaughtering that are staged daily in abattoirs around the world no doubt call for our pathetic faculty and thus also our

compassion, sympathy and even morality, if we are to re-examine our consumption of animal flesh and by-products.

In his reflection on our ethical relation to animals, Derrida proposes two hypotheses. First, in contrast to Descartes’ proposition, “I think, therefore I am” (which affirms the existence of human subjectivity because the “I” is able “to think”), Derrida suggests that the “I” begins “to think” of his/her existence after being gazed at by the animal other in his/her nudity. The disturbing feeling (i.e., feeling ashamed) aroused inside of the “I” marks the moment that a human subject perceives him/herself as different from animals, for, as Derrida notes, animals feel no shame in nudity. It would not be impossible to claim that this perspective on human subjectivity marks a radical break with respect to this history of continental philosophy. For Derrida, the fundamental starting point of the animal ethics is for us to think of subjectivity from the animal perspective. As he presents his experience with the cat, this experience explains how Derrida reflects upon the whole event by drawing the animal subjectivity inside him. Another hypothesis Derrida proposes is the crossing of the human-animal border. He speaks of *limitrophy*, the limit between *Man* with a capital M and *Animal* with a capital A. What Derrida means is that the fine line that divides *Man* (the I-We) from *Animal* (the Them) is itself an impossible notion. He does not believe that there exists “some homogenous continuity between what calls itself man and what he calls the animal” (*The Animal* 30; emphasis original). By realising that this limit cannot and does not exist, one learns that there are only heterogeneities and differences in beings. To cross the human-animal borders, what Derrida tries to do is first to recognise the multitude of differences among beings, and then to achieve the dream of absolute hospitality in such a way as to include animals. In *The Animal*, Derrida is not very clear, however, about what measure(s) we can potentially take to achieve this absolute hospitality. In his interview with Elizabeth Roudinesco, by contrast, he put forward more clear ideas about how he thinks this absolute hospitality might be realised. In this interview, Derrida states:

> Even though great violence has forever been practiced against animals […] I try to show what is specifically modern in this violence, and the “philosophical” axiom—or symptom—of the discourse that supports it and attempts to legitimate it. (Derrida and Roudinesco 64; emphasis mine)


This statement well summarises Derrida’s overall attitude towards violence against animals in our era: the “modern” attitude has not only taken violence against animals for granted, but it has done so in a way that poses new ethical problems. For Derrida, it is true that violence against animals has been practiced throughout human history; and in some cases, the practice may even have been substantially necessary.\(^{736}\) But, as Derrida notes in the interview, it is more important for us to recognise that contemporary society has taken this violence in unprecedented extreme, whether in the form of industrial farming and meat production or in the practices of genetic manipulation and experimentation on animals.\(^{737}\) The reason that our society has headed in this direction is not only that the juridical and legal systems protect or promote such violent acts, but also, more fundamentally, because the metaphysical tradition is essentially anthropocentric. In Derrida’s opinion, the situation we are facing cannot be resolved magically in an instant, for example by adopting a vegetarian diet, as promoted by animal activists. Rather, it requires a radical change in our philosophical ways of thinking, according to which there also exist moral imperatives towards animals. Moreover, it demands a constant resistance whenever violence is proposed or practiced against animals. Towards the end of his interview, Derrida is more upfront about his position:

I’m not saying that we must not in any way interfere with animal life; I’m saying that we must not invoke the violence among animals, in the jungle or elsewhere, as a pretext for giving ourselves over to the worst kinds of violence, that is the purely instrumental, industrial, chemico-genetic treatment of living beings. (Derrida and Roudinesco 73)

In regard to Derrida’s thoughts and ideas on the subject of animal ethics, they remain largely philosophical, even if he did evoke some concrete approaches in his conversation with Rudinesco. It is after Derrida that other critics and philosophers have taken up more pragmatic approaches to animal ethics. Matthew Calarco, for example, draws many of his arguments in animal ethics from Derrida’s philosophical thinking. As he states:

I shall argue in what follows that Derrida’s work on animals consists of three main aspects: (1) A kind of proto-ethical imperative that gives rise to (2) a concrete ethicopolitical position, on the other hand, and (3) a thorough reworking of the basic anthropocentric thrust of the Western philosophical tradition. (Calarco 108)

Calarco, in other words, seeks to develop the concrete ethicopolitical measures made possible by Derrida’s proto-ethical imperative. On the one hand, Calarco employs Derrida’s analogy

\(^{736}\) Here, Derrida mentioned that we can find evidences in biblical texts. Derrida and Roudinesco, *For What Tomorrow...*, p.64.

\(^{737}\) *Ibid.*, p.73.
between today’s meat processing of food industry and the Nazi’s biopolitical destruction of human life in order to demonstrate the inherent anthropocentric value of this logic, and which places humans at the top of a hierarchy of beings. On the other hand, though he believes that it is necessary to make changes to anthropocentric values, Calarco points out that Derrida is rightly skeptical of many of the fundamental changes that have been proposed regarding to our relationship with animals. From an institutional perspective, even if we embrace or adopt completely the utilitarian or egalitarian measures that animal liberationists advocate (Peter Singer and Tom Regan, for example, advocate treating animals as legal persons), the logic behind these utilitarian or egalitarian claims still very much adheres to a human-centric frame of mind. For Derrida and Calarco, these approaches still draw on a “humanist” understanding of ethics, and not an ethics that begins with the animals’ perspective. This in turn means that the positions they defend are simply unrealisable, hence Calarco’s claim that “it is clear that modern legal institutions will simply never regard animals as full legal subjects anymore than anthropocentric moral discourse will ever regard animals as full ethical subjects” (131).

In responding to this institutional dilemma, Calarco proposes two concrete approaches. By practicing these two approaches, we may eventually achieve a pragamitc ethical politics founded on the viewpoints of animals. First of all, Calarco suggests that the value of recourse to poetic, literary or artistic description in regard to animal ethics should not be ignored. As he states, “animal ethicists hardly make recourse to poetic, literary, or artistic descriptions of animals—descriptions that might help us to see animals otherwise” (Calarco 127). Although Calarco would appear not to develop fully this argument, his proposition is indeed noteworthy. If we combine Calarco’s approach with Timothy Morton’s idea, it will become clearer how aesthetics may be relevant to animal ethics. In the opening paragraph of his book, *Ecology without Nature*, Morton points out that he aims to address the paradox of nature, that is to say, the paradox that “nature” as a concept needs to wither away, for it is getting in the way of properly ecological forms of culture, philosophy, politics, and art, by considering art above all else. Morton says, “it is in art that the fantasies we have about nature take shape—and dissolve” (*Ecology* 1). He further adds,

The idea that a view can change the world is deeply rooted in the Romantic period, as is the notion of worldview itself (*Weltanschauung*). […] Coming up with a new worldview means dealing with how humans experience their place in the world. *Aesthetics thus*

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738 Calarco, *Zoographies*, p.110.

performs a crucial role, establishing ways of feelings and perceiving this place. (Morton, Ecology 2; emphasis mine)

What Morton tries to demonstrate is the necessity of incorporating an aesthetic dimension in dealing with environmental politics and ethics. One can argue that animals, in a broader sense, also belong to the field of ecology, and hence an aesthetic consideration of animals is thus also indispensable. This is why it is useful to take account of Calarco’s suggestion that a recourse to poetic, literary or artistic description in regard to animal ethics is required.

Another approach that Calarco suggests is the practice of *progressive* vegetarianism. Calarco justifies this approach as the most direct challenge to “carno-phallogocentrism.” Citing Derrida, Calarco argues that in the modern society, “being a carnivore is at the very heart of becoming a full subject” (132). The practice of killing animals and/or consuming animal’s flesh is almost a prerequisite of being a subject. In Calarco’s opinion, vegetarianism thus defies this carno-phallogocentrism because it reveals a passion for the Other. Calarco’s proposition is clear and sound. However, I would like to underline the word “progressive” in Calarco’s argument because even though Calarco does not explicitly emphasise this word, it is the notion of “progressiveness” that differentiates the moral sanctioning behind his vegetarianism from that proposed by people who adopt vegetarianism on the basis of the projection of human sentiments on animals. By slowly and gradually changing one’s diet to vegetarian meals, one’s corporal engagement with this practice produces effects on one’s psychological well-being. It further helps us to progressively open up our minds towards the ethics and the well-being of animal others. Often, people who are inclined to adopt a vegetarian diet also have more awareness of animal ethics, and this awareness will over time often lead to an expansion or strengthening of their ethical stance towards animals. For example, they may further orient their dietary habits to veganism or develop other consumption habits sensitivity to non-dietary animal by-products, such as refusing to purchase fur clothing or wear leather. It is for these reasons that I agree with

740 “The first thing to which Derrida would have us attend is the manner in which the concept of subjectivity has been constituted historically. […] Derrida argues that the meaning of subjectivity is constituted through a network of exclusionary relations that goes well beyond a generic human-animal distinction. He has coined the term “carno-phallogocentrism” to refer to this network of relations and in order to highlight the sacrificial (carno), masculine (phallo), and speaking (logo) dimensions of classical conceptions of subjectivity. What Derrida is trying to get at with this concept is how the metaphysics of subjectivity works to exclude not just animals from the status of being full subjects but other beings as well, in particular women, children, various minority groups and other Others who are taken to be lacking in one or another of the basic traits of subjectivity.” Calarco, op.cit., p.131.

741 Ibid., p.132.
Calarco’s suggested practice of progressive vegetarianism. On a superficial level, this practice may seem to be dogmatic; nonetheless, at a deeper level, it is the most direct challenge to “carno-phallogocentrism.” By encouraging people to adopt progressive vegetarianism, modern society may one day be able to realise a true ethical politics for and of the animals, and may thus achieve “the dream of an absolute hospitality” in which animal others are included.

Massumi and Singer: Animal Ethics and Politics

As noted earlier, animal ethics and politics have been developed quite extensively in both continental and analytical philosophy. This section presents Brian Massumi and Peter Singer’s positions on animal ethics and politics in these two different branches of philosophy. The choice to present these two scholars’ thinking is rather selective. For those who are familiar with the subjects of animal philosophy and animal ethics, one would not miss to include the positions of Cary Wolfe, Cora Diamond, and Tom Regan, etc. However, the approach that is undertaken in this section of my thesis is to defend generally Massumi’s point of view on animal ethics and to show the advantages of his position with respect to a complete adoption of utilitarianism (which is the grounding philosophy of Singer’s animal ethics). Hence, this section will be exclusively dealing with the philosophers’ views of Massumi and Singer. At the end of this section, I will also include my position of how animal ethics should be adapted to our modern society and what sort of role it should play will likewise be addressed in responding to these two philosophers’ positions.

At the beginning of his book, What Animals Teach Us about Politics, Massumi deliberately states that he willingly agrees with the accusation that he has adopted an anthropomorphic position, for he finds that it is through an anthropomorphic way of thinking that one is able to cross the boundary between animals and human beings. Unlike Derrida or Derrida’s followers, who focus on our pathetic faculty and hospitality towards animal others, Massumi directly addresses the self-constituting subjectivity of animals. For Massumi, animals not only have sympathy but they can also be creative. And it is through this creativity that animals reveal their self-constituting subjectivity.

Massumi argues that there are two specific contexts in which animals exhibit creativity. One is in their courtship and the other is when they feel the need to stage a paradoxical play. As Massumi states, “[i]n the arena of animal courtship, selection bears
directly on quality of lived experience. The aim is at creativity, rather than adaptive conformity to the constraints of given circumstances” (2; emphasis mine). He further adds, “[s]exual selection expresses an inventive animal exuberance attaching to the qualities of life, with no direct use-value or survivial value” (2). Taking on a neo-Darwinian position, Massumi reckons that creativity is required in animal courtship, and when animals put themselves on display in that courtship, they express a “sense of beauty.” Hence, aestheticism is also present in animal courtship. A variety of examples of this aesthetic expression can be found in the animal world. The most common example is the mating dance of birds. For instance, one witnesses the creativity of birds-of-paradise in the BBC’s documentary series Planet Earth. In the episode about birds, it shows us different species of birds-of-paradise demonstrating various marvellous mating dances in their own ways. Some wriggle their heads rhythmically when spreading their wings apart or propping up their coverts, some bounce back and forth while making particular squeaking sounds and displaying their colourful feathers. In addition, the series even captured the moment when a male bird-of-paradise put all his efforts into tidying up the “stage” where he was about to perform his dance. One thus realises that animals have an incredible ability to assert their creativity. It is not at all as if, as Heidegger suggests, animals only reacts to thing that “trigger” certain behaviors.

In a sense, one can claim that Massumi’s argument shows an implicit anti-heideggerian interpretation of animals’ being in the world. Massumi values the instinctive reactions of animals and considers that an expression of creativity is present in these instances. As he asserts, an animal’s improvisation may be called forth on the spot when it tries to fight against a foe or evade a predator.

Every instinct carries within itself a power of variation, to some degree or another. Every instinctive act holds a power of variation that we are well within our rights to call ludic, in the widest sense of the word. Or aesthetic, given the nature of the yield produced. For play’s margin of maneuver is “style”: the -esqueness that performs possibility. All of this obliges us to recognise expression as a vital operation as primordial as instinct itself. (Massumi 13; emphasis mine)

Massumi’s central idea is the play of animals, and this play is significantly bound up with animal creativity as well as their understanding of analogous or paradoxical circumstances. He refers to Gregory Bateson and further claims that play is not a simple act of designation

742 Massumi, What Animals Teach Us about Politics, p.2.
744 Brian Massumi, op.cit., p.12.
but it is “the staging of a paradox” (Massumi 4; emphasis original). For example, a wolf cub that bites its siblings or mates in the context of *play* suggests that it knows clearly that the play bite “is not a bite.”

The play bite, Bateson says, actively “stands for” another action, at the same time as it puts the context in which the action finds its practical force and normal function in suspense. The play bite that says it is not a bite has the value of the analogous action without its force or function. The wolf cub says through his teeth: “this is not a bite; this is not a fight; this is a game; I am hereby placing myself on a different register of existence, which nevertheless stands for its suspended analogue.” (Massumi 4; emphasis original)

In *play*, animals stage a paradox that allows them to perform an act which does not “stand for” its original meaning. This is why both Bateson and Massumi agree that an animal’s ludic gesture of play is a form of abstraction, and in a way, that it also “carries an element of metacommunication” (Massumi 5). Massumi concludes that animals learn through play, and, in doing so, that they lift themselves up to the level of metacommunication.

In *play*, the animal elevates itself to the metacommunicational level, where it gains the capacity to mobilize the possible. Its powers of abstraction rise a notch. Its powers of thought are augmented. Its life capacities more fully deploy, if abstractly. Its forces of vitality are intensified accordingly. (Massumi 7-8)

Following the logic of this argument, Massumi then suggests that we humans should also exercise this effective paradox. In Massumi’s view, when a human being decides to engage him/herself in play, s/he enters “a zone of indiscernibility with the animal” (8). “When we humans say ‘this is play,’ we are *assuming our animality*” (Massumi 8; emphasis mine). For Massumi, if we wish to establish an animal politics, the very first thing is to recognise and assume our animality.

Massumi makes a list of propositions in regard to how he thinks that an “animal politics” could become a reality. In what follows, four of these will be accorded particular attention, both because they are the core ideas of Massumi’s animal politics and because they are especially relevant to my consideration of animal ethics:

(1). We (humans) should assume our animality.

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(2). In re-establishing ties with our animality, a politics that affirms ludic excess is necessary.

(3). Animal politics should be a politics of performative gesture.

(4). Animal politics is indisociable from an affective politics.\(^{748}\)

Massumi explains that in a post-Latourian age (i.e., in the wake of Bruno Latour’s notion of incorporating “nonhuman agents” into politics), contemporary theorists have begun to speak of “nonconventional entities” in place of “nonhumans,” because they want to avoid the implicit anthropomorphism of the term, which “[designates] the other only as the negative of us humans” (38). For Massumi, not only is there a need for us to address and speak of these “nonconventional entities,” but it is also, he thinks, “necessary to recognise that we are our own nonconventional entities” (38). To put it more simply, what Massumi means is that we need to recognise that we are fundamentally the same as these nonhumans, and “we are able to surpass the given to the exact degree to which we assume our instinctive animality” (38).

Massumi further suggests that re-establishing links with our instinctive animality may give rise to a politics that contains “an immanent movement of supernormal self-surpassing,” a movement that he further claims occurs naturally.\(^{749}\) In order to understand the notion of supernormal self-surpassing, it is necessary to first understand the break Massumi proposes with normative or utilitarian ethics. Massumi considers that we should move away from the typical principles of animal ethics, in which categorical imperatives are assigned or imposed, or, or the need to integrate the well-being of animals into our calculations of utility is emphasised. On the contrary, the animal politics proposed by Massumi affirms ludic excess, an excess that shows spontaneous and undirected playfulness. As he claims:

> [Such animal politics] lives the imperatives of the given situation, immanent to that situation, and it lives in paradox. Such a politics does not recognise the wisdom of utility as the criterion of good conduct. Rather, it affirms ludic excess. [...] It excessively lives out the in-between. Its ethico-aesthetic engagements play out between the imperative mood of lived importance, and lived abstraction’s vitally affective autonomy of movement, with the latter taking primacy. (Massumi 39).

Following these claims, Massumi argues that supernormal self-surpassing is important because it is the front edge of “becoming.” As he explains, “becoming,” in fact, calls forth a surpassing. “What surpasses establishes itself,” states Massumi (39). Once this “something

\(^{748}\) Ibid., pp.38-54.

\(^{749}\) Ibid., p.38.
extra” surpasses the norm(s), it then turns into and is regarded as a given. This is why Massumi regards highly ludic excess, because only ludic excess can allow a given to be surpassed. According to Massumi, it is therefore essential for us to assume the ludic excess in our instinctive animality, for it allows us to surpass the given and the norm whenever they become established.

With regard to his third proposition, “animal politics should be a politics of performative gesture,” Massumi begins by explaining that political thought normally thrives on noncognitive primary consciousness, and, as such, is in fact thought in the act. For Massumi, noncognitive primary consciousness has the quality of being reflexive, in a sense that the enacted gesture which gives form to the original abstract thought waviers between the gap of “is” (being) and “could be” (becoming). Massumi then adds, “[b]eing and becoming reflect each other in the unicity of ethico-aesthetic gesture” (40). He thus reckons that primary consciousness is something enactive or performative because it contains this quality of being reflexive. It is why he sees that a politics of performative gesture is required, if our aim is to establish an animal politics. Such an animal politics combines improvisational and participative art in the wild. It invokes an ethico-aesthetics, or in another word, an ethico-aesthetic politics.

Finally, Massumi highlights that animal politics cannot be dissociated from an affective politics. To explain this statement, he returns to his previous point that animal politics contains performative gestures and that it manifests an ethico-aesthetic politics. For Massumi, ethico-aesthetic politics, though non-normative, can still be evaluated with certain criteria, notably by “the intensity of mental potentials for variation put into play” (Massumi 41). Massumi asserts that this evaluation is inevitably related to affect, given the noncognitive nature of ethico-aesthetic activity. In his view, the major criterion for this evaluation is “the degree to which the political gesture carries forward enthusiasm of the body” (41). Massumi highlights that, in animal politics, intensity should be taken into account because it is experienced as a value in itself, and also, because it is associated with the enthusiasm expressed by the body. One cannot and does not “do,” “enact,” or “perform” an enthusiasm. “Enthusiasm of the body is lived in and for itself, purely for the novel quality it gives to

750 Ibid., p.40.
751 Ibid., p.40.
752 Ibid., p.41.
753 Ibid., p.42.
experience’s unfolding, and especially for its intensity, that little something extra” (Massumi 42). Hence, there is always an immediate surplus-value of life that can be unfolded or constituted when the excess element of an enthusiastic act intervenes. To conclude this brief summary of Massumi’s views on animal politics, it is also important to note that he proposes to establish an animal politics which is ultimately based on the “animal’s perspective.” Massumi encourages us to recognise the instinctive drive and the animality within ourselves. For him, such an instinctual animality has the quality of enacting creativity and it can invigorate an aesthetic mode of animal politics in relation to ethics.

In respect to analytic approaches to animal politics and animal ethics, Peter Singer is probably the most iconic person working in this area. Not only has he developed a complex system of philosophical ideas which call for animal liberation, but he has also put his philosophical ideas into practice. The following paragraphs introduce Singer’s ideas about animal ethics, while also bringing in several criticisms.

Singer’s argument of utilitarianism regarding animal ethics is based largely on Jeremy Bentham’s notion of animal’s capacity to suffer and to enjoy. For Singer, animals are like humans. They, too, have consciousness and they are capable of both suffering and enjoyment. He presents a utilitarian argument regarding the ethical significance of this capacity: “[t]he capacity for suffering and enjoyment is a prerequisite for having interests at all, a condition that must be satisfied before we can speak of interests in a meaningful way” (7; emphasis original). Singer thus rebukes human inflictions of violence on animals, that is, the killing of animals, the consumption of animals’ flesh, and experiments on animals, as fundamentally opposed to animals’ interests. And he considers that all these inflictions of violence should be ceased with our engagement of daily practices.

To further explain his utilitarian position on animal politics and ethics, Singer first draws our attention to the problem of “speciesism.” As he states, “speciesism […] is a prejudice or attitude of bias in favor of the interests of members of one’s own species and against those of members of other species” (Singer 6). Though many may agree with Singer for this statement, yet I find that his discussion of animal ethics which centres on the idea of “speciesism” has two problems. First of all, Singer’s argument targets the problem of speciesism, instead of the problem of anthropocentrism in general. The focus on speciesism

754 Ibid., p.42.
756 Ibid., p.6
eventually restrains his ethical philosophy to be further developed and extended to other types of beings. (We will come back to this point later when I discuss Singer’s animal ethics has the disadvantage of disregarding environmental ethics.) Speciesism, understood as privileging the human species, is a narrow form of anthropocentrism. It is a narrow concept of anthropocentrism in two senses since: (1) it focuses on humans and animals qua species (hence, their existences are only valued in a biological sense), and, (2) it compares humans only with other animal species but not with other natural phenomena (e.g. ecosystems). To argue for animal ethics, I think Singer’s overall position will be more well-adapted and more persuasive if he had targeted his argument on a broader concept of anthropocentrism. Secondly, the provided analogical examples in Animal Liberation do not appear to be convincing if one scrutinizes their philosophical ground. In opening his discourse of animal rights, Singer draws our attention to the notion of universal equality, and further makes an analogy between speciesism, on the one hand, and with racism and sexism on the other. According to Singer, if we have recognized that racism against black people and sexism against women needs to be condemned, since they are not grounded in rationally acceptable ethical principles, by analogy, human’s speciesism against animals should be condemned because it is likewise not grounded in rationally acceptable ethical principles. As Singer states,

It should be obvious that the fundamental objections to racism and sexism made by Thomas Jefferson and Sojourner Truth apply equally to speciesism. If possessing higher degree of intelligence does not entitle one human to use another for his or her own ends, how can it entitle humans to exploit nonhumans for the same purpose? (6)

The simple reasoning behind this claim takes the form of a syllogism. It is widely acknowledged that Singer’s ethical defence for animals’ interests with a utilitarianist approach is itself an act with good intention. However, Singer’s analogical example—particularly the one between speciesism and racism—implies his belief of the distinction between animals and humans concerns mostly their biological features. Furthermore, this false analogy may also introduce the possibility to an incorrect interpretation of his position on the issue of equal human rights and racism. In an implicit manner, the analogy he establishes somehow suggests that he believes in the existence of different races, but that treating other race(s) differently, on the grounds of their difference, is morally wrong.

757 Ibid., p.6.
Another problem of Singer’s argument is the incoherent way of calculation when it comes to apply his idea of “equal consideration” in judging different individual cases of animals’ sufferings. Putting forward his utilitarian thinking, Singer distinguishes the ideas of equal treatment from equal consideration. In the preface of Animal Liberation, Singer clarifies this position by arguing that sentient beings’ interests should be taken into consideration even though he does not think that all of them should be entitled to the same treatment. He offers the example of the great apes, saying that some great apes even surpass the capacity of certain humans but that does not mean that they should be granted the same rights as human beings. According to Singer, giving the same rights or giving equal treatment to animals would not necessarily help to advance animal ethics that works in favour of the interests of animals, yet, giving equal consideration to animals could. This is why Singer draws our attention to the example of great apes. For Singer, to grant rights to great apes would not have much of an impact on the major food or animal by-product industry and nor would it change the diet of the majority of human population. However, if we give equal consideration to the animals that are reared for industrial food or animal by-products consumption and take the sufferings of these animals into account (eg. the anxiety of being caged in a small confined space, the pain of being debeaked, etc.), we will be able to see that those sufferings are much greater than our human pleasure to consume meat. Hence, Singer concludes the need to eliminate carnivorous diets. Effectively, such an action brought by this equal consideration would then work in favour of animals’ interests and make actual changes to animals’ lives. The point that Singer makes between equal treatment and equal consideration is clear and sound. Nonetheless, when one actually confronts the application of equal consideration for the well-being or the interests of an animal, it is always difficult to say that, to what extent, this consideration is really equal. Indeed, there are various types of urgency that one needs to take into account when giving equal consideration to animals. For example, Singer would agree that certain acts of animal killing could be set aside as exceptions, such as painless killing of an very ill pet, or, in the extreme case of choosing the life of a human being over the life of an animal, in order to save the human from the animal’s aggression. But what if saving a man’s life involves killing an endangered species animal, like a jaguar? How do we apply equal consideration in this scenario? Moreover, even though

758 Ibid., p.xxii.
759 Ibid., p.xxii.
760 Ibid., p.xxii.
761 Ibid., p.21.
Singer generally disapproves scientific experiments on animals because of the cruel and inhuman nature of these acts, he also thinks that there are times that certain experiments could be potentially justified. Singer sees these experiments can be tolerated on the ground of its utility, for a small amount of animal suffering can bring a large gain in utility (for human beings). Some of these arguments may strike us to be plausible and persuasive, however, when the notion of utility is introduced, aiming to give equal consideration is certainly not an easy task.

As argued earlier, the problem of Singer’s utilitarian approach is the incoherent way of calculation when it comes to apply the idea of “equal consideration.” This is particularly true when it comes to Singer’s views on vegetarianism. In Animal Liberation, Singer finds it difficult to present a coherent way to promote this diet. (Though to be fair, it is also true that vegetarianism is a complicated matter.) To start with, Singer focuses his argument on boycotting the meat industry. He thinks it is both morally wrong and lack in economical value to kill cattles, pigs, chickens, ducks, etc. for food. Yet the same logic is ambiguously applied to seafood vegetarianism. Since Singer underlines the “suffering of sentient beings” is the highest principle to guide us in our dietary habits, he is caught in the dilemma that if one has the right to consume certain types of seafood products, such as crustaceans (shrimps, prawns, and lobsters, etc.) or mollusks (clams, oysters, and scallops, etc.) Singer seems to be largely concerned with the way that crustaceans are killed and transported to markets. He thinks that there is no “humane” method of killing crustaceans. Moreover, when crustaceans are transported, in order to keep them fresh, they are often simply packed, alive, on top of each other in a confined space. Thus, vis-à-vis to his empirical observations, he concludes that if these crustaceans can actually feel pain, they must endure a great deal of

762 Singer explains that one of the reasons that people are unwilling to give up their carnivorous diet is because they are concerned about insufficient intake of protein. Singer argues that this is a false claim because a vegetarian diet (and even a vegan diet) could potentially provide enough of protein from plants such as soya beans, oats, and lentils. Moreover, he outlines that, nowadays, a large part of our agriculture industry cultivates soya beans and corn as cattle feed, which are in turn consumed as a source of protein. This process is both anti-ecological and economically inefficient. Singer states that, per meter square, the quantity of soya beans we produce to feed animals in order for them to produce meat is more than enough to provide us with a healthy vegetarian diet made from those soya beans, in which the intake of protein would undoubtedly be sufficient. Therefore, economically speaking, raising cattle for food is not necessarily a wise choice. Ibid., pp.164-66.

763 If they are dropped in boiling water to be cooked instantly, they suffer extreme pain; but if they are put in at normal temperature water and are slowly heated to boil, the period of struggle is prolonged, and apparently, the suffering is still significant. Ibid., p.174.

764 Ibid., p.174.
suffering, and thereafter, humans should avoid eating them. On the other hand, in regard to other types of seafood, especially mollusks (apart from octopus, which Singer reckons is a far more developed species among other underwater invertebrate animals, thus, they can presumably feel pain like other sentient beings), Singer thinks that mollusks like oysters, mussels, clams and scallops are “simple organisms,” hence he admits that occasionally he would not have minded eating them, although he has specifically stated that he has now completely abandoned this dietary habit. I consider that empirical observations that are drawn here to support his reasoning are, in some respects, still largely confined in an anthropocentric disposition. Moreover, the reasoning behind this act is not very convincing because his justification is based on the hypothesis that these animals do feel pain. This is what I would call the “in case” argument: in case mussels or oysters do feel pain, I should avoid eating them. Secondly, Singer’s approaches to veganism also remain ambivalent. Two important issues often highlighted by vegan advocates are industrial egg and industrial milk production. Industrial egg production involves exploiting hens to produce a maximum amount of eggs at the least cost. Hens are often confined in reduced spaces and are kept indoor all year round. In addition, male chicks and hens that cease to lay eggs are normally killed immediately, since the farm keepers would not want to pay the extra costs of raising chickens that yield no marketable product. Milk production likewise inflicts suffering on cows and calves. These mammals are obliged to confront great mental distress when little calves are removed from their mother cows. Other health problems of cattle are also flagged up, such as the daily injection of bovine growth hormone or overfeeding them with a rich diet. Singer is very familiar with the stance of vegans and he is sympathetic to their claims. Singer promotes dairy-free diets by drawing our attention to other cultures’ diets. He claims that it is not impossible to live well on a non-dairy diet. However, Singer states that he would not object to the consumption of eggs, providing the hens are free-range. Plus, hens normally would not mind their eggs being removed. “For Singer, the question is, therefore, “whether the pleasant lives of the hens (plus the benefits to us of the eggs) are sufficient to outweigh the killing that is a part of the [egg producing] system,” since both “the pleasant lives of the hens” and the “benefits to humans of the eggs” should be taken into account for equal

765 Ibid., p.175.
766 Ibid., p. 176.
767 Ibid., pp.176-77.
768 Ibid., p.175.
What is quite disputable here is why Singer would agree to eat eggs, but not dairy products or certain types of seafood, giving the fact that all of these dietary habits obviously involve different forms of inflictions of violence on animals. Moreover, it has been shown that “free-range” eggs are more of a marketing strategy these days, as long as the egg production remains industrialised and the eggs are produced in large quantity. According to the investigation of L214, a Lyon-based French organisation which promotes animal liberation, “free-range” (but non-organic) chicken subjected to European Union regulation does not mean that they would lead a happy life to run around freely on a farm in the open air. The truth is, they are still in cages, but that they have slightly more space (9 hens per meter square), have limited access to the green grass exterior (4 hens per meter square) and are usually covered with a chicken run. Last but not least, whatever the rearing techniques (organic, free-range or battery cage), it is obligatory to cut off the hens’ beaks in case the hens attack each other when they are under stress. With all these informations taken into account, one can thus question Singer’s utilitarian model of equal consideration that if this equal consideration which is based on empirical evidences can truly be consistent in practice when it is applied to each individual case. In this respect, I find that Singer’s take-on of vegetarian diet somehow shows an inconsistency or a lack of global view, in regard to the matter of animal suffering.

Overall, however, the biggest issue that I would like to raise with regard to Singer’s arguments is his sole focus on animal ethics, for such focus does not take environment ethics into account. Singer seems to forget that, in fact, animal welfare and animal ethics are inseparable from environmental ethics. In other words, to speak of animal ethics, one cannot exclude a broader view of environmental ethics, or at the very least, one has to take a minimum interest in understanding how animals interact with their environments before developing one’s view in animal ethics. In contrast with Singer, the other three philosophers discussed above—Calarco, Derrida, and Massumi—have not neglected the possibility to extend animal ethics and politics into other nonhuman beings, although they did not express such an opinion explicitly. For instance, while Calarco and Derrida do not directly address the

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769 Ibid., p.175.
topic of environmental ethics when they talk about the animal other, they focus their argument on a general criticism of the anthropocentric attitude inherent in the Western philosophical traditions. Such a criticism can be further applied to environmental ethics. Likewise, Massumi not only tries to show the significance of animal subjectivity for us but also urges us to look at the problematic issue from a broader perspective that seeks to integrate general nonhuman beings as a whole. However, for Singer, non-animal ecological others cannot be accounted for in ethical or political discourse because they do not have the capacity to suffer, nor do they have the ability to feel. At the beginning of Animal Liberation, Singer expresses his utilitarian viewpoint by saying that: “[a] stone does not have interests because it cannot suffer. Nothing that we can do to it could possibly make any difference to its welfare” (8). In accordance with this logic, trees, plants, rivers oceans, and all sorts of other non-sentient beings presumably are considered not to be able to feel or suffer and would thus also be qualified as beings that do not have interests. However, claiming that our prioritisation of human and animal interests would have no impact or make no difference to these beings’ welfare is certainly a false statement. In some cases, the welfare of an environment or an ecosystem could be more important than just one species of animal’s interests. One may take the example of locusts as a counter-argument: if we consider that locusts have or may have the capacity to suffer, their interests will thus be more valued than the welfare of the plants and crops they eat, providing plants and crops cannot suffer. The plants could thus be massively destroyed, without that posing an ethical problem. From both anthropocentric and ecocentric perspectives, this would not serve either humans or the surrounding ecosystem, for it is possible that it will lead to famine for humans or animals that depends on these plants and crops and it may even further disrupt the balance of the ecosystem of that habitat. Or, occasionally, the introduction of a foreign species of animals into a new environment (whether it is intentional or accidental) may cause massive damage to the local environment. It has been documented that invasive species such as cane toads, grey squirrels, rats, fire ants, and lampreys caused great distress to their new environments, and eventually they had to be artificially eradicated.\footnote{Hill, “Invasive Species: How They Affect the Environment,” EnvironmentalScience.org, n.d. Web, 10 Apr. 2016, website accessed: http://www.environmentalscience.org/invasive-species. Jha, “Invasive Species and Its Effect on Our Ecological Balance,” Earth5R, n.d. Web, 10 Apr. 2016, website accessed: http://earth5r.com/invasive-species-its-effect-on-our-ecological-balance-2/}. If we follow Singer’s logic, pests or invasive species of animals that have more intellectual capacity to feel pains or suffer than the crops, plants or trees they destroy, but does it mean that we should still privilege the existence of these animals, which may ultimate disturb or disrupt a
balanced ecosystem? This is why Singer’s animal ethics should be revised and rethought within a broader perspective, particularly with regard to environmental ethics.

To draw a general conclusion of the arguments and approaches of these four contemporary philosophers, the following theses should be noted. First, promoting and adopting a progressive vegetarian diet should be considered as both the first step and primary task in properly establishing animal ethics. By assuming the practice of dietary change, one is able to open one’s mind to committing oneself to a complete vegetarian diet, or, at the very least, to exploring different ethical stances in regard to one’s habitual consumption of animal products. The more the people engage in such practices, the sooner our current situation, which imposes violence on animals, will change. Secondly, recognition of animals’ instinctive creativity and an assumption of our own animality should be prioritized. As Massumi claims, only by recognising this intense power of creativity (in play) that we share with the animals, can we truly leave behind the false belief of a binary division between animal and human beings. This will in turn allow us to establish an aesthetic politics founded on the perspective of animals. Thirdly, to speak of animal ethics, while critiques of speciesism may help us advance certain arguments regarding the violent or unequal treatements of animals, it is also important to put forward a more general criticism of the anthropocentric attitude, rather than exclusively focusing one’s attack of speciesism. Further, the focus on speciesism often pushes utilitarian animal ethics advocates to consider only whether our treatments of animals is humane or not, where humane treatment is understood in utilitarian terms as treatment which avoids suffering. One possible approach is to adopt the deontological perspective of animal ethics from Tom Regan, which argues that animal beings are entitled to respectful treatment not because they have been equally considered in a utilitarian respect, but because they have inherent value. Finally and most importantly, a global view of ecological awareness or an environmental ethics is indispensable if we aim to properly situate discourses in animal ethics, and ultimately, it is necessary to take this broader environmental or ecological view into account in forming animal politics. The following chapter brings in Coetzee and Wu’s literary works in order to examine these four important aspects of animal ethics in context.
3.3.2. Ethical Responses to Animal Others

**Unlimited Sympathetic Imagining**

The principal reason that Coetzee and Wu’s works have been selected as the objects of a comparative study in this thesis is that both authors have dealt extensively with ecological issues in their postcolonial writings. We also find attentiveness to nonhuman animals as a common feature shared in both their fictional and non-fictional writings. In their discussions of animals in these two contexts, it seems fair to say that ethical issues are at the forefront of both writers’ reflections. This section thus presents an analysis of their ethical views of animal others.

In grounding their positions in animal ethics, one can say that both authors’ works have exhibited the quality of what Geoffrey Baker calls, an “unlimited sympathetic imagining.” Baker’s term is inspired by his reading of Coetzee’s *The Lives of Animals*, but his interpretive stance can be equally applied to Wu’s creative works. According to Baker, “[o]ne’s own literary imagination […] can serve as both a means of cultivating or realizing sympathy within oneself, and may even provide *a tool for breeding sympathy in others, in readers*” (39; emphasis mine). Baker thinks that this sympathy, which may arise in an author’s literary imagination, has the distinctive quality of “limitlessness.” The “unlimited sympathetic imagining” is important concept and can be used to examine both authors’ works, for it connects the aesthetic to the ecological imagination, and eventually, it establishes what Brian Massumi calls, an “ethico-aesthetic politics” of and for the animals. Baker draws our attention to Coetzee’s fictional character, Mrs. Elizabeth Costello. For Baker, Costello embodies such sympathy in the way that she “[pursues] a lifestyle based on sympathy, wherein [she] transforms [her]self by moving outside of [her]eself and into the shoes of another” (35-36). Baker is not the only critic who singles out the fact that Costello is particularly significant when it comes to the practice of this “unlimited sympathetic imagination.” Derek Attridge has made a similar observation of this character of hers:

> Part of the burden [Costello] is now experiencing is the burden of *feeling one’s way into other lives*, including the lives of animals: the greater one’s capacity to enter

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imaginatively into a different mode of existence, the stronger one’s horror at behavior that denies its value. (“Epilogue” 202; emphasis mine)

Ultimately, the “unlimited sympathetic imagination” is not only important but must also be understood conceptually if we are to understand a writer’s ethical view on animals. As Costello asserts,

In any event, the point is, Marion Bloom never existed. Marion Bloom was a figment of James Joyce’s imagination. If I can think my way into the existence of a being who never existed, then I can think my way into the existence of a bat or a chimpanzee or an oyster, any being with whom I share the substrate of life. (Coetzee, Elizabeth 80; emphasis original)

Having a fictional character put forward such a statement about imagining the existence of another fictional character or indeed of any other being, Coetzee makes a more powerful claim regarding the ethical import of unlimited sympathetic imagination.

Scenes that express or evoke “unlimited sympathetic imagining” have been remarkably portrayed in both Coetzee and Wu’s novels. Nonetheless, it does not mean that the two authors share exactly the same kind of ethical view in regard to our relations with animal others. Occasionally, their positions regarding animal ethics still manifest some slight differences. On the one hand, Coetzee believes that integrating altruism into our ethical understanding of animals and converting that altruism into actual practices of daily engagement with animals are necessary, for doing so allows one to take recurrent steps towards achieving what Derrida calls the “dream of absolute hospitality.” On the other hand, Wu—who displays a mild anthropocentrist position on animal ethical issues—thinks that the “unlimited sympathetic imagining” is important because it gives rise to an aesthetic and experiential appreciation of the suffering of animals, which resonate with human suffering in one way or another. This experiential appreciation can serve to remind people of animal’s capability of suffering, and thereafter, humans will be more willing to engage themselves in discussions of animal ethics.

For Coetzee, the “unlimited sympathetic imagining” may in some circumstances call forth altruistic gestures toward animal beings. Coetzee proposes that we cultivate and practice altruism towards animal others in three different ways: (1) a change of our dietary habit to vegetarianism; (2) an aesthetic or poetic engagement with animals’ bodily movement; and (3) an aesthetic articulation of animal suffering imposed by human beings. Regarding the

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change of our dietary habits, Coetzee is straightforward and clear when offering his opinion on the subject, though he also includes other people’s criticisms of his advocacy of vegetarianism and provides his own counter-arguments. Even though Coetzee constantly employs metafictional narrative in order for the reader to become aware of the fact that they are reading his novel, many traits of Elizabeth Costello suggest that we can read this fictional figure as a representation of Coetzee himself. One trait shared by Costello and Coetzee is their vegetarianism. For Coetzee, the ultimate altruistic gesture that one can do for animals in the ethical realm is radically changing one’s diet to vegetarianism. Sharing the same reflection as Derrida and Calarco, Coetzee compares the Nazi’s final solution, which aimed to exterminate the entire Jewish population, to humans’ mass slaughtering of animals for meat or animal by-products. In Coetzee’s view, the horrific act of killing both Jews and animals calls for the faculty of sympathy. According to Coetzee’s argument, it is true that most people commonly share the capacity to sympathise with another’s suffering; the only problem is that we often choose not to exercise it or neglect the importance of it. Once more, Coetzee speaks through Costello:

[People] closed their hearts. The heart is the seat of a faculty, sympathy, that allows us to share at times the being of another. Sympathy has everything to do with the subject and little to do with the object, the “another”, as we see at once when we think of the object not as a bat (“Can I share the being of a bat?”) but as another human being. There are people who have the capacity to imagine themselves as someone else, there are people who have no such capacity (when the lack is extreme, we call them psychopaths), and there are people who have the capacity but choose not to exercise it. […]

I return one last time to the places of death all around us, the places of slaughter to which, in a huge communal effort, we close our hearts. Each day a fresh holocaust, yet, as far as I can see, our moral being is untouched. We do not feel tainted. We can do anything, it seems, and come away clean. We point to the Germans and Poles and Ukrainians who did and did not know of the atrocities around them. We like to think they were inwardly marked by the after-effects of that special form of ignorance. We like to think that in their nightmares the ones whose suffering they had refused to enter came back to haunt them. We like to think they woke up haggard in the mornings and died of gnawing cancers. But probably it was not so. The evidence points in the opposite direction: that we can do anything and get away with it; that there is no punishment. (Elizabeth 79-80; emphasis original)

The truth is that, if we refuse to exercise the faculty of sympathy, it will not just come to us naturally. To commit oneself to a vegetarian diet habit is one way to call forth this faculty. We not only sympathise with the slaughtered animals; we also practice the genuine altruistic gesture of ceasing our consumption of meat or animal products.
With regard to aesthetic or poetic engagement with animals’ bodily movement, Coetzee draws our attention to Ted Hughes’ poem about the jaguar. Through Costello, he explains: often, when we write about animals or express our aesthetic appreciation of animals in poetry, the animals we describe stand only for human qualities (for instance, a lion may stand for courage while an owl stands for wisdom). Animals thus become subjected to our gaze and are turned into “objects” whose value is largely symbolic. Ted Hughes’ poem about the jaguar is, however, exceptional. The poet does not try to highlight the human quality that we find in animals but he tries to inhabit the moving body of the jaguar. He tries “[to feel] his way towards a different kind of being-in-the-world” (Coetzee, Elizabeth 96; emphasis mine). Coetzee compares Hugh’s poem with Rainer Maria Rilke’s poem about a panther, for these poems share very similar settings and themes, but are nonetheless constructed from very different perspectives. Rilke depicts the picture of a panther locked in the cage of a zoo. Behind the iron bars, Rilke’s panther sees no world and no life in the cage. The poem thus presents the theme of freedom, a human value which is thematised through reference to an animal subject. Coetzee then explains that Hughes takes the opposite stance to Rilke, because he does not try to highlight the human qualities or values presented in the jaguar. Instead, Hughes’ depiction of the jaguar demonstrates the poet’s capability to vividly inhabit the body and the mind of this animal. As Hughes writes: “He [the jaguar] spins from the bars, but there’s no cage to him / More than to the visionary his cell” (Hughes 5). Coetzee interprets these lines as follows:

Hughes is feeling his way towards a different kind of being-in-the-world, one which is not entirely foreign to us […] In these poems we know the jaguar not from the way he seems but from the way he moves. The body is as the body moves, or as the currents of life move within it. The poems ask us to imagine our way into the way of moving, to inhabit that body.

With Hughes it is a matter — I emphasize — not of inhabiting another mind but of inhabiting another body. That is the kind of poetry I bring to your attention today: poetry that does not try to find an idea in the animal, that is not about the animal, but is instead the record of an engagement with him. (Elizabeth 95-96; emphasis mine)

For Coetzee, such inhabitation exhibits a poetic engagement with the corporality of animals, which is able to initiate our “unlimited sympathetic imagining” and may eventually call for altruistic gestures towards the animal others, for it as bodies that animals suffer.

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776 Coetzee, Elizabeth Costello, pp.94-95.
Finally, the aesthetic portrayal of animal suffering inflicted by humans is one of the most important aspects of Coetzee’s works, especially when it comes to calling forth altruistic gestures towards animals. The killing of animals is a theme that Coetzee constantly draws upon in his novels and also in some of his non-fictional writings and talks. For more than a decade, the author has never ceased depicting scenes of animal killings in order to implore his readers to take the sufferings of animals seriously. In *Disgrace*, a brutal but aesthetically powerful description of the dog killing is presented. This scene serves two purposes: first, the dog killing serves as a metaphoric reference that foreshadows the violent gang rape of Lucy, one of the leading female protagonists. The gang rape of Lucy displays the complex anti-colonial hatred present in postcolonial South Africa. Moreover, the gang rape is also an act of vengeance on the white female body and it is associated metaphorically with humans’ abusive inflictions of pain on animals. Secondly, Coetzee’s brutal depiction of dog killing also serves to call forth his readers’ ethical awareness. One can easily identify Coetzee’s intention to elicit altruistic gestures via the horrific portrayal of the scene:

Now the tall man appears from around the front, carrying the rifle. With practised ease he brings a cartridge up into the breech, thrusts the muzzle into the dogs’ cage. The biggest of the German Shepherds, slavering with rage, snaps at it. There is a heavy report; blood and brains splatter the cage. For a moment the barking ceases. The man fires twice more. One dog, shot through the chest, dies at once; another, with a gaping throat-wound, sits down heavily, flattens its ears, following with its gaze the movements of this being who does not even bother to administer a coup de grâce. (*Disgrace* 95)

The man who kills the dog with the rifle leaves the scene that “is splattered with blood and brains.” While one of the shot dogs is panting with agony, the killer walks away coldheartedly without even considering ending the misery of the half-dying creature. The killer is, quite simply, indifferent to the dog’s suffering. It is very clear that Coetzee’s depiction aims to conjure his readers’ sympathetic imagination and thereby also help make possible altruistic engagement towards animals.

Another animal killing event depicted by Coetzee is related to a personal childhood experience, for it describes the critical moment that influenced his lifelong decision to be vegetarian:

He [Coetzee] himself likes meat. He looks forward to the tinkle of the bell at midday and the huge repast it announces: dishes of roast potatoes, yellow rice with raisins, sweet potatoes with caramel sauce, pumpkin with brown sugar and soft bread-cubes, sweet-and-sour beans, beetroot salad, and, at the centre, in pride of place, a great platter of mutton with gravy to pour over it. Yet after seeing Ros slaughtering sheep he no longer likes to
handle raw meat. Back in Worcester he prefers not to go into butchers’ shops. *He is repelled by the casual ease with which the butcher slaps down a cut of meat on the counter, slices it, rolls it up in brown paper, writes a price on it. When he hears the grating whine of the bandsaw cutting through bone, he wants to stop his ears.* He does not mind looking at livers, whose function in the body is vague, but he turns his eyes away from the hearts in the display case, and particularly from the trays of offal. Even on the farm he refuses to eat offal, though it is considered a great delicacy. (*Boyhood* 101; emphasis mine)

This event is presented in *Boyhood*, one of Coetzee’s autobiographical novels. Apparently, what the author seeks to do is to encourage our altruistic gestures (or even our consideration for the practice of vegetarianism) by presenting a child’s perspective on the consumption of meat and the slaughtering of animals. Echoing what Coetzee himself said in his speech delivered in Sydney in 2007, children’s hearts are innocent and tender: they are able to perceive cruelty as it is but not as given, and, at the same time, they are able to enact easily the faculty of sympathy. As Coetzee states:

> Given half a chance, children see through the lies with which advertisers bombard them (the happy chooks that are transformed painlessly into succulent nuggets, the smiling moo-cow that donates to us the bounty of her milk). *It takes but one glance into a slaughterhouse to turn a child into a lifelong vegetarian.* ("Animals" n.p.; emphasis mine)

### The “Voices” of Animal Others

Wu Ming-yi, by contrast, maintains a mild anthropocentrist position on animal ethical issues. Nevertheless, the “unlimited sympathetic imagining” still remains an important aspect of his fictional writings. For Wu, the “unlimited sympathetic imagining” is essential because it makes possible an aesthetic depiction of animal sufferings which resonate with the suffering of humans. Wu has a specific way of depicting this resonance. By imagining the suffering of an animal other, the “voice” of that animal other is often presented in the subconscious or in the form of a dream. Also, he animal sufferings depicted by Wu are often “anthropo-zoomorphised.” In two of his fictional works, *Shuimian de hangxian* and *Danche shiqieji*, Wu has not only brilliantly described the physical suffering of a turtle and an elephant, but he has also presented the memory of their suffering in the form of dreams. The physical pains that the animals endure are metaphorically associated with the traumatic experiences of people who have lived through Japanese colonial supression and wartime. As analysed in the section of “Postmodern Metanarratives” in the previous chapter, a female turtle, whose name is Shitou
from *Shuimian*, embodies exactly the resonance of human’s suffering with its endurance. According to Wu’s description, Shitou is capable of dreaming. Moreover, this turtle can also enter the dreams of others, while she dreams. As pointed out earlier, the mother of Sanlang saw that one of the feet of her bed had collapsed because it had been eaten by termites. She considered it a bad sign since she discovered it the night before Sanlang joined the marines and set sail. She thus placed Shitou where the disintegrated foot once stood in order to “steady” the bed. Wu then describes the sorrow and weeping the turtle must endure, as a result of the dryness, the pain, and the loss of its natural habitat:

Shitou retracts her head and legs into the shell, imagining herself a stone, so hard and quiet, so submissive and yet stubborn. Shitou quietly turns into a real foot of the bed. She can neither leave nor protest. She cannot resist the imposed decision made upon her life by a greater force. As the foot of the bed, Shitou has not pondered on the matter of life and death. She thinks the greatest problem of being the foot of the bed is not the hunger she tolerates, but that her eyes have been perpetually fixed to one single direction. She misses dearly her life in rivers. [...] After becoming the foot of the bed, she has to face up to the dry air everyday. Her lacrimal glands thus need to constantly produce tears. The teardrops run down to the floor; slowly, the tears have eroded the floor and made a small dent.

Being the foot of the bed, every night, Shitou has to bear the weight of the body of a woman whose youth gradually fades away and the body of a man who is exhausted and lives in despair for his future. [...] As a turtle, she is incapable of communicating in a language that humans can understand.

778 In Chinese, the pronunciation of the word “boat” is similar to the word “bed,” hence an unsteady bed is considered a bad sign for people who are going to board a boat. Cf. Wu M.Y., *Shuimian*, pp. 58-59.

779 In the original Chinese text, one is unable to decipher the sex of the turtle, for the third person, *Ta* [he or she], employed in Wu’s writing is a gender free pronoun. Here, I chose to use “she and her” instead of “he or him” every time a third person pronoun is mentioned because I have followed the word choice of Gwennaël Gaftic’s French translation. Mr. Gaftic has explained to me that his choice of a female third person pronoun is due to the fact that turtle takes the feminine article in French.
Wu’s writing thus inhabits the inert body of the turtle, putting forward the pains and sorrows she bears. At the same time, however, Shitou’s physical sufferings are also linked to the emotional suffering of Sanlang’s parents, who lie on the bed. Shitou, Wu tells us, feels puzzled about the weight she supports, because, even though it is always the same persons lying on the bed, its weight varies from one night to the next.\(^780\) Shitou then decides to enter the dreams of Sanlang’s parents. In doing so, she discovers that, when the woman weeps, her tears are as heavy as stones. The tears “thump” on the bed. Occasionally, her tears infiltrate the wooden bed, going through Shitou’s shell and then to the ground, accumulating underneath the earth.\(^781\) Wu’s beautiful description presents a vividly anthropozoomorphised picture, which draws together the turtle’s physical pain with the emotional endurance of Sanlang’s mother.

In *Shuimian*, readers can vaguely guess that the sorrow of Sanlang’s mother was probably related to her lived experiences during the difficult period of Japanese colonisation. In *Danche*, the physical and the psychological torments of the elephant, Ah mei, and the two characters, Basuya and Officer Mu 穆班長, are tied together, and they are apparently associated with a specific war, which the three had all survived. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Basuya was a Tsou aboriginal from Taiwan who had fought for the Japanese emperor in his conquest of the peninsula of Malay. He came across the male elephant, Ah mei, in a battle that took place in North Burma, and he became very fond of this particular elephant, as well as of Ah mei’s Karen trainer. Ah mei and other trained elephants were used in the war because they were good carriers of heavy weapons and supplies, not to mention that they had high tolerance of extreme weather and nearly impenetrable skin. During the war, Ah mei and other elephants were taken away by the Chinese military men, who fought against the Japanese.\(^782\) They travelled all the way to the north, crossed the border and the desert of Southwest China, and eventually Ah mei was brought to Taiwan.\(^783\) Ah mei had already befriended Officer Mu when he was captured by Chinese military men.\(^784\) Both Basuya and


\(^{784}\) “Officer Mu survived the difficult war in Burma, and he had personally encountered the thirteen captured elephants. Officer Mu’s encounter with the elephants had everything to do with the traces of war that were left on his body. On the right hand of Officer Mu, there were three and a half fingers missing. Because of this wound, he was transferred to the supply squad, and there he had to accompany the elephants. […] Among those elephants, there was one male elephant of prime age, which had an extraordinary body shape. The
Officer Mu’s physical and psychological sufferings are tied to the traumatic experience and mental distress of Ah mei (i.e. Lin Wang). One can find clear evidence of this by juxtaposing the following scenes:

For a while, Lin Wang had entered a phase of being extremely aggressive. However, it could hardly be explained by the fact that he was in musth since he was already quite old at that time. *He often puts his long nose into his ears, as if trying to smell what he hears.* Most veterans and specialists reckon that this long period of aggressiveness was caused by an emotional distress related to the rectal surgery Lin Wang had in 1969. Nonetheless, Officer Mu thinks that it is because old Lin Wang was still much troubled by his painful memory of the past, buried at the bottom of his heart.

As Lin Wang obsessively thrusts his nose into his ears, Basuya stabs one of his ear holes in a frenzied mood.

Basuya […] started to come home less and less. My mother somehow knew that he was probably seeing another woman elsewhere. Thereafter, she had been constantly arguing with Basuya. One time, Basuya was drinking and they had another row for the same reason. *Basuya snapped; he picked up a chopstick and stabbed it into his right ear.* […] Basuya had nearly lost his hearing in his left ear in the war. His ear could only hear little voices that are as tiny as ants. It is as if a rock has blocked the flow of sounds. I have heard my mother say that Basuya was tormented every night by the buzzing noise of his other ear. That night, he stabbed himself deaf, in the ear that could still hear but was always filled with noises.

Burmese elephant trainer called him Ah mei, and the Chinese military men called him “Ah-mèi.” After several months he spent with the elephants, Officer Mu had acquired their trust. He was then given the task of bringing the elephants back to Mainland China with other colleagues. In the tough Burma war, Mu got this task and was able to bring the elephants back to China. Among the prisoners,lorin Wang was a young elephant, and he was the most valued by the Chinese military. He was called Ah mei by the Burmese trainer and Mea by the Chinese military. After several months he spent with the elephants, Officer Mu had acquired their trust. He was then given the task of bringing the elephants back to Mainland China with other colleagues. In the tough Burma war, Mu got this task and was able to bring the elephants back to China. Among the prisoners, Lin Wang was a young elephant, and he was the most valued by the Chinese military. He was called Ah mei by the Burmese trainer and Mea by the Chinese military. After several months he spent with the elephants, Officer Mu had acquired their trust. He was then given the task of bringing the elephants back to Mainland China with other colleagues. In the tough Burma war, Mu got this task and was able to bring the elephants back to China. Among the prisoners, Lin Wang was a young elephant, and he was the most valued by the Chinese military. He was called Ah mei by the Burmese trainer and Mea by the Chinese military.
The depictions of the two scenes echo each other. Wu has finely presented the physical torments that the man and the animal share (i.e., the noises that pain them in their ears), and at a deeper level, these physical pains are linked to the psychological ordeals they both suffered from the war they lived through.

Apart from the ear-deafening experience of Basuya, which echoes the abnormal behavior of the elephant, the moment when Ah mei and Officer Mu found each other also stages the shared pains and sufferings among them. Wu writes:

Living through the battles fought against the Communists, Officer Mu […] finally arrived in Taiwan. During this period, he had lost contact with the elephants. It was not until several years later that he heard that “Ah mèi” had been moved to Yuanshan zoo and was now known as Lin Wang. The first time he met Lin Wang in the zoo, Officer Mu did not expect that Lin Wang would remember him. Elephants are known to be a spiritual kind of beings, yet even Officer Mu was not sure if this elephant was capable of retrieving his memories or not, especially as they had been parted for quite a long while. […] Surprisingly, when he shouted “Ah mèi, Ah mèi” with a low voice outside of the elephant house, Lin Wang appeared behind the arched doorway. The elephant began to emit very low frequency sounds that vibrated the air, though the sounds could not be heard. Then, Lin Wang reached out his long nose, smelled the head, the shoulders, the chest and the part that is near the genitals (this is an important reference for an elephant to recognise another individual) of Officer Mu. At last, he puts his warm and soft nose on the palm of Officer Mu, the one that had three fingers missing.

The symbolic gesture of posing his nose on the palm of Officer Mu’s hand where the three fingers was missing immediately suggests that the elephant understands and is able to sympathise with Mu’s sufferings, because they were both once engaged in the same war. In addition, near the end of the novel, Wu has inserted a chapter called “Limbo.” In this chapter, Wu finally let the elephant speak for itself. Unfolded in the form of a dream, Ah mei narrates his painful memory of the brutal war and he speaks of the dying and suffering of other elephants he once shared his life with. With deliberate intention, Wu has deliberately composed the entire chapter from the subjective perspective of “elephant.” Neither does Wu
use the name “Ah mei (or Lin Wang)” in composing his sentences, and nor does he use the
definite article when he refers to “elephant.” This tells that Wu is trying to outline the
ambiguity of this narrating voice. In that sense, this voice of “elephant” could be the voice of
Ah mei, or it could be the voice of any elephant that had survived the cruel war, or even the
voice of them all. Ah mei’s voice henceforth becomes a narrative which represents the
collective agony that all fourteen elephants underwent. At the same time, the memories of the
colonial past denounced by these psychologically tormented and physically exhausted
creatures reflect the rage, the anguish and the suffering that are marked on the bodies of the
surviving soliders like Basuya and Officer Mu. On another level, then, this peculiar narratie
voice can also be seen as an anthropozoomorphic way of representing the hardship of people
who lived through times of war. Although very different from Coetzee’s writings, which put
forward a direct and imperative ethical claim for animal beings, Wu Ming-yi has nevertheless
succeed in calling forth the “unlimited sympathetic imagination” via his anthropozoomorphic
protrayals of the joint sufferings of the human and animal characters of his novels.
3.3.3. Ethics of Non-animal Ecological Others

When speaking of ethics towards non-animal ecological others, one enters the field of environmental ethics. Within environmental ethics, one can further break down the discussion into different aspects. This chapter thus divides the discussion into three main sections, each dealing with the following aspects: the ethical, the political and the juridical. In these sections, philosophical arguments regarding whether non-animal ecological others have intrinsic value and whether this value should be recognised and conferred on them in our legal system will be analysed at length. Going further, the political significance and concrete effects that can be produced by non-animal ecological others are also brought into the discussion.

Ethical Arguments: Intrinsic Value of Non-animal Ecological Others

Philosophical arguments regarding the ethical aspect of non-animal ecological others inevitably raise the question of their intrinsic value. This section summarises and discusses the positions and the ethical arguments of three prominent environmental ethicists—Bryan Norton, John Baird Callicott and Holmes Rolston—whose works have had a great influence on today’s philosophical and political understanding of natural objects and environments. One critical issue that these three environmental ethicists all share in their arguments is the idea that nonhuman entities possess intrinsic value. In their view, the argument as to whether the natural environment or any other nonhuman non-animal kinds of beings that exist in nature should have a legal status has everything to do with the question of their intrinsic value. At the same time, the debate about intrinsic value, also calls forth the question of whether it is more appropriate to adopt anthropocentric or nonanthropocentric views on the environment or on non-natural beings.

To start with, I will introduce Norton’s position presented in his work, Toward Unity Among Environmentalists, and which has also been examined in the paper of Callicott, “Intrinsic Value in Nature: a Metaethical Analysis.” For Norton, whether environmental ethics should adopt an anthropocentric or a nonanthropocentric (biocentric or ecocentric) view is not the right question to ask. Norton argues that no matter which attitude we adopt, there is,
ultimately, a practical convergence between the two.\textsuperscript{785} Norton further argues that there is hardly any need to name this division, since the ecocentrism makes no practical difference. That is to say, whether we try to protect the natural environment on the basis that doing so is good for nature \textit{per se} or because it serves the well-being of humankind, future generations included, the natural environment \textit{has to} be protected and we \textit{ought to} take precautions against its degradation. Ultimately, these two types of ethics converge because “both prescribe the same personal practices and public policies” (Callicott n.p.). Norton thus names his idea as “Convergence Hypothesis.”\textsuperscript{786} In short, Norton’s position is largely inclined towards an anthropocentric attitude. One can therefore criticise his position on the grounds that, although Norton attempts to provide a framework for environmental ethics, he does not radicalise the problematic of the two types of environmental ethics (i.e. anthropocentric and ecocentric). His attempt is to \textit{only} reinforce the argument of adopting anthropocentric values in regard to the ethical thinking of environmental issues. Undoubtedly, when Norton suggests that we protect the environment for future generations, this position is surely anthropocentric. In fact, precisely because he claims to be an anthropocentrist, his arguments that defend an anthropocentric environmental ethics can be seen as problematic when the question of—“what sort of impacts or influences that other nonorganic natural entities or nonorganic artefacts could potentially bring to the environment and nature?”—arises. Norton’s anthropocentrism would take this question into account only in terms of resources management for human usage. Therefore, this is considered a weak point of Norton’s “Convergence Hypothesis.” However, this question will not be dealt with immediately here. It is in the next section where Bennett and Latour’s ideas are discussed, we will come back to this point. Drawing ideas of Bennett and Latour, a critique of the devaluation or rejection of the ecocentric or biocentric attitude will be more fully elaborated. Moreover, I will try to show why Norton’s emphasis on the anthropocentric environmental ethic approach and his disregard of the ecocentric view would be potentially dangerous in developing environmental ethics.

Callicott and Rolston are the two most important figures among environmental ethicists to have defended the notion of intrinsic value of nature (or natural environments). Callicott begins his argument in the article, “Intrinsic Value in Nature,” by recounting Edwin P. Pister’s winning lawsuit at the U.S. supreme court about the survival and the living right of Devil’s

\textsuperscript{785} Callicott, “Intrinsic Value in Nature,” n.p.

Hole pupfish (a type of small fish found in fresh water in the deserts of the southwestern US and northern Mexico). The extinction of these pupfish neither causes significant impacts on its nearby environment, nor does it affect human ability to appreciate the particular natural habitat of the desert they dwell in.

Pister was often asked — not only by laypersons, but by incredulous members of his own [biology] department (dedicated as most were to providing anglers with game fish) — What good is it, anyway? The question presupposed that a species has no claim to existence unless its members have some utility, some *instrumental value*. For years he struggled to answer that question on those terms. (Callicott n.p.; emphasis original)

Callicott points out that Pister eventually found a way to articulate the concept of the intrinsic value of this species in clear terms. To those who question his position and ask him “What good is it?”, he replies, “What good are you?” Pister’s rhetorical question points to a value that is non-instrumental, but intrinsic to the being. Callicott draws on the pupfish example to argue that, even though the species itself serves no direct purpose to humans, it does not mean that its right to live and to prosper should be denied. Callicott then brings in Aristotle’s argument, stating that Aristotle sees *happiness* in itself as an end for human beings. If a human being serves no purpose or s/he does not have an instrumental value for the society, we do not deny that human being’s right to life. We do not, even for an instance, question whether this person should or should not continue to exist. In Pister’s case, Callicott reasons that there is intrinsic value located within natural beings, whether they are animals, living organisms (a tree, a plant, a flower…), or nonorganic entities (a stone, a river, desert sand…) inasmuch as they belong to biotic communities, and he encourages us to adopt more of an ecocentric/biocentric attitude where environmental ethics is concerned. What one should note, however, is that Callicott considers that the intrinsic value of nature still originates from the human subject; it is anthropogenic. He argues that this intrinsic value arises from humans, essentially from their subjective perception. Though Callicott calls for an ecocentric/biocentric ethics (which is different from Norton’s position), he does not deny that humans are the source of the intrinsic value of nonhuman ecological beings.

In contrast to the two environmental ethicists named above, Rolston presents a more radical philosophical take on environmental ethics. Rolston develops an ecocentric/biocentric ethics and considers that there is an intrinsic value that is objectively present in nature. He

states very clearly that this intrinsic value does not depend on human subjects in order to exist. For Rolston, nature has its own properties and its qualities, including intrinsic value, before its beholders (i.e., humans) come along and see it as possessing value.

To say that $n$ is valuable means that $n$ is able to be valued, if and when human valuers, $H$s, come along, but $n$ has these properties whether or not humans arrive. (Rolston 14)

Comparing Rolston’s view to that of Callicott, one notices immediately that the major difference between the two is that Rolston believes intrinsic value is objective whereas Callicott thinks it is subjective. Rolston argues, “[t]he attributes under consideration are objectively there before humans come, but the attribution of value is subjective” (15; emphasis original). Radicalising his stance on the intrinsic value of natural beings, he further suggests that it is actually the object that “casually affects” us. It causes us to value it on the grounds of its valuable properties. Sharing a similar point of view to Jane Bennett, Rolston thinks that objects in nature move us, mesmerise us, and has the capability to affect us. He further adds that it is absurd to think that humans can behold the intrinsic value of nature. What humans do is in fact express an extrinsic value, which $H$umans confers to nature.

The term *intrinsic*, even when truncated, is misleading. What is meant is better specified by the term *extrinsic*, the *ex* indicating the external, anthropogenic ignition of the value, which is not *in*, *intrinsic*, internal to the nonsentient organism, even though this value, once generated, is apparently conferred on the organism. In the $H$-$n$ encounter, value is conferred by $H$ on $n$, and that is really an extrinsic value for $n$, since it comes to $n$ from $H$, and likewise it is an extrinsic value for $H$, since it is conferred from $H$ to $n$. Neither $H$ nor $n$, standing alone, have such value. (Rolston 15; emphasis original)

In order to argue that intrinsic value is itself objective, Rolston draws discussions of animals, natural living organisms and nonorganic entities in nature into his argument. He divides his argument into several different categories, but here I will only comment on his discussion of “valuable animals,” “valuable organisms” and “valuable earth” in order to illustrate my point. To argue that animals have intrinsic value, Rolston begins by posing an essential question—Do animal value anything intrinsically? The answer to such question, Rolston believes, is affirmative. He explains,

We may not think that animals have the capacity, earlier claimed for humans, of conferring intrinsic value on anything else. Mostly they seek their own basic needs, food and shelter, and care for their young. But then why not say that an animal values its own life for what it is in itself, intrinsically, without further contributory reference? (Rolston 16)

For Rolston, animals in nature defend their lives because they have a good of their own, and as such, there is intrinsic value innate to animal beings. Rolston expresses this in a very Derridean way, “[o]ur gaze is returned by an animal that itself has a concerned outlook” (16). To summarise his argument, he asserts that animals have a valued self-identity which is visible in the way they cope with the world. Moreover, to respond to the question of whether other living organisms are capable of valuing or if they have intrinsic value, Rolston elucidates his ideas with the example of plants. A plant, Rolston asserts, is not a subject, yet neither is it an inanimated or lifeless object. Nonetheless, plants have an active role in nature and the capacity to demonstrate their life form.

Plants make themselves; they repair injuries; they move water, nutrients, and photosynthesize from cell to cell; they store sugars; they make tannin and other toxins and regulate their levels in defence against grazers; they make nectars and emit pheromones to influence the behaviour of pollinating insects and the responses of other plants; they emit allelopathic agents to suppress invaders; they make thorns, trap insects. They can reject genetically incompatible grafts. (Rolston 16-17)

As shown, these capabilities show the active role of plants in nature and further qualify plants as possessing intrinsic value. Not only can plants reproduce themselves and participate in the surrounding ecosystem, but they can also, like any other sentient being which behaves on the ground of its own interest, “reject” other grafts if they see unfit for themselves. In other words, plants do things “for themselves,” and this leads to the idea that they value themselves intrinsically. For that reason, Rolston adds, “[a] plant, like any other organism, sentient or not, is a spontaneous, self-maintaining system, sustaining and reproducing itself” (17). In my view, Rolston thus makes a strong point by supporting his argument of the intrinsic value in animals and non-animal living organisms with the above explanations. However, one may ask: but does it mean we should value all beings intrinsically in nature? After all, there are many lifeless or unanimated objects in nature which surely do not have intrinsic value, such as stones, rocks, rivers, sand or earth, etc. To that question, Rolston provides an innovative response with his argument regarding the intrinsic value found in the Earth, considered on a planetary level. Rolston understands that valuing the whole Earth is an unfamiliar idea in ethics, but he urges us to do so by providing a philosophical analysis. He states,

Earth is, after all, just earth. The belief that dirt could have intrinsic value is sometimes taken as a reductio ad absurdum in environmental philosophy. Dirt is not the sort of thing

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791 Ibid., p.16.
792 Ibid., p.16.
that has value by itself. Put like that, we agree. An isolated clod defends no intrinsic value and it is difficult to say that it has much value in itself. But that is not the end of the matter, because a clod of dirt is integrated into an ecosystem; earth is a part, Earth the whole. Dirt is product and process in a systemic nature. We should try to get the global picture, and switch from a lump of dirt to the Earth system in which it has been created. (Rolston 26; emphasis mine)

Rolston also puts forward a counter argument. As he asserts, many consider that the Earth is only a big pile of rock that is no different, in that respect, from the moon. Hence, what we actually value is probably not the Earth but its instrumental potentials to give life.793 “We do not praise so much the dirt as what is in the dirt, not earth so much as what is on Earth,” says Rolston (26). In responding to such counter arguments, he suggests that we look at the greater scale of natural history. As he outlines, the evolution of rocks into dirt, and the emergence of fauna and flora is one of the rarest events we can find in the astronomical universe.794 He further claims and emphasises, “we humans too arise up from the humus, and we find revealed what dirt can do when it is self-organising under suitable conditions” (Rolston 26-27). For Rolston, the reason that we may qualify Earth as an entity having intrinsic value is that, like many other natural living beings on this planet, Earth is a self-organising system. Not only this, but it also provides unique conditions for different life forms to thrive. As he states, the basic chemical elements which normally create life—carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, and nitrogen—are commonly found throughout the universe. Nevertheless, it is only on Earth that the arrangement of these elements has made possible the creation of life. On Earth, these ordinary elements are placed in an extraordinary setting in which these common chemicals become part of self-organising systems, the largest of which is planetary in scale.795

Political Arguments: Affective Ability of Non-animal Ecological Others

So far, this thesis has presented ethical claims in relation to the intrinsic value of non-animal ecological others. In the following section, political arguments about non-animal ecological others will take centre stage. It is necessary to combine and integrate political arguments if we wish to speak of ethics towards non-animal ecological others, because it is the political solutions that are able to give rise to pragmatic practices and policies in socio-

795 Ibid., p.27.
political systems. This section draws principally upon Jane Bennett’s ideas—in which Bruno Latour and Jacques Rancière’s philosophical concepts are also integrated—in order to demonstrate concrete political claims about non-animal ecological others.

Bennett’s book on the political ecology of things begins with a guiding question: “how would political responses to public problems change were we to take seriously the vitality of (nonhuman) bodies?” (viii). Bennett poses this question in an attempt to show that there is a significant vitality (in other words, the capability or aptitude of things), which is inherent to nonhuman beings. But, before we go on to discuss Bennett’s political ideas about non-animal ecological others, one should note that her argument expands the horizon of the traditional definition of nonhuman natural beings given by environmental ethicists. By nonhuman bodies, Bennett does not only refer to natural organisms or inorganic objects. Instead, she tries to include all different sorts of nonhuman entities, for instance, trash, commodities, metals, processed food, etc. A good argument to support Bennett’s choice to include various different kinds of nonhuman entities is that: things such as trashes, commodities or edible food... though are neither natural organisms nor inorganic beings we found in nature, they still have great impacts on our natural environment. For instance, waste created by human beings has become a major problem for today’s global ecosystem. Plastic bags, bottles, or any other non-biodegradable objects have become a great issue that disturbs the balance of the ecosystem and distresses the natural environment. If we do not urge to form a “parliament of things” for these nonhuman things, we risk of not being able to resolve these ecological problems. As pointed out in the previous section, Bennett considers that the idea that “deep down everything is connected and irreducible to a simple substrate, resonating with an ecological sensibility” (xi; emphasis original). For Bennett, nonhuman bodies or things have affective ability, and that ability is the essential source for bringing forward a political ecology. Bennett equates affects (the effect that nonhuman beings could produce) with materiality. She believes that any nonhuman non-animal other has, or can at least acquire, an active role which brings significant effects to the world, even to human beings. Although Bennett does not focus her argument on the intrinsic value of these nonhuman non-animal others, her position is not far away from Rolston’s take on value in nature. Bennett draws on Charles Darwin’s argument about worms (and combines it with Latour’s concept of actants), stating that even the small agency that worms possess is capable of exerting great effects on humans. She claims,

796 Cf. Below arguments on Latour’s “parliament of things.”
Worms, or electricity, or various gadgets, or fats, or metals, or stem cells are actants, or what Darwin calls “small agencies,” that when in the right confederation with other physical and physiological bodies, can make big things happen. (Bennett 94)

For Bennett, Darwin’s observation of worms’ agency is not only convincing but also powerful, for worms’ agency eventually brings forth impacts or effects on a planetary or geological scale. Furthermore, she believes that worms should be highly considered because they have inaugurated human culture in respect to our natural history. Worms, as Darwin claims, make history by making vegetable mold. “[It] makes possible ‘seedlings of all kinds,’ which makes possible an earth hospitable for humans, which makes possible the cultural artifacts, rituals, plans and endeavors of human history.”97 (Bennett 96). She further notes that the way worms make possible the setting up of human culture is not at all a planned result.98 To a certain extent, Bennett also shares a similar view to that of Brian Massumi, for she considers these worms’ actions amount to “intelligent improvisations” (96). Bennett further proposes a good philosophical reflection on the condition of worms’ small agency as well: is it worms’ ability to decompose trees and leaves that nourish the earth, so that life on earth would thrive and human culture could come into existence? Or, is it the other way around—that the earth nourishes trees and leaves and hence allows worms to eat and decompose them?99 This is apparently a chicken and egg paradox. Yet, what is true behind this paradox and is important for us to learn is that the entire ecosystem consists of actants, which can produce vital materialities and further generate great impacts with their small agencies. The agency of a worm, a tree, a leaf and earth is by itself an actant as Bruno Latour would describe, and for Bennett, this is a political action.

Reasoning in this manner Bennett proposes a horizontal representation of the relation between human and nonhuman actants.800 To better understand Bennett’s proposition of a horizontal representation of the relationship between human and nonhuman actants, we must consider her readings of Latour and Rancière’s works. According to Bennett, if we compare Latour’s political ideas to John Dewey’s theory of the public,801 we can see that Latour has

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797 Darwin, The Formation of Vegetable Mould, through the Action of Worms, with Observations on Their Habits, p.309.
798 Bennett, Vibrant, p.96.
799 Ibid., p.98.
800 Ibid., p.98.
801 Dewey’s theory of public: John Dewey, an American political philosopher who addresses the question of the public and democracy, puts forward an argument of the distinction between the “state” and the “public.” For Dewey, the “state” is represented by elected lawmakers and the “public” is an incoherent body of citizens
pushed Dewey’s theory further and has developed in a vital materialist direction. There are three important ways in which Bennett thinks Latour has offered Dewey’s theory an ecological twist: (1) Latour has invented the concept of an actant—which has similar political significance to Dewey’s notion of “conjoint action”—in an attempt to “pry some space between the idea of action and the idea of human intentionality.” (2) He deliberately rejects the common binary division of “nature” and “culture” and is in favour of the “collective,” which refers to an ecology of human and nonhuman elements. (3) For Latour, political action is not an enactment of choices but is the call-and-response between “propositions” (Bennett 103). Taking these three points into account, Bennett argues that Dewey’s theory of the public could be adjusted to take account of the ecological developments present in Latour’s work. Latour thus helps us, as Bennett says, “[pave] the way for a theory of action that more explicitly accepts nonhuman bodies as members of a public” (103). Nonetheless, Bennett points out that whereas she challenges the “uniqueness of humanity” and makes that a central argument in her book, she would not rush to the conclusion that all species should be entitled to perfect equality in the political realm (which some utilitarian philosophers would advocate). Even for inanimated objects, seeking actual equality of consideration or treatment relative to human beings is unrealistic and is not her ultimate objective. She understands that her efforts will not allow her to “horizontalise the world” completely, simply because, as a human being, it is inevitable that she identifies with members of her kind, insofar as our bodies are similar to one another’s. She outlines that “[t]he political goal of vital materialism is not the perfect equality of actants, but a polity with more channels of communication between members” (Bennett 104; emphasis mine). More explicitly, a “horizontal representation” of the relationship between human and nonhuman actants does not seek an equal representation of all actants—be they human or nonhuman—but a possibility to include all actants in representational forms. The objective of this “horizontal representation” is to speak for all actants’ interests and their effects on the environment as a

who choose the state. A public is called forth when common citizens, as a collective, encounter the negative externalities (or consequences) of exchanges beyond their control (market or governmental activities for examples). The public thus is consisted of citizens whose common interest is to reduce these negative externalities through legislation. Cf. Dewey, The Public and its Problems (2012).

802 Bennett, op.cit., p.103.
803 Ibid., p.104.
whole. In this respect, she claims, Latour’s concept of the “parliament of things” should be embraced, even if the idea, as he presents it, is somewhat lacking in clarity. 

Bennett then suggests accommodating Latour’s concept of the “parliament of things” with Jacques Rancière’s theory of politics, and particularly his theory of democracy as disruption. Although Bennett is aware of the fact that Rancière’s political theory is addressed exclusively to human beings and human politics, Bennett still thinks that it is useful to draw Rancière’s idea of “the force of the people,” or the so called “force of the demos,” into ecological politics. According to Rancière, there are disruptions (or the force of people) in the between-space of the staged event, and these disruptions are neither intentional nor random acts. In those disruptions, political acts are revealed. Bennett writes,

For Rancière, the political act consists in the exclamatory interjection of affective bodies as they enter a preexisting public, or, rather, as they reveal that they have been there all along as an unaccounted-for part. […] This interjection by formerly ignored bodies […] modifies the “partition of the perceptible” or the “regime of the visible,” and this changes everything. (105)

Since Bennett recongises the small agency that could be brought forth by nonhman bodies and this small agency is in itself a political act, she therefore considers that these nonhuman entities are also capable of modifying the “regime of the visible.” The polity would thus be significantly changed or altered by the presence of their affective bodies. What Bennett does is to integrate Rancière’s model of political democray into a vital materialist theory of democracy, for she thinks that interjection or disruption can equally well apply to “things,” that is, to nonhuman entities. As she states, “we see how animal, a plant, minerals, artefacts can sometimes catalyze a public” (Bennett 107). By synthesising Latour and Rancière’s philosophical approaches, Bennett successfully theorises an ecological politics, in which a horizontal representation of the relationship between human and nonhuman actants can be realised.

804 Ibid., p.104.
805 “When asked in public whether he thought that an animal or a plant or a drug or a (nonlinguistic) sound could disrupt the political order, Rancière said no: he did not want to extend the concept of the political that far; nonhumans do not qualify as participants in a demos; the disruption effect must be accompanied by the desire to engage in reasoned discourse.” Ibid., p.106. Cf. In Bennett’s endnote, she states that she directly posed this question to Jacques Rancière in a conference they both attended. Ibid., p.151.
806 Ibid., p.105.
Juridical Arguments: Legal Approaches to Non-animal Ecological Others

In this section, we will consider legal approaches to accounting for the interests and agency of non-animal ecological others. Indeed, having discussed the ethical and political aspects of non-animal ecological others, a discussion of more practical approaches regarding modifications to the legal status of non-animal ecological others is now necessary. In the end, it is only through legal approaches that ethical and political considerations regarding nonhuman ecological beings may take on a definite concrete form. In this context, I discuss the paper of Dinah Shelton, “Nature as a Legal Person,” in order to provide some concrete responses as to how nonhuman ecological beings may be included in our legal systems.

Shelton’s article presents an overview of the place of natural objects in today’s society, with regard to their legal status, notably in the United States and some other countries in which aboriginal populations reside. She names four broad categories and suggests that current legal measures taken with respect to the environment usually fall within them:

1. Traditional private tort and property law, for centuries the primary avenue for mitigating or halting pollution in domestic legal systems;
2. public law regulation; general environmental protection statutes were enacted in the 1960s along with specific laws to ensure clean water, clean air, and the survivals of endangered species;
3. market mechanisms; and
4. constitutional rights or international human rights law.

In contrast to these traditional approaches, environmental ethics, Shelton observes, is often translated into legal concepts via a rights-of-nature approach. That is to say, environmental entities are considered to possess the right to be maintained in a healthy or an ecologically balanced state. This approach may thus be seen as a transfer and translation of concepts developed in the framework of human rights into a new framework of rights-of-nature. Adopting this approach, the possibility of attributing the status of a “person” to natural entities has often been evoked. Nevertheless, as Shelton also notes, designating a specific environment or an ecosystem as a legal “person” has rarely been put into practice so far. Only in certain countries, or, occasionally in certain domestic legal institutions, can we observe the realisation of this approach; as regards international law, this approach has not yet

808 Ibid., p.2.
been adopted.\textsuperscript{809} The value of being a legal “person” means that the given entities certain rights are automatically conferred.\textsuperscript{810} (Shelton reminds us that taking the natural environment or a natural being as a legal “person” does not necessarily mean that all natural beings are entitled to equal rights. After all, rights conferred to human beings are not always the same. For instance, upon birth, certain legal rights are automatically granted to a child, and, as the child becomes an adult, their rights expand.\textsuperscript{811})

To summarise Shelton’s article, she makes a comparative study between certain individual American states’ constitutional environmental policies (including those of Pennsylvania, Hawaii, Louisiana, and others) and national constitutional environmental policies in other countries (notably that of Ecuador, Bolivia and New Zealand). In a federal rule country like America, each individual state has its own state constitutions and amendments, which the state government must respect. Shelton points out that the guiding principle underlying the application of environmental policy in individual states of the U.S. is public trust. Similarly to the early English common law, which confers trusteeship or guardianship of the environment on the government, “US state constitutions revised or amended from 1970 to the present have incorporated public trust doctrine to provide greater protection to the environment.”\textsuperscript{812} In fact, one can criticise that, even though this kind of trusteeship or guardianship of the environment pleads for humans’ respect and protection of the health of our environment (which is a traditional approach of environmental law), it somehow still works in favour of humans’ interests. For example, in Pennsylvania, the first state constitutional recognition of environmental rights is connected to the first Earth Day.\textsuperscript{813} The proposed amendment was approved in 1971, and now, Article I, section 27 of the Pennsylvania state constitution clearly writes:

Section 27. Natural resources and the public estate

The people have a right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and aesthetic values of the environment. Pennsylvania’s public natural resources are the common property of all people, including generations yet to come. As

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{809} Ibid., p.2.
\item \textsuperscript{810} Ibid., p.2.
\item \textsuperscript{811} Ibid., p.5.
\item \textsuperscript{812} Ibid., p.3. In England, the initial focus of such trusteeship generally deals with fishing rights, access to the shore, and navigable waters and the lands beneath them. Ibid., p.3.
\end{itemize}
trustee of these resources, the Commonwealth shall conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all people.

Hawaii’s state constitution, compared to that of Pennsylvania, has gone further in defining the place of its environment, for it has created “a public trust over all of the state’s natural resources” (Shelton 3; emphasis mine). In Lousiana, “courts have required a cost-benefit analysis of any measure that is potentially harmful to the environment and demandes that the government adopt the least damaging measure” (Shelton 4). These state constitutions articulate an important value of our natural environment and call forth humans’ awareness and actions to protect nature and its resources. Nonetheless, what one might want to criticise regarding the establishment of these constitutions is that the recognition of value in nature is still guided by a principle that—when competing interests emerge, the interests of the states’ citizens overrules the general well-being of the natural environment. For example, if the overall population benefits economically from a timber company which aims to exploit the forest of a particular state, it is very likely that the state government would agree to cede their policies of environmental protection because the company’s investment is more beneficial for the citizens of the state. In that sense, all these state constitutions and amendments are still subjugated to an unbalanced or hierarchical legal structure, in which humans are prioritised.

As Shelton observes in her article, it has for a long time been common practice to designate certain non-human entities as legal “persons.” Indeed, the status of a “person” can be applied to an organisation, a society, or an enterprise, which has been conferred with rights and obligations before law. That is to say, even a business enterprise or a non-governmental organisation could be considered a legal entity with its own legal rights and obligations. Given this, it should not be difficult to extend our recognition of legal personhood to the natural environment or natural beings. However, there are very few countries that have taken up this approach. Up to this point, Ecuador and Bolivia are the only ones in the world to have granted the status of legal personhood to natural entities. Ecuador, for instance, is the first country to have recognised nature as a “legal person” in its national constitution (the declaration was made in 2008). Shelton explains that the drafts written by Ecuador’s Constitutional Assembly aimed to “change the status of ecosystems from being regarded as property under the law to being recognised as right-bearing entities” (6). The Bolivian Constitution followed immediately the precedent of Ecuador, mainly due to pressure from its

814 Shelton, op.cit., p.6.
large indigenous population.\textsuperscript{815} In 2009, it offered direct Constitutional protection to its natural environment and \textit{has given nature equal rights to humans}.\textsuperscript{816} Moreover, as Shelton points out, “[t]he 2010 Law of Mother Earth (Leyde Derechos de la Madre Tierra, Law 071) first implemented the amendment by redefining the country’s mineral deposits as ‘blessings’ and establishing new rights for nature” (6). She adds that these nature rights include:

\begin{quote}
[T]he right to life and to exist; the right to continue vital cycles and processes free from human alteration; the right to pure water and clean air; the right to ecological balance; the right to the effective and opportune restoration of life systems affected by direct or indirect human activities, and the right for preservation of Mother Earth and any of its components with regards to toxic and radioactive waste generated by human activities.
\end{quote}

(Shelton 6)

Besides recognising nature as a “legal person” within environmental law, a Constitution that attributes the state of legal personhood to ecosystem is also a possibility. The Whanganui River, the longest river in New Zealand, acquired the juridical status of legal personhood in 2012.\textsuperscript{817} According to Shelton, the Minister for the Treaty of Waitangi has announced that the New Zealand government and Iwi (i.e., the local Maori tribe that hold the Whanganui River as a sacred being) came to an agreement on certain key elements, with regard to the protection of the Whanganui River.\textsuperscript{818} This agreement covers the following issues:

\begin{itemize}
\item Recognition of the status of the Whanganui River (including its tributaries) as Te Awa Tupua, an integrated, living whole from the mountains to the sea;
\item Recognition of Te Awa Tupua as a legal entity, \textit{reflecting the view of the River as a living whole} and enabling the River to have legal standing and an independent voice;
\item Appointment of two persons (one by the Crown and the other by the River iwi) to a \textit{guardianship role}—Te Pou Tupua—to act on behalf of Te Awa Tupua and protect its status and health and wellbeing;
\item Development of a set of Te Awa Tupua values, recognising the intrinsic characteristics of the river and providing guidance to decision-makers; and
\item Development of a Whole of River Strategy by collaboration between iwi, central and local government, commercial and recreational users and other community groups. The strategy will identify issues for the river […] The goal of the strategy
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{815} \textit{Ibid.}, p.6.
\textsuperscript{816} \textit{Ibid.}, p.6.
\textsuperscript{817} \textit{Ibid.}, p.7.
\textsuperscript{818} \textit{Ibid.}, p.7.
will be to ensure the long-term environmental, social, cultural and economic health and wellbeing of the river.819 (Shelton 8; emphasis mine)

As this treaty show, to give nature or non-animal ecological others status as legal persons is altogether possible. Moreover, the cases discussed by Shelton also constitutes a radical challenge to our current juridical system, for they call for ethical and legal respect of nature’s intrinsic value.

Drawing on Shelton’s study, I would like to discuss two concrete approaches which I consider essential to push even further our ethical relationship with ecological others, both of which I believe could feasibly be integrated into juridical practice. First of all, a radical form of guardianship of the natural environment and of nonhuman ecological beings needs to be put into practice. As mentioned above, human rights are evolutive, a child’s rights and obligations before the law are different from those of an adult. Likewise, parent(s) or guardian(s) have legal responsibilities toward a child that the child does not have to the parent. These responsibilities are not based on the interests of the parents or guardians, but concern the wellbeing of the child. If we apply a similar logic of legal guardianship to nature, it would completely change our relationship with nature. Of the two types of guardianship presented by Shelton—the one guided by the principle of public trust (the trusteeship in various American states) and the one that has evenly appointed representatives from the indigenous population and from the ruling government (the guardianship role for the Whanganui River)—the later is particularly important. Although Shelton does not state it openly, this guardianship role and the recognition of the river’s legal personhood implicitly express a nonanthropocentric attitude. It is important that a nonanthropocentric attitude is integrated into juridical claims. Even though ultimately it is human beings who have determined the juridical agreement, the nonanthropocentric aspect of this decision-making should be highly valued. We have to fundamentally give up our anthropocentrism if we are truly to recognise nature before the law. To put it differently, we should see nature as itself having ends of its own and allow these ends to give us guidance. Instead of thinking “what should/can we do for nature?”, we should ask “what will nature do for itself without (or with a minimum amount of) human interventions?” The answer(s) that emerges from such

nonanthropocentric thinking could have a significant impact on our ethico-juridical relation to the natural environment.

The second approach that I wish to put forward, and which goes beyond anything discussed by Shelton, is the establishment of legal personhood for all natural environments in international laws. This approach would require the participation of all the countries of the world. To a certain extent, the already existing structure of international institution like United Nations may be helpful to realising this approach. As Shelton shows, recognising nature as a legal person has so far been practiced only in domestic legal institutions but not in any international juridical institutions. Moreover, the common factor that has allowed the countries discussed above to grant recognition of legal personhood to nature is because their large indigenous populations. Indeed, up until the present, only countries in which significant indigenous populations reside have advocated recognition of nature’s legal personhood. Drawing on Latour and Descola’s idea, we should look beyond the binary division between “culture” and “nature” and cease to think that it is only possible for countries where more indigenous populations reside to recognise the legal personhood in nature. Therefore, I would propose to advocate all countries in the world to adopt the approach of establishing legal personhood of all natural environments. If every country on this planet is willing to make changes to its constitution and assign the status of “legal person” to its natural environment or ecosystems, the current relation between humans and non-animal ecological others would fundamentally change. Surely, one could ask the following question: what differences would it make given that we already have international agreements such as the Paris agreement on climate and various other international treaties and agreements on the environment? Would it produce any different outcome(s) were every country of the world to recognise nature as legal person? The answer to these questions is yes. It will make a considerable difference, especially compared to the meagre results achieved by the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change). In recognising nature as a legal person in every country’s constitution, non-animal ecological others will no longer be placed in an inferior position relative to human beings. Their well-being will be considered as important as that of a country’s citizens. In addition, the principal consequence of adopting this change would be the total engagement of the country to protect the natural environment, both ethically and legally. To give a concrete idea of what sort of result might be produced, one may return to Shelton’s example of Bolivia. In Bolivia, indigenous people are aware of the fact that even though the Bolivian government has recognised its country’s natural ecosystems and
resources as legal persons, such an effort does not necessarily bring fruitful results, since global climate change still negatively impacts the Bolivian natural environment. For instance, global climate change has seriously affected the Andean mountain ecosystems with the melting of glaciers, loss of water, and the spread of diseases to the highlands.\footnote{Shelton, \textit{op.cit.}, p.6.} As long as there are countries which do not consider the wellbeing of nature to be a priority, other countries’ natural environment will continue to be affected in one way or another and radical changes will never come about. Hence, it is critical and urgent for us to advocate the recognition of legal personhood of nature in every country’s constitution. Only then could a truly ethical relation towards non-animal ecological others become a reality.
3.3.4. Ethical Responses to Non-animal Ecological Others

From Land Aesthetics to Environmental Ethics

The last section of this thesis addresses ethical responses to nonhuman ecological beings, drawing on examples from J.M. Coetzee and Wu Ming-yi’s writings. It is important to note, however, that my discussion of the ethical responses offered by the two authors may be slightly unbalanced, at least in the sense that there are far more examples found in Wu's works than there are in Coetzee's. The following discussion first draws attention to one of Wu’s articles in Taiwan ziran shuxie de tansuo 1980-2002—yi shuxie jiefang ziran [Exploration Modern Nature Writing of Taiwan 1980-2002—Liberating Nature by Writing] (2012), “Ningshi, xinshang, tihui, lijie erhou ganji [To Gaze, Admire, Feel, Understand and Thus Appreciate],” in which he draws onto Aldo Leopold and John Baird Callicott’s ideas to explain why land aesthetics is indispensable for establishing environmental ethics. Moreover, Wu also shows how our acknowledgement of land aesthetics can help us to make further progress in developing environmental ethics. Coetzee’s two novels, Life & Times of Micheal K and Disgrace, in which the aesthetic aspect of the land is much highlighted, should therefore be drawn into our discussion once again. From these two works, one perceives Coetzee’s implicit ethical responses to non-animal ecological others and his inherent land ethics. Finally, the discussion at the end of this section will turn to focus on Wu’s nature writing about different water habitats in Taiwan, in which he demonstrates the importance of environmental justice and advocates the urgency of ethico-juridical treatments of non-animal ecological others.

In “Ningshi,” Wu has thoroughly discussed the interrelation of land aesthetics and environmental ethic, showing the significant link between the two. To Wu’s mind, it is by valuing the aesthetics of land that we are able to develop a full environmental ethic. Wu argues that nature writing has always been the most influential criterion for the development of environmental ethics. However, he also emphasises that, if these writings address only problematic issues in environmental ethics, the inherent quality of human creativity that we
called literariness will fade and be replaced entirely by argumentative essays. He therefore claims,

This reminds us, nature writings with literary quality must have another meaning. A meaning that occurs naturally, and is further known via human interpretation—the meaning of beauty.

這提醒我們，文學性的自然書寫中理應還存在著另一種要義。這既是從自然所生發的，也是經過人類的詮釋才流散出來的—美的意涵。(Wu, “Ningshi” 376)

Wu’s argument about the ethics of our relation to non-animal ecological others centres on the aesthetic aspect of nature. He adopts the ideas of Aldo Leopold in A Sand County Almanac to outline the importance of land aesthetics. Wu cites Leopold’s words,

The ‘key-log’ which must be moved to release the evolutionary process for an ethic is simply this: quit thinking about decent land-use as solely an economic problem. Examine each question in terms of what is ethically and esthetically right, as well as what is economically expeditant. A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise. (Leopold 224-25; emphasis mine)

With these words, Leopold encourages us to see the significant meaning that land aesthetic could bring to our reflections on ethics. If our acts have an influence on a particular environment and that influence tends to preserve the wholeness of its biodiversity and further maintain its stability and beauty, it is thus a right thing to do; vice versa, it would be wrong in an ethical respect.

Furthermore, in alignment with Leopold’s position, Wu agrees that there is an “intrinsic value” in natural beings or in wilderness. Wu argues that beauty is innate to nature.

Leopold believes in the “intrinsic value” of wilderness. He thinks that even if we had never set foot on Alaska, Alaska would not become valueless. […] Aesthetics in the wild is not designed for humans. It exists naturally, waiting to be appreciated by humans’ sensibility.

李奧波肯定荒野的「內在價值」，他認為即使我們都不去阿拉斯加，也不會使那兒變得沒有價值。⋯⋯野地的美感不是專門為人類而設的，它本然自存，等待人用感知識能力去欣賞。(Wu, “Ningshi” 378)

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822 Cf. Ibid., p.373.

One may question whether beauty is innate to nature and whether it instead derives from human aesthetic sensibility. If that were the case, land aesthetics would arise from interaction with humans and would not be objectively present in nature. To respond to this question, Wu refers once again to Leopold, highlighting the fact that there can be a transition from an anthropocentric understanding to an ecocentric understanding of aesthetics.

Leopold urges us to perceive and feel everything in the wild, both physically and psychologically, including those things which could provoke our discomfort, fear and anxiety. In so doing, we are able to understand the powerful force and beauty of nature. Like a flamingo needs its marsh, a goose needs its wetland grass, and a mole needs its field, we need nature as a whole. In this respect, we are obliged to understand the needs of other natural beings [...] .

The understanding of aesthetic thus moves away from an anthropocentric perspective to an ecocentric one.

Finally, apart from moving towards an ecocentric understanding of the land aesthetic, Wu considers that an appreciation of nature’s beauty found in “the trivials” is equally important. He emphasises that the land aesthetic is not only found in the sublime beauty of majestic or grand scenery, but can also be perceived in areas of wilderness which hardly anyone likes to visit (such as swamps, or deserts). Likewise, ordinary places such as a piece of fallow land, a little pond, or a riverbed can also unveil the wonder and the beauty of natural beings. For Wu, it is from the perspective of land aesthetics that we are able to discover the beauty and recognise the intrinsic value of the trivials. To conclude this section, let us turn to Wu’s interpretation of Callicott’s work. According to Callicott, the voice of aesthetics in nature is the voice of environmental policy and land management. Wu shares the same opinion with these two environmental philosophers, thinking that land aesthetics is inseparable from land ethics, and is ultimately the main source for the concrete establishment of ethical environmental policies. Citing Callicott directly, we may conclude that land

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824 Wu M.Y., op.cit., p.380.
825 Ibid., p. 380.
aesthetic and land ethics are indissociable from one another. In some way, they even complement one another.

The land aesthetic […] complements the land ethic in conservation value theory. The land ethic, as all ethics, is coercive, constraining. The land aesthetic, on the other hand, may motivate conservative behaviour more positively. It may represent a less onerous and more seductive approach to the promotion of conservation behaviour. Philosophically speaking, the land aesthetic and the land ethic are complementary. They are equally the value implications of evolutionary and ecological theory and together they represent a coherent environmental axiology. (Callicott, “The Land” 354).

Coetzee’s reflections on our relation with the land very much correspond to what Leopold believes and Wu promotes. In Life, a novel that tells the story of Michael K’s wondering in a South Africa that is torn by civil war, Coetzee has successfully put forward a land ethic via his detailed observations and fine portrayals of the aesthetic aspect of nature. As described in the story, living like a nomad after the death of his mother, Michael later takes shelter in Visagie’s house, yet, Coetzee’s description shows Michael’s longing to be close to nature and expresses his appreciation of nature’s beauty. He writes,

Though he continued to sleep in the house he was not at ease there. Roaming from one empty room to another he felt as insubstantial as air. […] He shifted his bed to the kitchen, where he could at least see stars through the hole in the roof. (Coetzee, Life 58)

The passage clearly shows that even when Michael chooses to take shelter indoors, he desires to be outside close to nature, lying under the stars. Another passage that tells of Michael’s cultivation of land should also draw our attention. After he discovered some seeds in the kitchen of the Visagies, Michael becomes dedicated to cultivating an abandoned piece of land close to a dam.

His deepest pleasure came at sunset when he turned open the cock at the dam wall and watched the stream of water run down its channels to soak the earth, turning it from fawn to deep brown. It is because I am a gardener, he thought, because that is my nature. He sharpened the blade of his spade on a stone, the better to savour the instant when it clove the earth. (Coetzee, Life 59)

This passage exhibits a pastoral kind of aestheticism. Coetzee offers a fine portrayal of a whole ecosystem, from the sunbeams to the stream of water that soaks the earth and K’s skillful use of stone. These natural inorganic beings, or ecological others as I have called them come together and reveal the vitality of nature. In addition, Coetzee also describes Michael’s jubilation when he perceives the vitality of nature.
There were times, particularly in the mornings, when a fit of exultation would pass through him at the thought that he, alone and unknown, was making this deserted farm bloom. (*Life* 59)

Knowing that the land he cultivates is thriving with life, Micheal’s heart is filled with joy and aspiration. Michael’s cultivation of the deserted farm could hardly be said to be an expression of a sublime land aesthetic found in magnificent sceneries. However, it still articulates a land aesthetic because it expresses nature’s beauty found in “the trivials,” to use Wu’s expression.

Last but not least, Coetzee’s portrayal of Michael’s experience of living in the wild provides us with a glimpse of the land ethic that may derive from his land aesthetic. After the grandson of Visagie returns to the deserted farm, Michael decides to leave the farmhouse and retreat to a cave alone. Coetzee writes,

> He did not turn his cave into a home or keep a record of the passage of the days. There was nothing to look forward to but the sight, every morning, of the shadow of the rim of the mountain chasing faster and faster towards him till all of a sudden he was bathed in sunlight. He would sit or lie in a stupor at the mouth of the cave […]. There were whole afternoons he slept through. He wondered if he were living in what was known as bliss. There was a day of dark cloud and rain, after which tiny pink flowers sprang up all over the mountainside, flowers without any leaf that he could see. He ate handfuls of flowers and his stomach hurt. As the days became hotter the streams ran faster, he could not see why. In this crisp mountain water he missed the bitter savour of water from under the earth. (*Life* 68)

In this passage, Michael’s detailed observation of his natural surroundings is put forward: the sunlight at daybreak, the shades of the mountain, the cloud and rain in the sky, and the blooming of flowers. Michael attentively gazes at the sight and listens to the streams that flow. Michael’s wonder in front of nature recalls what Wu calls, an ecocentric understanding of aesthetics. As Wu has argued, drawing on Leopold, *to perceive and feel everything* in the wild with our mental and corporal sensibility involves an ecocentric understanding of aesthetic. Ultimately, a land ethic could come out from this ecocentric understanding of land aesthetic. Michael has observed and experienced physically and psychologically the powerful force and the beauty of nature. He has felt the blissful joy while bathing under the sunlight and has undergone physical discomfort after consuming wild flowers. These physical and psychological pleasures or discomforts provoked by his contact with nature suggest that Coetzee has ascribed ecocentric aesthetics to his writing of K’s story, for Michael’s experience shows that Michael perceives himself as a part of this larger ecosystem. Eventually, this ecocentric understanding of land aesthetic may assist in rethinking our relation with lands and environment more ethically.
If we read Coetzee thoroughly, we may find that this rethinking of our ethical relation with the land is equally exhibited in another novel of his. In *Disgrace*, an ecocentric understanding of the land may be considered an important aspect of the novel. One of the main characters, Lucy (a Dutch descendent white South African), has confronted her father, David Lurie, in an argument over their different understandings of the particular socio-political environment of South Africa, which has affected her choice of not reporting her experience of sexual assault. Lucy reported the burglary and violent intrusion to the local police but chose to remain silent on the fact that she was sexually violated because she was aware of the fact that the intruders might have some connection with Petrus (a black South African), whom she hires to help her cultivate the land. Furthermore, she accepted Petrus’s marriage offer when she discovered that she was pregnant from one of the perpetrators. For David, regardless of the skin colour or the social standing of the intruders, a violent crime must be reported to the police in order to bring the criminals to justice. In his view, Lucy’s pregnancy should be terminated. Nevertheless, the way that Lucy understands life and her country’s violent colonial history as well as her idea of how one should coexist with the land and with nature show us why she has voluntarily accepted to live with the shame. For Lucy, she does not take abortion as a possible solution because of her genuine respect for life. In her view, a human life—whatever the condition in which it is conceived—deserves a chance to live and thrive. One can therefore tell that she values the intrinsic value of human life. Lucy then extends her affirmation of intrinsic value to nature. After warning her father that one of the intruders, a boy called Pollux, will be staying at Petrus’s house, Lucy and David had a heated argument. In that argument, Lucy’s statements reveal her ethical view on the land.

“So [...] now young Pollux returns to the scene of the crime and we must behave as if nothing has happened.”

“Don’t get indignant, David, it doesn’t help. According to Petrus, Pollux has dropped out of school and can’t find a job. I just want to warn you he is around. I would steer clear of him if I were you. I suspect there is something wrong with him. But I can’t order him off the property, it’s not in my power.”

“Particularly—” He does not finish the sentence.

“Particularly what? Say it.”

“Particularly when he may be the father of the child you are carrying. Lucy, your situation is becoming ridiculous, worse than ridiculous, sinister. I don’t know how you can fail to see it. I plead with you, leave the farm before it is too late. It’s the only sane thing left to do.”
Lucy’s words show her disagreement with David. With these words, it may strike the readers that she only recognises the instrumental value (but not the intrinsic value) of the land she cultivates. That is why she demands her father to stop calling it a farm. However, Lucy firmly states that she will not give up the land, she eventually accepts to be married to Petrus and sign the land over to Petrus, in exchange for her and her future child’s safety. If it is only the instrumental values that she recognises in “that piece of land,” she would have easily taken her father’s advice and restart her life elsewhere. In fact, this deliberate arrangement is not an imposed decision to which Lucy submissively yields. On the contrary, she willingly gives up her ownership of the land because, for Lucy, proprietorship over a piece of land has no meaning. It is rather one’s actual living experience and interrelation with the land that matters to her. This explains that “the piece of land” which matters a great deal to Lucy is recognised. By forming an alliance with Petrus, she will be able to continue her life on “the farm” and remain close to the land she has been cultivating. Hence, her insistence on staying on “the farm” symbolises Coetzee’s appeal to his readers’ attention of land ethic.

**Ethico-juridical Responses in Literary Texts**

This final section addresses ecological others from an ethico-juridical perspective, but it draws attention exclusively on Wu Mng-yi’s works, for he has directly treated these questions, which is not the case in Coetzee’s writings. (Coetzee’s discussion of ethico-juridical questions concern mostly animal others.) In Wu’s fictional work, *Fuyanren* [The Man with Compound Eyes], and his non-fictional essay writing, *Jia li shuibian namejin* [So Much Water So Close to Home], Wu has articulated explicit examples that demonstrate the “aesth-ethical” aspect of ecologial others. While *Fuyanren* draws our attention to the massive quantity of waste in the Pacific Ocean, *Jia* depicts our problematic and abusive treatments of different water habitats, mostly of rivers and oceans. As Lee Yu-lin asserts in his analysis of Wu’s work,
[In] *Jia li shuibi name jin*, the author [...] not only shows us a sense of existence captured by words, [...] he further employs the aesthetic representation to imagine and think about nature.

《家離水邊那麼近》一書[裡]，作者[...](“Shui” 98) 作者[...]不僅表現了[...] 以文字捕捉的感覺存有[...] 作家更藉由這一藝術形象想像與思考自然。This imagining and thinking about nature via aesthetic representation that Lee refers to is in fact a kind of ethical reflection.

In the first chapter of *Jia*, Wu emphasises the aesthetic value of rivers. He argues that it is important for us to valorise these ecological others (i.e. rivers) and insists on the necessity of taking them into account in our ethics and our laws. Wu states in a poetic way, “it is not only water that flows in rivers, but also economy, culture, art and memory. 河流不只流出水，還會流出經濟、文化、藝術與記憶。” (Jia 21) He offers the example of the Nile River to explain his statement. For Wu, this ancient Egyptian river has not only provided water supply for millions and millions of people over thousands of years, but has also underpinned significant mythological and cultural developments, while also making economic and agricultural activities possible. Today, its capacity to generate energy has also played an important role in the lives of Egyptians. Nonetheless, the drastic change of the usage of the Nile, according to Wu, has brought serious negative impacts to its habitat.

The fate of the Egyptian people is bound up with the Nile. From the ancient Egyptian myth, it is said that Khnum, a goat-head human-body dietie, poured some holy water onto earth and then it turned into the Nile River. Khnum thus became the God that controls the water level of the Nile. For thousands of years, since human civilisation began, this long river has regular floodings between June and October every year. [...] After the floods receded, the banks were covered with soil that was full of nutrients, and the inhabitants would return to grow cotton, rice, and wheat in order to feed their hungry bodies and maintain their civilisation. [...] It is said that ancient Egyptians used stones by the river to mark the water level of floodings. This marking indicates the wealth of people since rents and taxes of their farming lands were based on this indication. [...] However, after the Aswan Dam was built, the dynamic character of the Nile disappeared. The person who controls the water level is no longer Khnum but state-employed hydraulic engineers. Farmers are therefore obliged to use chemical fertilizers to grow crops. Fertilizers are washed into the river and created water pollution. For a short period, Egyptians have avoided the problems caused by floods and have paid relatively low expenses on their electricity bills. (The fact is that, sometime after damn was built, the price of electricity went up again.) Now the Egyptians have to be able to afford expensive fertilizers, and they have lost the migratory fish species in the Nile River because of the construction of the dam.
埃及人的命運跟隨著尼羅河，傳說中人身羊頭的克努穆神將神水倒出流成尼羅河，祂因此成了尼羅河水位的掌控者。自有人類文明沿尼羅河建立幾千年以來，這條長河就在六至十月間固定氾濫⋯⋯待十月洪水退去，兩岸覆上養分豐富的沉積泥，[居民]再遷回種植棉花、稻米、小麥，餵食飢餓的肉體與文明。⋯⋯ 據說古埃及人會用河邊的石頭上標記來得知去年洪水的高度，這同時象徵財富的高度，因為農地的租稅就是根據洪水的高度所定出來的。⋯⋯不過亞斯文水壩建立後，複雜性格的尼羅河卻從此消失，掌控河流水位的不再是克努穆神，而是水利官員。農民不得不使用化學肥料來耕種，而肥料再流到尼羅河造成污染。埃及人避免了水患，暫時獲得較低的電費（事實上後來電費在水壩建成一段時間後又再變得昂貴），付出了高額的肥料費，並且因高壩而失去許多河流魚種。(Wu, Jia 19-20)

Wu’s writing reveals the cultural aspects of the Nile River. At the same time, he also criticises the modernization of the river, showing us how today’s revolutionary and technological changes of the Nile disturb the balance of the river’s ecosystem. This criticism may provoke ethico-juridical reflection on the part of the readers when it comes to thinking about our relation towards natural environments. Apart from the example of the Nile River in Egypt, Wu has also provided another example of human exploitation, this time of the Meilun River 美侖溪 and its natural habitat in Taiwan. Wu first draws on Yang Mu’s 楊枚 poetry of the Meilun River, stating that his poetry offers an aesthetic portrayal of the Amis tribe’s 阿美族 intimate relationship with the Meilun River.828 In Yang Mu’s recollection of his childhood memory, the way that Amis people catch fish collectively and perform ritual prayers to the river exemplifies a close relationship with non-animal ecological others, which is evoked from their appreciation of aesthetics in nature. However, Wu notes, we no longer have this intimate relationship with the river in today’s modern cities; on the contrary, we simply wish to regulate the river flow or manage the use of the river for our interests.829 We build dams and breakwaters and emit industrial chemical waste or animal excrements into the rivers.

Everytime humans regulate or manage [rivers], […] we give no warnings, and neither do we perform any ritual prayers. [The fish, crabs and shrimps in rivers] have no chance to express their sentiment. They have nowhere to go and neither can they keep their memory.

人們每一次「整治」[溪流]⋯⋯我們沒有告知，沒有祭典，而[溪流裡的魚與蝦蟹]甚至沒有能力感傷，沒有地方遷徙，沒有記憶。(Wu, Jia 50)

Wu furthermore compels us to seek for ethico-juridical measurements in stopping environment degradation. He states,

828 Wu M.Y., Jia, p.32.
829 Ibid., p.33.
The water of the Meilun River under the Jiaguo Bridge appears to be abundant. The main reason is that it collects wastewater from general households and marble factories, hence giving us a false impression that the water in the river is abundant. At the riverbanks, there are also pig farms. The excrement of pigs is washed into the river, and has created serious problems of eutrophication. […] The problems of river pollution caused by wastewater and animal excrements are everywhere in Taiwan, especially on the West coast. According to government regulation, farmers must obtain emission licences and they are subjected to regular examinations if they keep more than two hundreds pigs on their farms. The smart farmers thus keep the number of pigs under two hundred. […] Frankly, taking the current situation into account, I have never assumed that the East coast residents are more willing to cherish their lands when compared to the residents on the West coast. […] As for the attitude of government officials [towards environmental protection], if there is no supervision, they are all the same throughout the world.

嘉國橋以下的美崙溪段看似水量豐沛，主要是因為承受了北埔、嘉里一帶的生活廢水和大理石廠廢水，所以產生局部豐水的錯覺。溪邊也有部分地方被圍起來養豬，豬隻的排泄物排入溪中，遂形成嚴重的優養化現象。台灣各處溪流都有養殖戶排放廢水與排泄物的問題，西部更形嚴重。因法令規定兩百頭以上才需取得排放許可並應定期檢測，所以聰明的養豬戶就把豬隻的數量控制在二百頭以下。一概而論，我從不認為現階段島嶼的東部居民比西部居民更珍惜土地一些……至於政府官僚的態度，若缺乏監督，則全世界都一樣。（Wu, Jia 36)

The degradation of water habitat related to the harmful treatment of Taiwanese rivers not only concerns the chemical wastewater and excrements, but is also linked to the installation of numerous water power stations and mine factories nearby. According to Wu, in the eighties, the Taiwanese government finally acknowledged the severe condition of Taiwanese rivers and decided to forbid any industrial use or human intervention of some of these rivers for a period of several years.830 This government intervention shows that “aesth-ethical” reflections on the wellbeing of our natural environment may eventually give rise to legal decisions in favour of the welfare of nature.

Other similar examples that Wu has given in the book are his criticisms and ethical reflections on the seriously damaged ocean habitats in Taiwan. Taking Shuilian beach 水璉沙灘 at Yanliao 鹽寮 as an example, Wu explains how the sand beach was completely washed away by a typhoon. In fact, the disappearance of the beach was indirectly caused by the construction of Yanliao port.831 In constructing Yanliao port, a long wall of breakwaters was built to shelter the beach.832 However, it has largely reduced the accumulation of sand that

830 Ibid., pp.82-83.
831 Ibid., p.174.
832 Ibid., p.174.
should be brought by the Hualian River 花蓮溪. After Typhoon Haitang 海棠颱風, a large part of Shuilian beach disappeared. Wu laments,

A sandy beach can only be formed after the coast has been eroded for thousands and thousands of years, with the accumulation of floating sand at the bay. However, it may only take a few days for the beach to disappear.

Wu also tells us about a governmental report about the construction of breakwaters along the coastline. Reading this report, Wu becomes aware that the government was already aware of the fact that building the breakwater is environmentally problematic, but decided to go ahead with it anyway. Criticising this decision, Wu asserts:

Apparentalyn, the official report already shows that the government is aware of the [negative impacts of groins when breakwaters are placed in sea.] [...] Why do we keep on carrying out construction plans based on some negative experiences? [...] I wonder in what way this government formed by the people of an oceanic island would claim itself as a sea country? I would have imagined that the definition of a sea country is not a country that faces the sea but a country that shows its goodwill to the sea.

Indeed, the phrase, “a country that shows its goodwill to the sea,” asserted here directly calls for our attention to an “aesth-ethical” imperative.

Parallel to these criticisms, Wu also addresses the problematic issue of waste dumping in the ocean. In Jia, Wu refers to the unthinkable quantity of waste that we dump into the oceans each year, evoking the necessity of a new ethical perspective with regard to our oceanic environment. He asserts,

The problematic state of the sea cannot be altered simply by fishermen’s affection for the sea. Our ocean has swallowed far too much toxic chemicals and garbage. The evolution of sea creatures can barely catch up with the rapid development of humans’ fishing equipment. [...] Selective or limited fishing can only be achieved with legal regulations. However, what we really need is a new ethics for our oceans, an abstract kind of protocol, for there are always loopholes in legal regulations.
I turned around and looked at the sea. The sea that was dumped with billions tons of trash and waste water, almost an unrealistic figure.

不過現在的海的問題不是光靠漁人的情感就能改變,大海吞下了太多的有害物質、垃圾,而海洋生物的演化,遠遠追不上人類狩獵器具的演化速度⋯⋯選擇性的捕捉、適當的捕捉方式恐怕是要靠法令來輔助推行,不過那最終還是需要某種新的海洋道德觀,一種抽象的規範。因為任何法律的規範總是有漏洞可以鑽。

我轉過頭看著海,那個每年被人類倒進超現實般上百億公噸的垃圾,廢水的大海。(Wu, Jia 184)

Not only has Wu included the discussion of waste dumping in the ocean in Jia (which was published in 2007), he has further integrated these criticisms and further developed his thinking on the issue in the context of his creative novel writing. In Fuyanren, Wu attempts to call forth his readers’ attention to the severe environmental condition of the Pacific Ocean by presenting the problems of waste dumping. In the chapter, “The Vortex on the Sea,” Wu tells us his knowledge about the trash vortex in the Pacific Ocean, an actual gigantic garbage patch that was discovered by captain Charles Moore in 1997. Wu accounts Moore’s discovery of this gigantic garbage patch on his journey to Hawaii.

Moore was astonished to find himself surrounded by rubbish. His ship ploughed through the stuff day after day, taking about a week to reach the other side. At the time Moore believed there was over a hundred million tons of flotsam circulating in the north Pacific, divided into eastern and western garbage patches in orbit around Hawaii. That was in 1997. Now it’s even more massive, totalling at least two hundred million tons.

莫爾發現自己置身垃圾之中,船隻走了一天又一天還沒走完,垃圾不斷從他的船舷旁通過,大約七天才通過這個巨大的垃圾渦流區。莫爾相信,當年就有超過一億噸的垃圾漂浮物正在北太平洋地區打轉,以夏威夷群島為中心,分為東、西兩大塊。現在更形巨大,至少已達到兩億噸的規模。(Fuyanren 149; The Man 122)

Subsequently, Wu stages his fictional twist near the end of the story, adding in a scene of a strong typhoon which violently breaks up the gigantic garbage patch. The trash that is smashed up by the typhoon floats toward Taiwan, encircling the island.835 Moreover, a tsunami that is brought by the typhoon gives rise to high tides of garbage that shatter the fictional animan island, Wayo Wayo.836 This particular design of Wu—interweaving an unrealistic event with genuine scientific findings—emphasises how an environmental ethics may result from the dystopian imagination. Wu not only directly presents us with current environmental problems that require our ethico-juridical reflection but also incorporates these problems into his novel writing. In a sense, creative novel writing is much more accessible for

general readers. Wu’s inclusion of these specific environmental issues in his literary writings therefore shows that significant influences may be brought onto his readers via literature, for literary works may enable the readers to critically examine the relevant issues.
Conclusion
Conclusion

Ontology as the ground of ethics was the original tenet of philosophy. Their divorce, which is the divorce of the “objective” and “subjective” realms, is the modern destiny. Their reunion can be effected, if at all, only from the “objective” end, that is to say, through a revision of the idea of nature.

— Hans Jonas, The Phenomenon of Life

This thesis has offered extensive discussion of the ontology and ethics of nonhumans, including animals, non-animal ecological beings and certain man-made natural objects. Further, it has also tied these analyses to the specific context of postcolonial literature. The guiding principle of the thesis is well expressed in the above quotation from Hans Jonas, a prominent philosopher of bioethics whose work had catalysed much of the environmental movement in Germany. As Jonas suggests, the separation of ontology and ethics is a result of the modern thinking, which produces a binary division of the “subjective” and “objective” realms. For Jonas, the reunion of ontology and ethics can only be realised or achieved through a major revision of our idea of nature.837 Without paying specific attention to Jonas’s own philosophy, my thesis developed a theoretical approach which exhibited a similar philosophical viewpoint, the principal difference being that the analyses carried out were grounded in a postcolonial context. By presenting ethical and ontological discussions of and for nonhumans, the goal was to come up with new ways of theorising postcolonial subjectivity, while also tackling some of the more problematic aspects of postcolonial political identity.

When I began researching this topic, the goal was to elaborate and develop Derrida’s ethics of and for the nonhuman animals by drawing examples from postcolonial eco-literature. In contemporary postcolonial eco-literature, one can easily identify depictions of animal suffering or sacrifice that are thematically related to the violence and pain inflicted on colonised people. Literary examples of this include Amitav Ghosh’s The Hungry Tide (2004) and Indra Sinha’s Animal’s People (2007).838 In the domain of postcolonial eco-literature, a number of authors approach the colonial domination of colonised people via discussions of the hierarchical relationship between humans and animals. The common ground shared between J.M. Coetzee and Wu Ming-yi’s writings involves, to a large extent, precisely this kind of representation. Both authors painstakingly depict remarkable scenes of animals’

suffering which underline the inequality of the human-animal relationship and ultimately reflect the exploitation of colonised people. I was intrigued by this specific writing technique and wanted to apply Derrida’s ethical questioning of animals in order to understand more its philosophical dimension. To express it in Derrida’s words, I considered that the postcolonial animal that we are following is able to constitute a form of resistance to colonial domination, to contextualise a zoosphere for writing, and further to realise “the dream of absolute hospitality” in that zoosphere. Moreover, I was also convinced by the fact that the portrayals of animal suffering have the capacity to contest the postcolonial political identity, which is often taken as given.

The thesis, at its early stage, thus began with a search for this postcolonial animal. But very soon I realised that the animal figures represented in postcolonial eco-literature, particularly in Coetzee and in Wu Ming-yi, are not simply assigned with allegorical meanings or stand as first-degree metaphors for the colonised people. They are beings which have their own subjectivity and which are capable of unveiling their wholeness in life, both in the real world and in the zoosphere of postcolonial texts. In writing the following statements, Coetzee reminds us that this wholeness could be vividly embodied in poetry:

If I do not convince you, that is because my word, here, lack the power to bring home to you the wholeness, the unabstracted […] nature, of that animal being. That is why I urge you to read the poets who return the living, electric being to language; and if the poets do not move you, I urge you to walk, flank and flank, beside the beast that is prodded down the chute to his executioner. (The Lives, 65)

With these words, one learns that this wholeness has always been a trait of animal beings. Coetzee considers that words have the capacity to bring home to us this wholeness of animal beings. He further outlines that, if one finds plain words lack the power to represent this wholeness, poetry can serve as the vehicle that embodies and reinforces our awareness of this wholeness. Coetzee thus advises us to read poetry which is able to vividly transcribe this wholeness within animals to a zoospheric text. To a large extent, Coetzee’s idea here with respect to poetry can be extended to literature in general, for much literature manifests this quality of poetry. Working within this mind-set, the thesis began to research the subjectivity and the question of the being of the animal. As I soon discovered, the literary works of Coetzee and Wu have not only unveiled the wholeness of the animal beings in the zoosphere

839 “I therefore admit to my old obsession with a personal and somewhat paradisiacal bestiary. It came to the fore very early on: the crazy project of constituting everything thought or written within a zoosphere, the dream of an absolute hospitality and an infinite appropriation. How to welcome or liberate so many animal-words [animots] chez moi?” Derrida, The Animal, p.37.
of postcolonial texts, but also, both authors have employed imaginative ways of writing in order to reinforce our awareness of this wholeness and the subjectivity of the animals. By creating the hybrid creature of the “animan,” Coetzee and Wu have successfully problematised the boundary between humans and animals, and have furthermore offered new perspectives on the forming of subjectivity via their challenge of this frontier. Arguably, one could object that this animan figure diminishes or reduces the wholeness of animals because it involves a process of hybridization. However, I find that the literary process of inventing a hybrid animan exhibits the quality of poetry in Coetzee and Wu’s literary texts, which ultimately reinforces our perception and awareness of the wholeness in animals. The animan has never existed in our physical reality, but it can manifest its being under the pen of a writer. I therefore considered that this wholeness in animals is bestowed upon animan, and is presented in front of our eyes while we read through Coetzee and Wu’s words.

The concept of the hybrid “animan” thus represented an important breakthrough of my research, for it motivated me to look beyond the ontological boundaries of beings as defined in contemporary continental philosophy. Most importantly, in questioning these philosophical limits, it further pushed me to explore other non-animal kinds of ecological beings, both in ontological and ethical terms. With regard to the subjectivity of the ecological others, one of the critical problems that this thesis addressed was the grounding of contemporary epistemology. To my mind, current epistemology suffers from the philosophical blind-spot of anthropocentricism, and, as a consequence, it has limited our perspective as regards the acknowledgement of the subjectivity of ecological others outside of humans and animals. The thesis thus considered that moving away from this anthropocentric perspective is an important step in contemporary continental philosophy. Only by encouraging a non-anthropocentric viewpoint may a new philosophical paradigm arise. Based on my premise and relevant findings regarding the human-animal hybrid, I then decided to look at the intersubjective relation between humans and non-animal types of ecological beings or natural entities in order to develop an argument to defend the subjectivity of the ecological other. In this respect, the thesis is mostly indebted to Jane Bennett’s philosophical interpretation of the Spionzian notion of “affect,” which considers that the agency of an object or a thing can call forth the encounter with a human subjectivity. The thesis thus regarded the subjectivity of these nonhuman non-animal ecological beings can be shown or exhibited in this intersubjective encounter. Concerning the ethical relations that one can establish with these ecological others, the thesis outlined the importance of recognising their intrinsic value and furthermore
provided juridical frameworks or approaches as discussed notably in a paper by Dinah Shelton. With some modifications of these approaches, the thesis broke new ground by offering radical but concrete steps to develop an ethics of and for ecological others.

It is from these ethical and ontological examinations that this research has discovered the significant role of this ecological other. The role of the ecological other was not only able to successfully contest postcolonial identity politics, but it also opened our mind to see from the “objective” end, and it allowed us to have a different perception of nature and natural beings, as Jonas claims. I would like to end here with a quote from Wu Ming-yi’s novel, which presents a vivid depiction of a hybrid body composed of human, animal, biological and “affective” elements and which best summarises the role of the ecological other of my thesis.

In the last scene of The Stolen Bicycle, the protagonist has a vision while peddling his father’s lost bike. What he sees and experiences in his vision is the entanglement of his hybrid body with various different kinds of ecological others—the bike, the tree, the orangutan, the soldiers and the machine guns. It is from this postcolonial ecological writing that we find the ecological other unfolds itself:

I follow the Oyashio Current, riding south. The Bicycle turns around in the whirlpools and eddies as I pass into another current [.]. […] I ride onto a forested island, following the roots to its insular heart, where [the mother of Mr. Ichiro, an orangutan,] is holding him to her bosom as she swings them from that tree to this tree, swinging them right in front of me with inscrutable smiles on their faces. Then I’m captured by a tree, which sends its roots through a gap in the hub and chain ring, through screw and screw hold, through the five tubes of the frame’s two triangles, through the valves to the inner tubes, coming full circle before sprouting leaves along each steel spoke. Soliders mount machine guns on my body and on the rear rack, cut off my hands to draw water, and urinate steadily over me at dawn. Bullets of different bores keep passing through my flesh and denting bending piercing the steel tubes of the iron horse. Sometimes when the guns pause, someone in the branches above will masturbate, sprinkling the seed of pain on leaf and branch and trunk, and on the earth itself.

I隨著親潮向南而騎，車子在洋流的漩渦裡打轉進人另一道洋流，我⋯⋯登上一座長滿了樹的島嶼，順著樹根往島的心臟騎去，在那裡紅毛猩猩一郎被母親抱在懷裡，牠們從另一棵樹晃到這棵樹，從我面前帶著難解的微笑而去。我被一棵樹捕捉住，它將根伸入花鼓齒輪縫隙與螺母之間五通管裡從氣嘴直到內胎繞了一個圈圈之後沿著每一條鋼絲長出葉子。士兵在我的身上和後貨架上架上機槍，他們切掉我的手指接水，清晨時把熱呼呼的尿液淋在我身上。各種口徑的槍彈不斷穿過我的身體，把

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*The English translation of Danche shiqieji has come out in 2017, which is after most part of this thesis is completed. Therefore, most of the cited texts from Danche in my thesis are my own translation, apart from this long quote, which follows the English translation of Darryl Sterk. However, this long citation has been slightly modified since there appears to be a problem with syntax.*
Research Overview and Assessment

With a focus on J.M. Coetzee and Wu Ming-yi’s works, this thesis has offered an interdisciplinary research of postcolonial eco-literature in its theoretical, political and literary aspects. The selected texts for analysis in this thesis designated specifically writings that seek to re-present the dystopian image of the exploited natural environment or nonhuman entities, while, at the same time, associating and articulating these representations with the suppressions and exploitations carried out within colonial frameworks in different parts of the world. As regards to its theoretical perspective, it addressed the subject of how contemporary continental philosophy takes nonhuman animals and other kinds of ecological beings into account and rethinks the philosophical question of the other. With respect to politics, it contextualised this philosophical questioning in history of the postcolonial countries, notably South Africa and Taiwan. And as far as literature is concerned, it examined the writings of Coetzee and Wu in order to show how their texts depict the ecological Other as a means to contest postcolonial identity politics.
With an objective to fulfill an interdisciplinary study of postcolonialism and ecologism, the first part of this thesis focused exclusively on its theoretical methodologies. It approached the question of the other by considering different philosophical concepts that challenge the way we normally understand subjectivity. It introduced the hypothesis that subjectivity can be understood very differently than it has traditionally been the case in anthropology and ethnography. The thesis proposed a radical theoretical approach to understand non-animal ecological others, and ultimately used this approach to contest postcolonial identity politics.

In part one of this thesis, it covered three major areas of discussion: on nonhuman animals, on other non-animal types of ecological beings, and on the importance of adopting ecocritical reading to analyse postcolonial literary works. The proposed argument about the otherness of animals was inspired by the philosophy of several key continental philosophers, including Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida and Giorgio Agamben, whose philosophy offers a grounding to develop a non-anthropocentric perspective. Moreover, drawing also from Matthew Calarco’s interpretation of these philosophers’ ideas, Calarco’s reading helped advancing my argument to debunk the anthropocentric machine, which operates in the nexus of Western metaphysic and philosophical traditions. The argument related to non-animal ecological beings was influenced primarily by the philosophical ideas or theories of Timothy Morton, Steven Shaviro and Eduardo Kohn. Their ideas and theories demonstrated a possible deconstruction of the Kantian epistemology and Cartesian Subject, which are in alignment with anthropocentrism. Furthermore, outlining the importance of their theories, the thesis showed a possible understanding of the ontological world through affective relations between human and nonhuman entities. In a different perspective, the thesis proposed that it is also possible to destabilise the anthropocentric machine with this new ontological approach based on non-animal ecological beings. The final chapter of part one demonstrated the essential links between Romanticism and ecocriticism, justifying the need to employ an ecocritical approach to study postcolonial literature. The presented links showed that an interdisciplinary study of postcolonialism and ecologism is both necessary and appropriate to break new grounds for academic disciplinary research. This particular chapter began with a synthesis of Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe’s critique on the rise of German Romanticism and the fundamental idea of “literature.” Nevertheless, the thesis argued: with the evolution of Romantic movement in different parts of Europe, “literature” was invested with new meanings, and it was adopted differently by contemporary ecocriticism. The thesis thus
clarified why it considered important to adopt the role of “literature,” which plays a significant role in postcolonial ecocriticism, for its overall analysis. With respect to the applied methodologies of this thesis, part one thus put forward the significance of bridging postcolonial and ecocritical studies, demonstrating that this rising interdisciplinary study deserves more attention in academic field of research.

The second and the third part of this thesis drew intertextual and comparative reading of Coetzee and Wu’s literary works. Part two mainly took issues that are relevant to postcolonialism into discussions, whereas part three focused on problems associated with ecologism. By presenting a comparative analysis of Coetzee and Wu’s works, part two highlighted several problematic aspects that are essentially tied to the construction of the two respective postcolonial modern nation-states, particularly in relation to their postcolonial identity politics. Four aspects were initially discussed in part two, including the production of literature, the remaking of colonial history and postcolonial memory, language and identity formation, and colonial environmental history. As shown in the analysis, literature produced in Taiwan and South Africa is, to a great extent, determined by the regional politics of its modern colonial history. Moreover, the production of literature is often conceived as a means to construct a unified cultural or political identity for the modern Subject. The thesis, however, argued that Coetzee and Wu’s postmodern writings are able to contest this constructed cultural or political identity. The second chapter inquired into the remaking of colonial memory and the construction of postcolonial narratives in the two countries. It drew attention to different views on this issue that are proposed by a number of South African and Taiwanese literary critics, namely Njabulo Ndebele, André Brink, Sarah Nuttall, Chen Fang-ming and Peng Hsiao-yen. The thesis further proposed that the involuntary childhood memories that are summoned in postcolonial authors’ semi-autobiographies can be an alternative choice for the remaking of postcolonial narratives. The third chapter outlined the realisation of national language policies in South Africa and Taiwan, showing that the formation of postcolonial political identity is inevitably tied to the imposition of national language(s). It also argued that this linguistic imposition is in fact a colonial legacy. To resist this colonial legacy, Coetzee draws symbolic references to the silent postcolonial subalterns, whereas Wu embraces Homi Bhabha’s approach of linguistic/cultural hybridity. The final chapter in part two followed the argument of George B. Handley and Elizabeth DeLoughrey, considering colonial and environmental history as mutually constitutive. It discussed extensively the impacts on the postcolonial environments wrought by colonial history in the
two countries. Both in these two authors’ works as well as other environmental research documents, my findings showed that colonial biopolitical and environmental managements are two aspects that have reciprocal effects on each other. The thesis emphasised that the only way to conduct a comprehensive study is by taking into account of one another. This last chapter was crucial to my doctoral dissertation, since it brought together concrete discussions of postcolonialism and environmentalism in a literary context. More importantly, it also served as a transition with part three, showing the necessity to bring in discussions about ethical and ontological dimensions of the ecological beings. On the whole, the second part of my thesis tried to cover as thoroughly as possible the discussion of various historical events, literary movements, socio-political upheavals, language policies or exploitative environmental practices that occurred in different colonial or transitional periods of these two countries. But, seeing that these two countries had significant amount of differences in their history, colonial experiences, languages, and cultures, it was almost impossible to gather or sort out all the relevant research information without paying several research visits to the two countries. With limited budgets and time, I had not privileged my research journey to South Africa. My knowledge about South Africa thus was mainly based on my readings of relevant documents in English or French which I was able to obtain online, with personal networks or with my accesses to different libraries in Europe.

Part three drew attention to the ecological aspects of the chosen literary texts, highlighting the role and the function of the ecological other. Three chapters were then included in chapter three for detail discussions: the concept of the “animal,” the subjectivity of nonhuman non-animal ecological others, and ethics towards nonhumans. The first chapter introduced the concept of the “animal,” a neologism that applies to beings that combine features of both animals and humans. This concept was inspired by Agamben’s philosophy of the permeable border between animals and humans as well as by animal subjectivity as discussed in the works of Wu and Coetzee. The second chapter turned to the discussion of subjectivity of non-animal ecological others. The related theoretical arguments were mostly drawn from Jane Bennett’s philosophical view on nonhuman beings and objects. It first clarified the divisions of these ecological others and elaborated different philosophical approaches with regard to their subjectivity. As pointed out earlier, it also tackled the issue of anthropocentrism that is embedded in Western metaphysics and epistemology. From a posthumanist perspective, the thesis explained why this problematic anthropocentrism has prevented us from seeing the crucial role of nonhuman non-animal ecological others.
However, one noticeable problem here was the subjectivity of nonhuman beings that was theorised in this chapter. Comparing to the concept of “animan” that was theorised in the previous chapter, the subjectivity of ecological others was less fully-developed. In this chapter, the thesis chose to limit its definition of ecological other in relevance with “nature” and it mainly focused on the Bennett’s reading of Spinozist notion of “affect” to constitute its argument about their subjectivity. Nevertheless, throughout years of research, I have come across other studies that tackle the question of subjectivity of nonhuman non-animal beings or objects in other different aspect. For example, both Terrence Deacon and Jesper Hoffmeyer, have, in some respects, argued that life is fundamentally based on sign action (“semiosis”) and not on molecular interactions. Their research has considered the existence of subjectivity of non-animal ecological beings or objects articulated by biosemiosis. Unfortunately, considering the limited time that I had as well as the coherence of the entire thesis argument, I decided not to go further into this field. However, it will be very interesting to develop and explore more in this aspect of nonhuman non-animal beings if opportunities arise in my future academic career. The last chapter dealt with the question of ethics towards nonhuman others in general. In regard to animal ethics, Derridean philosophical questioning of the animal remained the core of the thesis’ argument. Issues concerning humane killing of the animals, vegetarianism, and industrialisation of animal by-products were addressed extensively, together with the discussions of other different philosophical positions, including that of Peter Singer and Brian Massumi. One of the weak points in this part of the discussion, which I have realised in retrospect, is my choice to compare these two philosophers’ ethical positions and approaches. Whereas Peter Singer develops his principles of animal ethics from the perspective of analytic philosophy, Massumi draws our attention to a continental philosophical reading of animal ethics and aesthetics. It was difficult to lay out a solid grounding in comparing their philosophical postions. Though at the end of this section, Tom Regan’s philosophical position on animal ethics was briefly evoked in dicussion, the entire argument would have been more complete if I had brought Regan’s view into a more comprehensive study. With respect to ethics towards nonhuman non-animal ecological others, the thesis included discussions of ethical arguments about the recognition of their intrinsic value, political arguments about their affective ability and juridical arguments related to the possibility of recognising the rights of ecological beings. The difficulty encountered in this chapter was to draw relevant examples from Coetzee’s writings for literary comparison with

Wu Ming-yi’s. As stated in my introduction, Coetzee is mostly regarded as a postcolonial writer, though some of his works are identified with critical thoughts on issues related to animals and postcolonial environments. Unfortunately, Coetzee’s writings hardly demonstrate discussion in the framework of environmental ethics. The final section of part three therefore appears to have an unparallel structure with regard to its literary analysis. To a certain extent, the choice of drawing another postcolonial writer’s work for such comparative study might seem a more suited option. It is therefore my wish to further pursue and deal with this problem in my future postdoctoral research.

On the whole, in recent postcolonial ecocritical studies, more attention has been drawn to the significant role that animals play in literary texts. It is true that, in general, locating postcolonial literary texts that integrate discussions of the subjectivity of animals or embody ethical questioning about animal is not a difficult task. On the contrary, non-animal types of ecological beings often stand apart from these literary texts. In postcolonial ecocritical studies, a number of theorists and philosophers have debated the ontological or ethical aspects of non-animal kinds of ecological others and have considered the importance of their role. Yet, not enough of attention has been drawn to study literary texts that are relevant to these ecological beings. With this thesis, I hope it has achieved in putting forward the role of the ecological others. Furthermore, I wish that this role of the ecological others could assist in developing this new fields of research in postcolonial eco-literature.
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Introduction

Cette thèse présente une analyse comparée des œuvres de deux écrivains contemporains, John Maxwell Coetzee (1940-), originaire d'Afrique du Sud et Wu Ming-yi (1971-), de Taïwan, que l'on associe au genre de la « littérature écologique postcoloniale ». À partir de leurs travaux, cette thèse propose une étude interdisciplinaire couvrant trois dimensions : théorique, politique et littéraire. Les textes choisis pour l’analyse sont plus spécifiquement les écrits qui cherchent à la fois à re-présenter l’image dystopique de l’exploitation des environnements naturels et des êtres non-humains et à exprimer la représentation de l’oppression des peuples colonisés et de l’exploitation des ressources naturelles dans un cadre colonial dans différentes parties du monde. En ce qui concerne la dimension théorique, la thèse aborde le questionnement suivant : comment la philosophie occidentale contemporaine prend en compte les animaux et les êtres écologiques (le sort des êtres non-humains et non-animaux), afin de reconsidérer la question plus générale de l’altérité. Quant à la dimension politique, la thèse place le questionnement sur le terrain de la philosophie politique en s’intéressant aux contextes historiques des pays postcoloniaux, notamment ceux de l’Afrique du Sud et de Taïwan. Enfin, la dimension littéraire examine les écrits de Coetzee et de Wu afin de montrer comment leurs textes décrivent l’« ecological other [autre écologique] » en tant que moyen pour lutter contre l’identité politique postcoloniale.

Littérature écologique postcoloniale

Qu’est-ce que la littérature écologique postcoloniale ? Comment peut-on la définir ? Le sens large et littéral de ce terme n’est pas difficile à saisir : c’est la littérature qui se préoccupe et traite des enjeux liés au postcolonialisme et à l’écologie.1 On peut également définir la littérature écologique postcoloniale d’une manière plus précise. Par exemple, il est

1 Ultimement, cette sorte de littérature peut également articuler des questions liées à l’esthétique.
tout à fait possible d’examiner d’abord la définition de la littérature postcoloniale et de la littérature écologique prises séparément, puis de chercher un sens pour l’ensemble de l’expression « littérature écologique postcoloniale ». Par littérature postcoloniale, j’entends l’écriture littéraire qui cherche à répondre ou à entretenir un dialogue avec le discours intellectuel colonialiste et impérialiste moderne, étant donné que ces réponses et ces dialogues abordent des enjeux à la fois culturels, historiques, géographique, politiques, philosophiques et esthétiques. Très souvent, l’objectif de la littérature postcoloniale est d’identifier et de traiter les problèmes socio-politiques au sein des états-nations (pays) modernes qui ont été établis après la Second Guerre Mondiale. Dans certains cas, la littérature postcoloniale peut être orientée vers l’articulation de récits historiques et d’illustration de mémoires collectives. Quant à la littérature écologique, je propose de la concevoir dans le sens inverse de la définition de la littérature environnementale selon Timothy Morton. En tant que professeur de littérature anglaise qui explore le croisement de l’« ontologie orientée vers les objets [object-oriented ontology] » et de l’écologie, Morton estime que : « l’art donne à ce qui est non-conceptuel une apparence illusoire de la forme ». Selon la logique de cette citation, il affirme que le but de la littérature environnementale est d’« encapsuler une image utopique de la nature qui n’est pas réelle ». La définition de Morton n’est pas fausse et pourtant, elle reste limitée dans certains aspects. Je propose donc d’analyser la littérature écologique comme l’ensemble des écrits littéraires qui représente une version dystopique hyperbolique de l’environnement, auxquels les imaginations dystopiques des auteurs sont évoquées ou se sont inspirées à travers du monde actuel. D’une part, les dégradations environnementales et le changement climatique sont aujourd’hui des faits reconnus et les gens sont beaucoup plus conscients du fait que la situation environnementale empire rapidement. D’autre part, en comparaison avec les écrits sur la nature rédigés aux siècles précédents, les écrivains contemporains sont davantage sensibles à l’état dégradé de notre environnement. Dans le passé, la nature décrite par les écrivains était principalement liée à leurs aspirations à la beauté ou l’état sain de la nature. C’est ce que l’on retrouve notamment dans les écrits de Jean-Jacques Rousseau et d’Henry David Thoreau. Pour ces raisons, la littérature écologique peut-être entendue comme les écrits qui se focalisent sur la description dystopique hyperbolique de l’environnement. La représentation de cette dystopie hyperbolique de l’environnement traite de différentes sortes d’abus ou de maltraitance des animaux, de l’endommagement des


organismes non-humains, de la pollution des écosystèmes ou encore des phénomènes naturels inhabituels et imprévisibles provoqués par l’exploitation humaine de la nature ainsi que leurs effets négatifs sur les êtres humains. La littérature écologique aborde donc des enjeux et des questions telles que la chasse à la baleine, l’élevage des poules en batterie, la destruction de la forêt tropicale, le réchauffement climatique, l’élévation du niveau des mers, etc. L’objectif principal est de rappeler que nous aggravons la dégradation de notre environnement.

Si l’on s’appuie sur ces définitions de la littérature postcoloniale et de la littérature écologique, le terme « littérature écologique postcoloniale » désigne spécifiquement des écrits littéraires qui cherchent à re-présenter l’image dystopique de l’exploitation de l’environnement naturel et des êtres non-humains tout en associant et articulant cette critique à la répression de peuples colonisés et à l’exploitation de la nature effectuée dans le contexte colonial. Les écritures de Coetzee et Wu font particulièrement émerger cette image dystopique et éclairer nos réflexions philosophiques et c’est pourquoi ma thèse propose d’analyser de manière croisée leurs œuvres. Ces deux auteurs prennent des perspectives postcoloniales et écrivent dans des contextes postcoloniaux complètement différents. Dans une certaine mesure, nous pouvons même dire que leurs écrits prennent des positions ontologiques très différentes quant à ce qu’on entend par l’écologie. Cependant, mon but n’est pas d’affaiblir la création littéraire ou de dévaluer les pensées philosophiques d’un auteur en référence à l’autre, mais plutôt de créer un espacement⁴ - dans le sens métaphorique derridien - tel que leurs ouvrages entrent dans un dialogue l’un avec l’autre. Toutefois, avant que nous nous immergions dans l’analyse de leurs textes, nous sommes obligés de nous poser la question : « pourquoi avons-nous besoin de la littérature écologique postcoloniale » ?

Pour répondre à cette question, on doit considérer deux aspects essentiels de la littérature écologique postcoloniale : l’aspect politique et l’aspect esthétique. Sur le premier, dans le monde politique actuel, il existe de toute évidence un besoin de réfléchir à la nature et l’état-nation dans un même mouvement. On ne peut plus, tout simplement, penser ou imaginer la nature et l’état-nation séparément, ou les comprendre comme deux idées...
indépendantes, sans rapport entre elles. La nature est incontestablement liée à l’état-nation. Comme Morton l’affirme: «dans l’ére moderne, […] la nature et l’état-nation sont étroitement entremêlés ».⁵ Si nous suivons l’explication de Morton, nous comprendrons que: à l’époque moderne, nous inventons l’état-nation comme remplacement de l’état féodal ou de la société monarchique traditionnelle. L’état-nation prend donc le rôle et l’autorité qui étaient auparavant incarnés par la monarchie. De ce fait, dans la société d’aujourd’hui, la gestion, l’imagination ainsi que la définition conceptuelle de certains espaces spécifiques de la nature sont entièrement dépendants de la façon dont l’état-nation considère ces espaces et comment il les politise.⁶ Autrement dit, une partie du rôle de l’état-nation est de définir son occupation des espaces naturels tout en désignant la frontière géopolitique de ces espaces, son objectif principal étant de maximiser leur utilité économique et d’assurer une réglementation nationale efficace. Qui plus est, cette définition des espaces naturels concerne non seulement la surface terrestre mais également les territoires marins et aériens aux alentours. Cette idée n’est pas particulièrement originale, mais elle est beaucoup moins travaillée par les humanités et par la littérature. Je souhaite donc explorer ce sujet en m’appuyant notamment sur une discussion du postcolonialisme et de l’écologie, puisque le premier problématisé essentiellement les questions liées à l’état-nation et la seconde problématisé les questions liées à la nature et l’environnement.

En ce qui concerne la dimension esthétique, Morton évoque les réflexions d’Herbert Marcuse sur l’art et l’écologie, qui sous-entend que l’urgence est de privilégier la littérature afin de comprendre les crises du monde industriel technologique contemporain.⁷ Morton affirme:

L’art peut aider l’écologie par une modalisation de l’environnement basée sur l’amour (eros) au lieu de la mort (thanatos) — ce qu’est le monde industriel technologique actuel, selon Marcuse.⁸

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⁵ Timothy Morton, op.cit., p.15.
⁶ Un exemple justifie clairement ce constat. Pour la philosophie de l’écologie radicale, il n’existe pas de nature sauvage dans le monde actuel. De leur point de vue, la gestion de l’espace naturel par un gouvernement d’un état-nation est très forte dans sa présence. À certains égards, c’est même inévitable puisque l’endroit naturel le plus désert peut être réclamé et géré officiellement comme un parc naturel par un état-nation. La politisation de l’espace naturel par l’état-nation se retrouve donc partout dans le monde.
⁷ Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979) était un philosophe et théoricien politique germano-américain. Il est surtout connu comme membre de l’école de Francfort. Son travail propose une analyse critique du capitalisme, du matérialisme historique, de la technologie, de l’industrialisation moderne et de la culture du divertissement. Selon lui, ce sont de nouvelles formes de domination inventées pour un contrôle social accru.
Morton partage cette idée de Marcuse. Il pense que l’expansion industrielle technologique contemporaine ne pourra mener qu’à la détérioration de l’environnement. Cependant, il considère que l’art peut être un moyen qui assiste à concevoir l’environnement avec l’amour (eros) et éviter sa dégradation. Selon Marcuse :

L’univers esthétique est un Lebenswelt dont les besoins et les facultés de la liberté dépendent pour leur libération. Ils ne peuvent pas se développer dans un environnement qui est façonné par et pour des pulsions agressives et ils ne peuvent pas non plus être envisagés comme le simple effet d’un nouvel ensemble des institutions sociales. Ils ne peuvent apparaître que dans la pratique collective en créant un environnement.9

Pour Marcuse, le Lebenswelt [monde de la vie] est un monde qui se compose des expériences phénoménologiques, telles que définies par l’analyse d’Husserl. Pour être immergées et engagées dans l’esthétique de ce monde vivant, les facultés stimulées de la liberté sont nécessaires. Ces facultés ne peuvent pas se produire ou se développer dans un environnement qui est modalisé par des pulsions agressives et hostiles, telle que les forces de violence ou de dégradation. En revanche, ces facultés peuvent apparaître dans la pratique collective, en créant un environnement. En effet, cette pratique collective est l’art. En suivant l’argument de Marcuse, Morton souligne l’urgence de l’art pour penser l’écologie. Lorsque l’art se manifeste et se présente devant nous, il nous permet de comprendre les crises de l’environnement, qui sont souvent la conséquence des pulsions agressives.

La littérature, en sens commun, est une forme d’art. Morton n’affirme pas explicitement que la littérature est le seul moyen qui peut mener à un changement important dans notre façon à penser l’écologie. Comme il l’affirme au sujet de son livre, « Ecology without Nature tente de ne pas favoriser une forme particulière de la jouissance esthétique 10 ». Cependant, à partir de ses analyses de textes littéraires dans sa recherche, il est évident qu’il y a une priorité de la littérature en tant que forme esthétique spécifique pour aborder des questionnements sur les crises écologiques. Sans aucun doute, la façon qu’à Morton de voir l’art et la littérature en tant que médiums principaux pour résoudre les crises écologiques contemporaines nous montre le lien évident entre la conception romantique de la nature et son influence sur le développement d’une écocritique contemporaine. Dans le premier chapitre, un sous-chapitre traitera spécifiquement de l’avènement du romantisme ainsi que son influence.

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10 Timothy Morton, op.cit., p.6.
sur l’établissement de l’écocritique. Dans ce sous-chapitre, cette thèse fournira une critique de la notion de « littérature » proposée par les romantiques. Néanmoins, la thèse apportera un contre-argument de cette critique et expliquera pourquoi elle s’aligne sur la position de Morton.

En définissant un terrain commun entre les deux points que je viens de montrer – le lien essentiel entre l’état-nation et la représentation de la nature ainsi que la relation fondamentale entre la littérature et l’écologie – nous comprenons pourquoi il est important d’étudier ensemble le postcolonialisme et l’écologie. Qui plus est, nous comprenons pourquoi nous aurons besoin de la littérature écologique postcoloniale. Encore une fois, le propos de Morton résume merveilleusement la raison d’étudier la littérature écologique postcoloniale : « Écrire sur l’écologie c’est écrire sur la société et non pas simplement dans un sens faible, selon lequel nos idées de l’écologie sont des constructions sociales ».11 En effet, écrire sur l’écologie n’est pas une description de l’environnement naturel, mais une écriture pour l’environnement dans l’ensemble. Elle inclut donc les articulations et problématisations de la société, de l’économie, de la politique et bien évidemment, elle traite aussi des articulations entre environnement naturel et milieu artificiel.

**J.M. Coetzee et Wu Ming-yi**

D’autres auteurs que Coetzee et Wu offrent des analyses philosophiques puissantes sur le lien entre postcolonialisme et écocritique. Cependant, pour plusieurs raisons, j’ai choisi de me focaliser sur les œuvres de ces deux écrivains. Premièrement, malgré le fait que ces deux auteurs aient grandi dans des pays postcoloniaux et dans un contexte d’après-guerre, ils représentent deux générations postcoloniales distinctes. Ils ont donc développé des réflexions différentes et ils ont acquis des points de vue différents sur leurs environnements socio-politiques, différences identifiables dans leurs créations artistiques. Mener une étude comparée et interdisciplinaire sur leurs travaux offre un champ plus large à la compréhension de l’héritage colonial dans différentes parties du monde ainsi qu’à une meilleure compréhension des différentes périodes postcoloniales.

Deuxièmement, une chose intéressante qu’un lecteur attentif peut constater est la référence explicite de Coetzee dans l’écriture de Wu Ming-yi. Dans son premier roman

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postcolonial, *Shuimian de hangxian* 睡眠的航線 [Les Lignes de navigation du sommeil] (2007), Wu mobilise une phrase *Waiting for the Barbarians* [En attendant les barbares] (1980) de Coetzee comme épigraphé pour son deuxième chapitre. La référence à Coetzee dans le texte de Wu crée immédiatement une intertextualité entre leurs ouvrages. Cette intertextualité indique un lien essentiel entre les deux auteurs et c’est l’une des raisons qui m’a motivé à travailler sur ces deux écrivains, car cela m’intriguait de découvrir si Coetzee, dans une certaine mesure, avait influencé l’écriture de Wu.


Par exemples, dans *Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life* [Scènes de la vie d’un jeune garçon] (1997) et *Disgrace* [Disgrâce] (1999), Coetzee introduit des scènes d’abus animaux qui, en dehors des enjeux qu’elles soulèvent concernant l’éthique animale, effectue également

12 「晚上是最好的時間：有時你無法入睡時，那是因為你耳朵的頻率正好與逝者的哭聲相通。」 Wu Ming-yi, *Shuimian de hangxian* 睡眠的航線 [Routes in a Dream], Taipei: Eryu wenhua, 2007, p.71, citation de Coetzee en *En attendant les barbares*. Le texte original en anglais et la traduction en français avec l’aide de Gwennaël Gaffric, traducteur français de Wu Ming-yi : « The night is best: sometimes when you have difficulty in falling asleep it is because your ears have been reached by the cries of the dead. » [La nuit est le meilleur moment : parfois, quand vous avez du mal à vous endormir c’est parce que vos oreilles entendent les cris des morts]. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Londres: Vintage, 2004, p.123.


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14 On peut contester que la carrière de Wu en tant qu’un écrivain ne commence pas par ces trois ouvrages, mais par deux autres recueils de nouvelles furent publiées quand Wu était plus jeune : *Benri gongxiu 本日公休 [Fermé pour les vacances] (1997) and Huye 虎爺 [Maitre Tigre] (2003). J’ai délibérément choisi de ne pas tenir compte de ces deux livres puisqu’il y a deux raisons qui me persuadent que sa carrière commence à la suite de ces collections d’essais qui parlent de l’environnement et de la nature. Premièrement, ses deux ouvrages ne sont plus disponibles sur le marché et sont très peu lus par le public. Deuxièmement, ces deux livres sont mieux vus comme des recueils de textes pendant différentes périodes de la jeunesse de Wu. Ils ne partagent pas de thème cohérent et il n’existe pas non plus de récit qui fasse le lien entre chaque nouvelle. Au niveau de la structure de ces deux livres, elle n’est pas unifiée et chaque histoire reste indépendante. Par exemple, certaines histoires traitent de la question des Aborigènes taïwanais, d’autres s’intéressent à la vie lors du service militaire et d’autres encore parlent de la culture du *baseball* à Taïwan. Les lecteurs doivent garder à l’esprit que malgré le fait qu’il est difficile de retrouver un thème cohérent pour ces deux ouvrages, certaines de ces histoires anticipent l’intérêt écologique plus tardif de Wu. En effet, son intention d’intégrer les discussions sur les enjeux environnementaux est parfois présente dans ces histoires.
Meilidao shijian 美麗島事件 [l’incident de Formose] s’est déroulé en 1979.\(^\text{15}\) Cependant, le climat social où il a grandi ne permettait pas une expression libre de points de vue politiques librement ni même de participer directement à des événements politiques. Ce climat social n’encourageait pas les populations à se souvenir et à penser le passé colonial du pays.

Quand Wu a commencé à écrire aux alentours de vingt ans, il était beaucoup plus influencé par les écrivains de la littérature du terroir Xiangtu Wenxue 鄉土文學 [la littérature du terroir], telle que Huang Chun-ming 黃春明 et Song Ze-lai 宋澤萊.\(^\text{16}\) Ses premiers écrits explorent de nombreux thèmes variés et une grande partie contient des observations de la vie des paysans, de leur travail de la terre, l’environnement naturel ainsi que la faune. Ce n’est qu’après la mort de son père que Wu commence à écrire des récits liés à l’histoire coloniale de Taïwan. Dans sa mémoire, le père de Wu appartenait à une « génération japonaise perdue », dans laquelle les Taïwanais étaient libérés de la domination de leurs ex-colonisateurs japonais, mais demeuraient en quelque sorte culturellement « japonais ».\(^\text{17}\) Selon Wu, son père était un homme silencieux « comme la plupart des personnes âgées japonaises » et il ne parlait presque jamais de son passé.\(^\text{18}\) Wu connaissait donc très peu de la vie de son père. Après sa mort, Wu a découvert une vieille photo de lui, debout à côté d’un avion de chasse. Wu n’était donc pas très familier de la vie de son père. Après sa mort, Wu a découvert une vieille photo de lui, debout à côté d’un avion de chasse. Il a commencé alors à dévoiler le passé de son père et il apprit par une surprise que son père s’était engagé volontairement pour le service militaire japonais quand il avait eu treize ans.\(^\text{19}\) En se comparant à son père au même âge, Wu s’est rendu compte qu’il était préoccupé par des choses ou des pensées insignifiantes.

\(^{15}\) Meilidao shijian 美麗島事件 [l’incident de Formose] : était une manifestation politique en faveur de la démocratie. Cet événement politique a eu lieu le 10 décembre 1979 à Kaohsiung. Il a eu lieu à un moment où des figures importantes de la Magazine Formose et des activistes politiques opposés au régime autoritaire du Kuomintang ont organisé une manifestation politique pour commémorer la Journée internationale des droits de l’homme. À l’époque, Taïwan était un état de parti unique (sous le contrôle du parti républicain de Kuomintang) et le gouvernement a utilisé cette manifestation comme une excuse pour saisir les dirigeants principaux de son opposition.


\(^{17}\) Ibid.

\(^{18}\) Ibid.

\(^{19}\) Ibid.

En m’appuyant sur ces deux trajectoires intellectuelles complètement différentes, un des défis importants de cette thèse est de découvrir d’une part comment le postcolonialisme et l’environnementalisme peuvent avoir un effet l’un sur l’autre dans le contexte littéraire et d’autre part, comment le genre spécifique qu’est la littérature écologique postcoloniale peut avoir une influence sur le développement de la littérature contemporaine.

### Afrique du Sud et Taïwan

Cette thèse visant à analyser les œuvres de J. M. Coetzee et Wu Ming-yi, il est indispensable au cours de l’analyse de mener une étude comparative approfondie de l’Afrique du Sud et de Taïwan, puisque leurs écrits sont, dans une large mesure, influencés et déterminés par le contexte historique, socio-politique, culturel et linguistique de ces deux pays. Qui plus est, une autre raison importante m’amène à effectuer cette étude comparative de ces deux pays postcoloniaux : la similarité de leurs luttes socio-politiques postcoloniales.

Les deux pays ont vécu des régimes coloniaux très différents. Ainsi, si l’on s’intéresse au XIXe siècle (siècle le plus pertinent en ce qui concerne la configuration politique contemporaine de ces deux pays), l’Afrique du Sud était principalement dominée par ses

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colonisateurs hollandais et anglais, tandis que Taïwan était alors soumis au pouvoir impérial japonais, puis au pouvoir militaire du Kuomintang [le parti nationaliste]. Spontanément, on peut considérer que les pays se sont constitués différemment dans leurs aspects culturels, linguistiques, et socio-politiques. Pourtant, malgré ces différences, si on raconte une histoire longue des périodes de colonisation, on découvrira par exemple que, au XVIIe siècle, les deux pays ont été découverts par les explorateurs portugais, puis ont été occupés et dirigés par les Néerlandais. Dans une perspective historique, ces deux états-nations modernes étaient concernés par la colonisation européenne dès son début.

Néanmoins, il est pratiquement impossible de couvrir toutes les questions relatives aux expériences précoloniales et postcoloniales de ces deux pays dans la thèse. Cette thèse affirme qu’il est plus pertinent de définir et travailler sur certaines périodes spécifiques, afin que les analyses critiques présentées soient plus cohérentes et précises. De plus, puisque Coetzee et Wu sont nés après 1940, leurs œuvres littéraires évoquent souvent leurs propres expériences liées à la période transitoire et postcoloniale. Cette thèse se concentre donc sur les conditions sociales et politiques de ces deux périodes, en Afrique du Sud et à Taïwan. Comme évoqué ci-dessus, la raison principale pour conduire une étude comparative de ces deux pays est la similarité de leurs luttes socio-politiques, luttes qui peuvent être distinguées en deux périodes historiques : entre 1948 et la fin des années 1980 ou début des années 1990 (la période transitoire) ; de la fin des années 1980 jusqu’à aujourd’hui (l’ère postcoloniale).

Les années 1948 et 1949 ont laissé une trace déterminante dans l’histoire politique de ces deux pays. Les deux pays sont entrés dans une période transitoire, pendant laquelle leurs anciens colonisateurs britannique et japonais ont dû abandonner leur gouvernance. Ces anciens pouvoirs coloniaux étaient soit directement affiliés aux nouveaux gouvernements, soit

21 En 1949, le gouvernement du Kuomintang [le parti nationaliste], dirigé par le Généralissime Tchang Kaï-chek 蔣介石, s’est replié à Taïwan après avoir perdu plusieurs batailles contre le Parti communiste en Chine continentale. Après que le Kuomintang a pris le pouvoir à Taïwan, le gouvernement a mis en place un système autoritaire avec un parti unique, et instauré une loi martiale pour les quarante années suivantes. Cette période, connue sous le nom de « Terreur blanche » (Baise kongbu 白色恐怖), a laissé une trace indélébile dans l’histoire contemporaine de Taïwan, puisqu’elle est l’une des plus longues périodes de loi martiale dans le monde.


À l’autre bout de l’Asie Pacifique, c’est en 1949 que le gouvernement du Kuomintang s’est replié à Taïwan. Après que le Kuomintang a pris le pouvoir à Taïwan, le gouvernement a mis en place un système autoritaire avec un parti unique, et instauré une loi martiale pour les quarante années suivantes. Cette période, a laissé une trace indélébile dans l’histoire contemporaine de Taïwan. En raison de la revendication par le Kuomintang d’être le seul représentant légitime de la Chine ainsi que de sa confrontation militaire et politique avec le Parti communiste chinois, la mise en place de la loi martiale était une façon légale et efficace de supprimer les idées communistes et les activités indépendantistes à Taïwan. Dans le cadre de l’état d’urgence, le gouvernement du Kuomintang a aussi essayé de construire et d’imposer une identité politique « chinoise » unifiée à partir de différents traits, ethniques, linguistiques, culturels ou encore littéraire, qui sont tous discutés en détail dans cette thèse.

C’est à la fin des années 1980 et au début des années 1990 que ces deux actes politiques ont pris fin. En 1987, presque quatre décennies après l’avènement de la dictature militaire du Kuomintang, la loi martiale a finalement été levée à Taïwan et le pays est rentrée dans une nouvelle ère, une ère postcoloniale « véritable » où les Taïwanais ont glané leur liberté d’expression et leur régime démocratique. L’état a réformé la loi et il a levé l’interdiction sur les partis politiques autre que le Kuomintang, ainsi que l’interdiction de réunion. Pour l’Afrique du Sud, c’est en 1994 que le système politique de ségrégation raciale a pris fin. Le changement a été symbolisé par la victoire de Nelson Mandela lors de la première élection présidentielle démocratique. L’institution politique a été complètement
reformée et les traitements inégaux ou la discrimination légale envers les populations non-blanches a – en théorie – été abolie. Ces deux pays postcoloniaux ont vécu quasiment une demi-siècle de transition traumatique, y compris de violence raciale, sexuelle, culturelle, linguistique et de classe, héritée de la colonisation. Ces événements politiques qui sont arrivés approximativement à la même période en Afrique du Sud et à Taïwan présentent donc des contextes socio-politiques intéressants pour une analyse littéraire approfondie sur les œuvres de Coetzee et Wu.

**Mon corpus**

L’arrière-plan de mon argument général consiste à évaluer l’épistémologie constructiviste et à montrer comment l’état-nation, l’identité politique d’un sujet, l’origine ethnique et la littérature (nationale) sont bâtis par cette épistémologie. Par ailleurs, je souhaite montrer comment ce que je considère comme des constructions sont mises en pratique dans nos vies quotidiennes. Bien que j’aie l’intention d’effectuer une analyse littéraire, il me semble néanmoins nécessaire d’étayer mon propos par des exemples concrets concernant la construction de l’état-nation, de l’identité postcoloniale ou encore de l’origine ethnique. Ainsi, dans mon analyse littéraire, je n’exclurai pas les analyses comparatives sur : (1) les organisations régionales d’après-guerre par rapport aux pouvoirs politiques en Asie Pacifique et Afrique, ainsi (2) les sociétés postcoloniales de Taïwan et d’Afrique du Sud.

**Bilan et Perspectives**

À travers l’étude des œuvres de J. M. Coetzee et Wu Ming-yi, cette thèse propose une approche interdisciplinaire de la littérature écologique postcoloniale dans ses aspects théorique, politique et littéraire. Les textes qui构成ent mon corpus sont des écrits visant à re-présenter l’image dystopique de l’exploitation des environnements naturels et des êtres non-humains et à exprimer la représentation de la répression des peuples colonisés et l’exploitation des ressources naturelles dans des contextes coloniaux de différentes parties du monde.

Avec pour objectif de mener un examen interdisciplinaire du postcolonialisme et de l’environnementalisme, le premier chapitre de ce travail a été consacré aux problématiques théoriques et méthodologiques. La question centrale de l’altérité est abordée en mobilisant des concepts philosophiques qui permettent d’étendre le principe de la subjectivité au-delà du simple cadre anthropocentrique et épistémologique, c’est-à-dire tel qu’il est généralement pensé par l’anthropologie et l’ethnographie. Ce chapitre a donc également introduit l’approche théorique radicale développée dans la thèse pour une compréhension des êtres écologiques non-humains, mobilisée par les auteurs pour contester l’identité politique postcoloniale.

Dans le premier chapitre de cette thèse, trois domaines principaux ont été discutés : les animaux non-humains, les autres êtres écologiques non-animaux, et l’importance du recours à l’écocritique dans l’analyse des œuvres littéraires postcoloniales. L’hypothèse proposée concernant l’altérité des animaux est inspirée de la pensée de philosophes continentaux
contemporains, parmi lesquels Emmanuel Lévinas, Jacques Derrida et Giorgio Agamben. Leurs philosophies ouvrent la voie à une perspective non-anthropocentrique. Par ailleurs, en portant mon attention sur les interprétations de Matthew Calarco sur les pensées de ces trois philosophes, j’ai montré comment Calarco réussit à défaire cette «machine anthropocentrique», qui fonctionne au sein de la métaphysique occidentale et de ses traditions philosophiques. Par exemple, en appliquant la théorie d’Agamben, Calarco montre que des êtres animaux possèdent des modes de communications et il affirme que les animaux sont déjà dans le milieu des langues. Il propose donc d’envisager un franchissement de la frontière linguistique entre des êtres humains et animaux afin d’appréhender leurs modes de communications ou leurs usages des langues. Il est ainsi possible de vraiment percevoir l’ontologie de cette altérité animale et de défaire la «machine anthropocentrique». La discussion liée aux êtres écologiques non-animaux est avant tout dominée par les idées et les théories philosophiques de Timothy Morton, Steven Shaviro et Eduardo Kohn. Les théories de Morton et de Shaviro présentent une déconstruction de l’épistémologie kantienne et du «Sujet» cartésien, qui participent de l’anthropocentrisme. L’approche alternative de Kohn démontre quant à elle que notre perception du système linguistique est limitée par nos conceptions anthropocentrées. Kohn mobilise les travaux de Charles S. Peirce et Terrence Deacon et propose que des êtres écologiques non-humains et non-animaux (comme les forêts ou un écosystème) partagent la même sphère sémiotique que nous et que ces êtres peuvent manifester leurs «pensées» à travers leurs usages des signes. De plus, en soulignant l’importance des idées de ces trois théoriciens contemporains, nous avons voulu montrer qu’une nouvelle compréhension de l’ontologie peut être permise en considérant les relations affectives entre des humains et êtres non-humains. Dans une optique différente, notre travail a démontré qu’il était possible de déstabiliser la machine anthropocentrique en usant d’une nouvelle approche ontologique basée sur des êtres écologiques non-animaux.

Le dernier sous-chapitre est revenu sur le lien essentiel entre le romantisme et l’écocritique et a justifié la nécessité d’employer une approche écocritique pour l’étude de la littérature postcoloniale. Ce lien révèle que l’étude interdisciplinaire du postcolonialisme et de l’environnementalisme est non seulement nécessaire mais également riche de potentiel pour de nouvelles recherches académiques. Après avoir synthétisé la critique de Jean-Luc Nancy et Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, notamment sur l’avènement du romantisme allemand et l’idée fondamentale de la «littérature», la thèse a montré qu’avec l’évolution propre du mouvement romantique dans différentes parties de l’Europe, l’idée de «littérature» s’est chargée de
nouveaux sens, dont la pluralité se retrouve au sein de l’écocritique contemporaine. Cette idée justifie donc encore d’avantage la pertinence d’une analyse du rôle de la « littérature », qui est peut-être une préoccupation majeure de l’écocritique postcoloniale.

D’un point de vue méthodologique, le premier chapitre a insisté sur l’importance de rapprocher étude postcoloniale et étude écocritique, en montrant que ce nouveau domaine interdisciplinaire mérite plus d’attention dans le champ de la recherche littéraire.

Le deuxième et le troisième chapitre de cette thèse ont proposé des lectures comparatives des écrits littéraires de Coetzee et Wu. Le deuxième chapitre s’est concentré sur les enjeux correspondant à la discussion du postcolonialisme, alors que le troisième chapitre s’est focalisé sur les problèmes associés à l’environnementalisme. À travers l’analyse comparative des ouvrages de ces deux auteurs, le deuxième chapitre a souligné quelques enjeux problématiques liés à la construction de l’État-nation postcolonial en Afrique du Sud et à Taïwan et traite en particuliers de leurs politiques identitaires postcoloniales. Quatre questions étaient initialement discutées dans ce chapitre : (1) la production de la littérature, (2) la reconstitution de l’histoire coloniale et de la mémoire postcoloniale, (3) la formation de la langue et de l’identité, et (4) l’histoire environnementale coloniale.

Comme indiqué dans l’analyse, la littérature produite à Taïwan et en Afrique du Sud est en grand partie déterminée par la politique régionale vis à vis de son histoire coloniale. Pour le Sujet moderne, la production littéraire est souvent conçue comme l’un des moyens de promotion d’une identité politique ou culturelle unifiée. J’ai attiré l’attention sur les analyses de Peter Button et Nicholas Brown, en expliquant comment la littérature moderne à Taïwan et en Afrique du Sud est « construite » et conçue par rapport à la spécificité historico-coloniale de la région. Selon Button, la littérature chinoise moderne qui était publiée en Chine continentale au début du XXème siècle a suivi la logique d’une notion de « 典型 dianxing [classique ?] » et a donc donné lieu à une tradition hégémonique selon laquelle toutes les œuvres littéraires devaient incorporer ou incarner le concept du « 国民性 guominxing [caractère national prolétarien] ». Ce guominxing est devenu indispensable à la fabrication d’une « véritable œuvre d’art ». Comme Button le rappelle, le principe d’établissement d’un canon littéraire, qui participe à la l’élaboration du caractère national ou d’une identité nationale, demeure d’actualité au sein de la production de littérature chinoise moderne. Contrairement au caractère national prolétarien qu’on trouve dans la production littéraire chinoise moderne, l’imagination et la production du caractère national à Taïwan a pris un chemin opposé. Dans une volonté de distinction, le gouvernement colonial de
Kuomintang a suivi ce modèle de dianxing, mais il a tenté de fabriquer un caractère national complètement opposé à celui de la Chine continentale pour justifier sa légitimité « chinoise ». Le gouvernement du Kuomintang a donc imposé à la littérature taïwanaise moderne l’incorporation à la fois des pensées anti-communistes mais également d’une philosophie morale chinoise traditionnelle (notamment le confucianisme) dans le but de promouvoir une identité politique ou culturelle unifiée.

En ce qui concerne la production littéraire africaine, Nicholas Brown met en évidence le lien essentiel entre l’impérialisme britannique et l’émergence de la littérature africaine (à laquelle appartient la littérature sud-africaine). En s’appuyant sur la critique du capitalisme de Marx, Brown considère que le capital n’a pas seulement un sens économique. Les cultures, selon Brown, peuvent être considérées comme des unités capitales. De plus, il avance que l’impérialisme européen est responsable de la diffusion du système capitaliste à travers le monde, en particulier de ses aspects économiques et culturels. Brown montre que la littérature africaine, en tant que discipline, s’est développée notamment pour être « exportée » et « consommée » par l’institution académique occidentale. Il considère en outre que la littérature africaine dépend de cette circulation des capitales culturelles. À mes yeux, la production littéraire sud-africaine est très impliquée dans cette circulation. J’ai évoqué quelques romanciers célèbres comme J. M Coetzee et Nadine Gordimer, afin d’expliquer comment leurs travaux participent (même involontairement) à cette circulation qui est notamment créée pour l’institution académique occidentale. J’ai estimé que la production littéraire sud-africaine non seulement assiste, mais accélère également cette circulation des capitales culturelles, contribuant par ailleurs à la production d’une identité politique sud-africaine qui est « consommée » par l’institution académique occidentale. En fournissant des exemples trouvés dans Shuimian de hangxian et Foe, la thèse a montré que la technique d’écriture de métarécits postmodernes de Wu et Coetzee peut néanmoins défier cette identité politique ou culturelle construite. En même temps, cette technique peut aussi agir contre le dianxing, qui mobilise souvent une universalité dans les œuvres classiques de la littérature moderne.

Le deuxième sous-chapitre a interrogé la reconstitution des mémoires coloniales et la construction des récits postcoloniaux dans ces deux pays respectifs. Il a attiré l’attention sur les différents points de vue qui sont proposés par de nombreux critiques littéraires sud-africains et taïwanais, par exemple, Njabulo Ndebele, André Brink, Chen Fang-ming et Peng Hsiao-yen. En ce qui concerne de la représentation de l’histoire postcoloniale et la mémoire

Cette thèse a suggéré plus loin que les souvenirs involontaires d’enfance qui sont présents en filigrane dans les écrits semi-autobiographiques de Coetzee et Wu peuvent nous montrer une voie alternative afin de reconstituer les récits postcoloniaux. Le retour aux souvenirs d’enfance indique souvent l’innocence ou encore la naïveté du regard sur le passé. Cependant, les expériences vécues par ces deux auteurs ne se conforment pas à cette conception typique. Sans être en conscient de l’importance de ces expériences, les souvenirs évoqués dans leurs œuvres peuvent être considérées comme des gravures dans leurs corps. Ces traces coloniales sont conservées dans leur chair et elles se manifestent lorsqu’une force spontanée ou involontaire d’un objet suscite des émotions fortes liées à ces traces. La thèse a proposé l’idée que ce n’était pas une coïncidence que cet objet qui suscite les souvenirs d’enfance de ces deux auteurs était la bicyclette, un équipement militaire qui a été beaucoup utilisé pendant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale et qui fait partie de l’histoire coloniale des deux pays.

Le troisième sous-chapitre a mis l’accent sur la mise en place de la politique linguistique nationale en Afrique du Sud et à Taïwan, en montrant que la formation de l’identité politique postcoloniale est liée à l’imposition de la langue (ou des langues) nationale(s). Par le passé, particulièrement pendant la période coloniale européenne, l’analyse d’Andrew Simpson nous indique que les missionnaires chrétiens, qui étaient envoyés en Afrique continentale, ont aidé à standardiser ou même à « produire » certaines langues autochtones. À la suite de cette standardisation linguistique, les colonisateurs européens ont

À Taïwan, un processus similaire a été mis en place au niveau du développement et de l’imposition des langues nationales. Sous la direction du régime impérialiste japonais, le gouvernement colonial local a souhaité changer les habitudes culturelles et les langues pratiquées par de nombreux peuples différents sur l’île de Formose, afin de renforcer l’identité politique japonaise. Vers la fin de sa période coloniale, non seulement l’éducation de la langue japonaise a été introduite, mais la pratique religieuse du shintoïsme a été également encouragée. Qui plus est, la langue japonaise a été strictement imposée dans l’espace public. Cependant, puisque cette stratégie coloniale a été mise en place vers la fin de la colonisation, le gouvernement japonais n’a pas pu complètement supprimer toutes les langues locales pratiquées (par exemple, le minnan, le hakka et certaines langues aborigènes). Avec l’arrivée du parti Kuomintang, le gouvernement nationaliste chinois, l’imposition du chinois mandarin (guoyu 国语 [la langue nationale]) a été considérée comme une mesure politique importante afin de gouverner Taïwan. La politique linguistique de « sinisation » des habitants taïwanais a duré plus de quarante ans. Dès les années 1950 jusqu’aux années 1970, il existait une revendication permanente de l’identité politique nationale chinoise qui a été liée à l’imposition du mandarin. Quelques décennies plus tard, après la suppression de la loi martiale, Taïwan est rentré dans l’ère « postmoderne ». Un mouvement de renaissance des langues taïwanaises s’est développé et il a été accompagné d’une invention d’une identité politique proprement « taïwanaise ». Dans mon analyse, j’ai montré que même si la renaissance des langues locales comprenait plusieurs langues locales, ce mouvement a été principalement promu, tout du moins à ses débuts, par des locuteurs hoklo. À partir des études consultées, j’ai constaté que l’invention de l’identité politique à Taïwan – que ce soit une identité japonaise, chinoise, ou taiwanaise – se manifeste différemment dans des périodes
différentes. Qui plus est, cette invention de l’identité politique est entièrement liée aux politiques linguistiques qui ont été menées par les gouvernements au pouvoir. La thèse a donc défendu que l’imposition linguistique – que ce soit au sein de la politique coloniale ou de la politique nationale du pays postcolonial – est effectivement un héritage colonial. Pour résister à cet héritage colonial, ma thèse a estimé que Coetzee fait références symboliquement aux « subalternes postcoloniaux [postcolonial subalterns] » silencieux à travers deux personnages qu’il a créé : Michael K dans Michael K et Friday dans Foe, alors que Wu a tendance à prendre l’approche de l’hybridité linguistique et culturelle d’Homi Bhabha dans plusieurs de ses romans, y compris Shuimian, Tianqiaoshang et Danche.

Le dernier sous-chapitre dans le chapitre deux a suivi l’argument d’Elizabeth DeLoughrey et de George B. Handley, en considérant que l’histoire coloniale et l’histoire environnementale sont mutuellement constitutives. Ce sous-chapitre a discuté sur l’impact de l’histoire coloniale sur les environnements postcoloniaux de ces deux pays. Dans les œuvres de ces deux auteurs, ainsi que dans d’autres documents traitant des questions environnementales, j’ai découvert que la gestion de l’environnement et la gestion biopolitique des peuples colonisés est de deux côtés la même chose. Elles produisent des effets réciproques l’un et sur l’autre. La thèse a donc mis l’accent sur le fait que la seule façon de mener une étude globale et approfondie est de tenir compte de ces deux aspects. Dans Postcolonial Ecologies, DeLoughrey et Handley critiquent le pouvoir « central-colonial » qui a dominé les peuples et les terres colonisés. Ils estiment que la raison pour laquelle l’esclavage a existé c’est parce que les colonisateurs associaient les peuples locaux ou indigènes à la faune. DeLoughrey et Handley évoquent également les arguments de Richard H. Grove, un des fondateurs de l’histoire environnementale, et ils rejoignent sa position quant à la manière dont les îles tropicales colonisées furent traitées comme les laboratoires des empires. Selon Grove, on ne peut pas étudier notre environnement actuel sans avoir perçu les impacts faits par le colonialisme. D’un point de vue historique, Grove considère que le changement climatique n’est pas tout simplement un résultat de l’industrialisation de l’époque moderne comme on le suppose souvent. À l’inverse, il estime que l’idée du changement climatique anthropogénique existe depuis longtemps et trouve son origine au début de l’expansion

24 Ibid., p.12.
impérialiste. Les études de Grove montrent qu’il existait déjà une politique et des mesures pour combattre les problèmes environnementaux dans les premiers siècles de la période coloniale, mais les mesures proposées n’étaient pas bien cohérentes puisqu’elles étaient en contradiction avec des intérêts économiques. Grove remarque que le système capitaliste économique qui exploite l’environnement et les ressources naturelles était incorporé dans l’entreprise coloniale, surtout pour son expansion. Toutefois, Grove ne va pas plus loin pour développer une critique. Son interprétation analyse les impacts négatifs de ce système capitaliste économique sur l’ensemble de notre environnement mais il néglige le fait que ces impacts n’ont pas seulement eu un effet temporaire limité au contexte colonial. Même si les régimes impériaux ou coloniaux ont « officiellement » pris fin, ce système capitaliste continue à influencer l’environnement aujourd’hui comme un héritage colonial et ses influences étaient particulièrement visibles dans les périodes qui suivirent les deux guerres mondiales.


Dans ce sous-chapitre, la thèse a présenté des exemples issus des œuvres de Coetzee et Wu, en démontrant que ces deux auteurs manifestent leurs constats et critiques d’une manière littéraire sur des exploitations des environnements et ressources naturelles sous le contrôle colonial et sous la gouvernance de l’état postcolonial de ces deux pays. Ce dernier sous-chapitre était primordial pour l’ensemble de mes arguments, puisqu’il a réuni des discussions concrètes sur le postcolonialisme et l’environnementalisme dans un contexte littéraire. Surtout, il a servi de transition au troisième chapitre, en insistant sur la nécessité d’introduire des discussions de la dimension éthique et ontologique des êtres écologiques.

La troisième partie a attiré l’attention sur les aspects écologique des œuvres choisies. Trois sous-chapitres sont inclus pour une discussion approfondie : le concept de l’« animan [homme-animal] », la subjectivité des êtres écologiques non-animaux non-humains et

la question des relations éthiques envers les non-humains. Le premier sous-chapitre a présenté le concept de l’« animan », un néologisme qui s’applique aux êtres qui mélangent des caractéristiques animales et humaines. Ce concept s’inspire notamment de la philosophie d’Agamben, qui s’adresse à la frontière perméable entre les animaux et les humains, ainsi qu’à la notion de subjectivité animale, évoquée dans les travaux de Wu et Coetzee. En m’appuyant sur l’exemple d’« animan » à travers le roman de Wu, qui met en valeur les « traditions ou caractéristiques ethnographiques distinctives » chez les aborigènes taïwanais, mon directeur, Jon Solomon, a estimé que ma thèse n’avait pas pu aller au-delà du point de vue dualistique entre l’« Occident » et son dehors. Au contraire, il pense que la thèse a pris l’« Occident » et le reste comme deux entités distinctes au sein d’un horizon herméneutique. À cet égard, Solomon a pensé que les écrits de Wu ne fonctionnent que dans le cadre du romantisme, qu’il considère comme l’angle mort du domaine des études littéraire sinophones. Dans ma thèse, j’ai essayé de traiter ce problème en expliquant comment le romantisme a évolué et s’est transformé sous l’influence de l’écocritique. J’ai donc considéré que les écrits de Wu pouvaient être pris comme bien plus que seulement l’expression du romantisme. Toutefois, j’accepte ses critiques et considère que certains problèmes qu’il pose ne sont pas entièrement résolus dans ma thèse, et ils méritent d’être poursuivis dans mes recherches futures.

Le deuxième sous-chapitre s’est orienté vers une discussion de la subjectivité des êtres écologiques non-animaux. Les arguments théoriques sont principalement tirés du point de vue philosophique de Jane Bennett sur les objets et les êtres non-humains. Ce sous-chapitre a commencé avec une clarification des différentes sortes d’êtres écologiques, puis a élaboré diverses approches philosophiques concernant leur subjectivité. Comme évoqué plus haut, il s’est également confronté au problème de l’anthropocentrisme qui est au sein de la métaphysique et de l’épistémologie occidentales. En prenant une perspective posthumaniste, cette thèse a expliqué pourquoi cet anthropocentrisme problématique nous empêche de percevoir la subjectivité des êtres écologiques. Néanmoins, un problème notable demeurait : la théorisation de la subjectivité des êtres non-humains. Comparé au concept de l’« animan » qui avait été théorisé dans le sous-chapitre précédent, la subjectivité des êtres écologique était moins développée. Dans ce sous-chapitre, j’ai choisi de limiter ma définition de l’« autre écologique [ecological other] » strictement aux entités que l’on trouve dans la nature et je me suis concentré sur la lecture et l’interprétation de Bennett à partir de la notion spinozienne de l’« affect », qui m’a servi à défendre l’idée d’une subjectivité des êtres écologiques non-
animaux. Cependant, pendant ces années de recherche, j’ai constaté que diverses études abordent et traitent cette question de la subjectivité des êtres écologiques selon d’autres perspectives. Par exemple, Terrence Deacon et Jesper Hoffmeyer ont, du moins à certains égards, défendue l’idée que la vie est fondamentalement fondée sur l’action des signes (« la sémiotique ») et non sur les interactions moléculaires.26 Leurs recherches considèrent que l’existence de la subjectivité des être écologiques non-animaux peut être exprimée par la biosémiotique. Malheureusement, avec le temps limité à construire un argument cohérent pour ma thèse, j’ai décidé de ne pas aller plus loin dans l’intégration des idées de Deacon et Hoffmeyer à ma thèse. Il serait pour autant particulièrement pertinent de développer et d’explorer cet aspect des êtes non-animaux en détail, si l’opportunité se présente dans ma future recherche académique.

Le dernier sous-chapitre a interrogé les questions de l’éthique envers les autres non-humains. En ce qui concerne à l’éthique animale, le questionnement philosophique derridien reste au cœur de mon argument. Des questions concernant la tuerie des animaux par les humains, le végétarisme et l’usage industriel des sous-produits animaux ont été évoquées et examinées en détail, en les associant à une discussion des positions philosophiques de Peter Singer et Brian Massumi. Rétrospectivement, un point faible dans ma discussion fut de choisir de comparer ces deux positions éthiques distinctes par de nombreux aspects. Singer développe ses principes de l’éthique animale dans le cadre de la philosophie analytique, alors que Massumi propose une lecture philosophique « continentale » de l’éthique et de l’esthétique animale. Il ne fut pas facile de définir un terrain commun afin d’effectuer une comparaison détaillée de leurs positions. En outre, bien que, à la fin de ce sous-chapitre, la position philosophique de Tom Regan sur l’éthique animale ait été évoquée, l’argumentation générale aurait été plus harmonieuse en mettant l’accent sur son travail et sa pensée. Quant à l’éthique envers les êtres écologiques non-animaux et non-humains, la thèse a associé des discussions philosophiques sur leur valeur intrinsèque, des arguments politiques sur leur capacité affective et des arguments juridiques liés à la possibilité de la reconnaissance des droits des êtres écologiques. La difficulté rencontrée dans ce sous-chapitre était de trouver des exemples pertinents en faisant des analyses comparatives entre Coetzee et Wu Ming-yi. Comme indiqué dans mon introduction, Coetzee est principalement vu comme un écrivain.

postcolonial, bien que certaines de ses œuvres sont identifiées à des critiques des problèmes liés aux animaux et aux environnements postcoloniaux. Malheureusement, les écrits de Coetzee montrent rarement un engagement envers l’éthique environnementale. Cette section finale du chapitre trois manifeste donc une structure non parallèle avec son analyse littéraire. Dans une certaine mesure, la mobilisation des travaux d’un autre auteur postcolonial pour une telle étude comparative aurait constitué une option préférable. Je souhaite poursuivre ce terrain de recherche lors de mon projet de post-doctorat.

Globalement, dans les études écologiques postcoloniales contemporaines, une plus grande attention a été attribuée au rôle que l’animal joue dans les textes littéraires, à l’opposé du rôle de l’être non-animal. En général, l’identification des textes littéraires postcoloniaux qui intègrent les discussions de la subjectivité de l’animal et qui incarnent des questions de l’éthique sur l’animal n’est pas une tâche difficile, là où les êtres écologiques non-animaux sont souvent exclus des écrits littéraires postcoloniaux. Dans le domaine des études écocritiques postcoloniales, de nombreux théoriciens ont discuté des aspects ontologiques et éthiques des êtres écologiques non-animaux et ont considéré l’importance de leur rôle. Cependant, peu d’attention a été accordée à l’étude des textes littéraires qui comprennent des êtres écologiques non-animaux. Ainsi, j’espère sincèrement que ma thèse a atteint son objectif: attirer l’attention sur le rôle des autres écologiques. Par ailleurs, je souhaite également que l’étude de ces êtres écologiques jouera bientôt un rôle important dans le développement de ce nouveau champ de recherche de la littérature écologique postcoloniale.

**Conclusion**

*L’ontologie comme fondement de l’éthique fut le principe originel de la philosophie. Leur divorce, qui est le divorce des domaines « objectif » et « subjectif », est la destinée moderne. Leur réunion ne peut être effectuée, si elle le peut jamais, qu’à partir de la fin « objective », c’est-à-dire à travers une révision de l’idée de nature.*

— Hans Jonas, *Le Phénomène de la vie*

Cette thèse a proposé une discussion approfondie de l’ontologie et de l’éthique des non-humains, y compris des animaux, des êtres écologiques et de certains objets naturels construits par les humains. Elle a également associé ces discussions au contexte spécifique de
la littérature postcoloniale. L’idée fondamentale de cette thèse est bien résumée par la citation de Hans Jonas, un philosophe spécialiste de l’éthique environnementale, dont les travaux ont contribué au mouvement environnementaliste en Allemagne. Comme Jonas le suggère, la séparation entre ontologie et éthique est le résultat de la pensée moderne, qui a produit une division binaire du « subjectif » et de l’« objectif ». Pour Jonas, la réunion de l’ontologie et l’éthique peut être réalisée ou achevée seulement à travers une révision importante de notre idée de « nature ».27 Sans s’être attardé particulièrement à l’étude de la philosophie de Jonas, ma thèse a développé une approche théorique qui exprime un point de vue philosophique similaire, la différence principale résidant dans le contexte postcolonial de mes analyses. La mobilisation des discussions éthiques et ontologiques sur mais aussi pour les non-humains, fut de proposer une nouvelle façon de conceptualiser la subjectivité postcoloniale tout en se confrontant à certains des aspects les plus problématiques de l’identité politique postcoloniale.

Quand j’ai commencé à étudier ce sujet, mon but était alors d’élaborer et de développer une éthique dans la perspective proposée par Derrida des et pour les animaux non-humains, en m’inspirant des exemples de la littérature écologique postcoloniale. Dans ce genre de la littérature contemporaine, nous pouvons facilement identifier des descriptions des souffrances animales ou des sacrifices d’animaux, qui sont thématiquement mobilisées pour exprimer la violence et la douleur infligées aux peuples colonisés. De tels exemples littéraires peuvent être trouvés dans Le Pays des marées [The Hungry Tide] (2004) d’Amitav Ghosh et dans Cette nuit-là [Animal’s People] (2007) d’Indra Sinha.28 Dans la littérature postcoloniale, de nombreux auteurs se confrontent à la question de la domination coloniale sur des peuples colonisés à partir d’une discussion de la relation hiérarchique entre humains et animaux. La proximité que l’on retrouve dans les écrits de J. M. Coetzee et Wu Ming-y est précisément ce genre de représentations. Les deux auteurs décrivent soigneusement des scènes remarquables de la souffrance animale qui rappellent et soulignent l’inégalité de la relation humain-animale et qui reflètent ultimement l’exploitation du peuple colonisé. J’ai été intéressée par cette technique d’écriture particulière et j’ai voulu appliquer des questionnements derridiens sur l’éthique animale afin de comprendre sa dimension philosophique. À la lumière des concepts de Derrida, j’ai considéré que l’animal postcolonial que nous suivons constitue une forme de résistance à la domination coloniale, de contextualiser une « zoosphère » pour

l’écriture et par ailleurs, de réaliser « le rêve d’une hospitalité absolue » dans cette zoosphère. De plus, je suis également convaincue par le fait que des représentations de la souffrance des animaux ont la capacité de contester l’identité politique postcoloniale, identité qui est souvent, à tort, considérée comme donnée.

La thèse avait à l’origine débuté avec une réflexion sur la recherche de cet animal postcolonial. Mais je me suis très rapidement rendue compte que les figures animales représentées dans la littérature écologique postcoloniale – particulièrement dans les œuvres de Coetzee et Wu – n’étaient pas seulement des significations allégoriques et n’étaient pas forcément mobilisées comme des métaphores primaires du peuple colonisé. Ce sont des êtres qui possèdent leur propre subjectivité et qui peuvent révéler leur « totalité en vie [wholeness in life] », que ce soit dans le monde ou dans la zoosphère des textes postcoloniaux. En écrivant ces phrases, Coetzee nous rappelle que cette totalité pourrait être incorporée de manière saisissante dans la poésie :

Si je ne vous convaincs pas, c’est parce que mes [mots], ici, n’ont pas le pouvoir de vous faire saisir la totalité de cet être animal, sa nature non abstraite et non intellectuelle. C’est pourquoi je vous invite à lire les poètes qui rendent au langage l’être vivant, électrique ; et si les poètes ne vous émeuvent pas, je vous invite à descendre, côté à côté, avec la bête qu’on aiguillonne vers son exécuteur.

Grâce à ces mots, nous apprenons que cette totalité est toujours un trait appartenant aux êtres animaux. Coetzee considère que les mots ont la capacité de nous apporter cette totalité. Dans ce paragraphe, il précise également que si l’on trouve que de simples mots manquent de puissance pour représenter cette totalité, la poésie peut incarner et renforcer la conscience que l’on peut en avoir. Coetzee nous conseille de lire la poésie qui pourrait de manière vivante nous transmettre cette totalité propre aux animaux dans un texte zoosphérique. Dans une large mesure, l’idée de Coetzee à propos de la poésie peut être élargie à la littérature en général, puisque beaucoup d’œuvres littéraires manifestent aussi cette qualité poétique. C’est avec cet esprit que la thèse a initié une étude portant sur la subjectivité de l’animal et sur la question de l’être de l’animal. J’ai découvert très vite que des écrits de Coetzee et Wu ne dévoilaient pas seulement cette totalité des animaux dans la zoosphère de leurs textes postcoloniaux, mais les


deux écrivains mobilisaient également des imaginaires d’écriture afin de renforcer notre conscience de la totalité et de la subjectivité des animaux. En inventant la créature hybride de l’« animan », Coetzee et Wu réussissent à problématiser la frontière entre humains et animaux, tout en fournissant de nouvelles perspectives afin de conceptualiser la subjectivité à travers le défi que présente cette frontière. On peut dire que la figure d’« animan » diminue ou réduit la totalité des animaux puisqu’elle nécessite un processus d’hybridation. Cependant, je considère que le processus littéraire d’invention d’un « animan » hybride montre une qualité poétique dans les écrits de Coetzee et Wu, ce qui au final renforce notre perception et notre conscience de cette totalité des animaux. L’« animan » n’a jamais existé dans notre monde réel, mais il peut se manifester sous la plume de l’écrivain. J’ai donc envisagé que cette totalité chez les animaux était conférée à l’« animan » et est présente devant nos yeux quand nous lisons les travaux de Coetzee et Wu.

Le concept de l’« animan » hybride représentait donc une découvraite importante de ma recherche, puisqu’elle m’a motivé à chercher au-delà des frontières ontologiques des êtres tels qu’ils étaient définis par la philosophie occidentale contemporaine. Qui plus est, en interrogeant ces limites philosophiques, il m’a amené à m’intéresser à d’autres types d’êtres écologiques, dans leurs dimensions à la fois ontologiques et éthiques. En ce qui concerne la subjectivité des êtres écologiques, l’une des problématiques essentielles à laquelle cette thèse s’est confrontée a été la fondation de l’épistémologie contemporaine. L’épistémologie actuelle possède un angle mort philosophique résultant de son anthropocentrisme et, par conséquent, elle empêche la possibilité de reconnaître la subjectivité des êtres écologiques en dehors des êtres humains. La thèse a donc considéré que l’éloignement de cette perspective anthropocentrique était une étape importante à effectuer dans la philosophie occidentale contemporaine. C’est seulement en encourageant l’adoption d’une approche non-anthropocentrique qu’un nouveau paradigme philosophique peut émerger. En me basant sur mes prémisses et mes découvertes sur l’hybridité d’humain-animal, j’ai décidé de me concentrer sur la relation intersubjective entre humains et êtres écologiques non-animaux ainsi que sur des entités naturelles afin de développer un argument pour défendre la subjectivité de l’« ecological other [de l’autre écologique] ». Dans ce contexte, ma thèse s’inscrit grandement dans l’interprétation philosophique de Jane Bennett de la notion spinozienne d’« affect », qui considère que l’agentivité d’un objet ou d’une chose peut susciter une rencontre avec la subjectivité humaine. Cette thèse a donc considéré que la subjectivité des êtres écologiques ni humains et ni-animaux pouvait être exprimée dans cette
rencontre intersubjective. En ce qui concerne les relations éthiques que nous pouvons établir avec ces autres écologiques, la thèse a souligné l’importance de la reconnaissance de leur valeur intrinsèque. Par ailleurs, elle propose la discussion des approches et des cadres juridiques à partir de l’article de Dinah Shelton. Avec certaines modifications de ces approches, la thèse a instauré de nouvelles voies pour proposer des étapes radicales mais concrètes afin de développer une éthique de et pour les autres écologiques.

C’est à travers de ces analyses éthiques et ontologiques que cette thèse a découvert le rôle signifiant de l’autre écologique. Ce rôle d’autre écologique n’a pas seulement été de contester avec succès l’identité politique postcoloniale, mais également de parvenir à ouvrir nos esprit sur la fin « objective », et de nous permettre d’avoir une perception différente de la nature et des êtres naturels, comme le suggère Jonas. J’aimerais terminer ici avec une citation que l’on retrouve dans le roman de Wu Ming-yi, qui décrit de manière éclatante un corps hybride composé par l’humain et l’animal, les éléments biologiques et « affectifs » et qui résume parfaitement le rôle de l’autre écologique de ma thèse. Dans la dernière scène du Voleur de bicyclette, le protagoniste a une vision de lui en train de pédaler le vieux vélo perdu de son père. Ce qu’il voit et ressent dans sa vision est un entremèllement de son corps hybride avec plusieurs types d’êtres écologiques : le vélo, l’arbre, l’orang-outan, les soldats et les mitraillettes. C’est à partir de cet écrit écologique postcolonial que l’autre écologique se déplie devant nous :

Je pédale en suivant le courant Oya shivo vers le Sud, je tourbillonne et tourbillonne encore et me retrouve pris dans un autre courant. […] J’accoste sur une île couverte de forêts dont je suis les racines jusqu’à atteindre son cœur, là-bas, l’orang-outan M. Ichiro est dans les bras de sa mère, ils se balancent de branche en branche, passent devant moi, un sourire impénétrable sur leurs visages. Je suis capturé par un arbre, qui lance ses racines dans l’espace entre le moyeu et le plateau, entre la vis et le trou de la vis, à travers les cinq tubes du cadre de deux triangles, à travers les valves et les chambres à air, revenant en boucle jusqu’à ce qu’il pousse des feuilles sur chaque rayon en métal. Des soldats installent des mitrailleuses sur mon corps et sur le porte-bagages, ils coupent mes mains pour récupérer de l’eau, et à l’aube ils m’aspergent de leur urine chaude. Des balles de différents calibres continuent de transpercer ma chair, et bossèlent, courbent, pénètrent les tubes en acier du cheval de fer. Parfois, quand les mitrailleuses s’arrêtent, quelqu’un va se masturber sur les branches, et saupoudrer les feuilles, les branches, les troncs et la terre de ses semences de douleur. 31

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L’autre écologique : une contestation de la politique de l’identité postcoloniale – une étude interdisciplinaire de la littérature écologique postcoloniale de

J.M Coetzee et Wu Ming-yi

Cette thèse présente une analyse comparée des œuvres de deux écrivains contemporains, John Maxwell Coetzee (1940-), originaire d’Afrique du Sud, et Wu Ming-yi (1971-), de Taïwan, que l’on associe au genre de la « littérature écologique postcoloniale ». À partir de leurs travaux, cette thèse propose une étude interdisciplinaire couvrant trois dimensions de leurs travaux : la théorie, la politique et le littéraire. Les textes choisis pour l’analyse sont ceux qui cherchent à la fois à fournir une image dystopique de l’exploitation des environnements naturels et des êtres non-humains et à représenter l’oppression coloniale des peuples colonisés et de l’exploitation des ressources naturelles dans différentes parties du monde. En ce qui concerne la dimension théorique, la thèse aborde le questionnement suivant : comment la philosophie occidentale contemporaine prend en compte les animaux et les êtres écologiques (êtres non-humains et non-animaux), afin de reconsidérer la question plus générale de l’altérité. Quant à la dimension politique, la thèse adopte une posture philosophique afin de questionner les contextes historiques des pays postcoloniaux, notamment ceux de l’Afrique du Sud et de Taïwan. Enfin, la dimension littéraire examine les écrits de Coetzee et de Wu afin de montrer comment leurs textes décrivent l’« autre écologique » (ecological other) en tant que moyen pour lutter contre l’identité politique postcoloniale.

Mots clés: Afrique du Sud, animan, anthropocentrisme, autres non-humaines, écocritique postcoloniale, état-nation, relations affectives, éthique animale, éthique environnementale, subjectivité, Taïwan.

The Role of the Ecological Other in Contesting Postcolonial Identity Politics:
An Interdisciplinary Study of the Postcolonial Eco-literature of

J.M. Coetzee and Wu Ming-yi

This thesis presents the literary works of two contemporary writers—John Maxwell Coetzee (1940-), originally from South Africa, and Wu Ming-yi (1971-) from Taiwan—whom it analyses as key exponents of postcolonial eco-literature. The thesis offers an interdisciplinary study of their works in their theoretical, political and literary aspects. The texts selected for analysis are those that seek to present a dystopian image of the exploited natural environment or nonhuman entities, while, at the same time, associating and articulating these representations with the suppressions and exploitations carried out within colonial frameworks in different parts of the world. As regards the theoretical perspective of the thesis, it addresses the subject of how contemporary continental philosophy takes nonhuman animals and other kinds of ecological beings into account and rethinks the philosophical question of the other. With respect to politics, it contextualises this philosophical questioning by looking at the history of various postcolonial countries, notably South Africa and Taiwan. Lastly, as far as literature is concerned, it examines the writings of Coetzee and Wu in order to show how their texts depict the ecological other as a way of contesting postcolonial identity politics.

Key words: affective relations, animal ethics, animan, anthropocentrism, postcolonial ecocriticism, environmental ethics, nation-state, nonhuman others, South Africa, subjectivity, Taiwan.