



SF and Sympoiesis Thinking in *The Man with the Compound Eyes* by Wu Ming-Yi

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Abstract

Wu Ming-Yi is one of the Taiwanese writers who combines his environmental and indigenous concerns with science-fiction (sci-fi) elements. *The Man with the Compound Eyes* (複眼人) is his first English-translated novel that has sci-fi elements. Since the storytelling that mingles sci-fi, climate changes, and environmentalism in Wu's *The Man with the Compound Eyes* is akin to Donna Haraway's concepts of "SF" that refers to a complex web of lives and narrative, this paper takes the novel as an example of creative Chinese science fictions that offer valuable thinking about the Earth system. There are two main discussions in this paper: 1) how Wu's narrative conforms to SF and 2) how he uses the narrative to speak of the others without the anthropocentric tone. The discussion shows that first, in terms of the SF quality, the Trash Vortex in the novel serves as an implementation of "SF," which enacts as sarcastic hyperobjects and a representation of slow violence in Rob Nixon's sense. The Vortex reverses the predominant pattern of sudden catastrophe in a mainstreamed sci-fi film to challenge anthropocentric values. Also, the Vortex plays an "SF" role to provoke ecological consciousness and expose the environmental and indigenous problems in Taiwan. Second, in terms of the SF narrative, Wu uses his "SF" to call for listening to nonhuman others. Instead of speaking for nature, Wu rather focuses on listening to nature, which reflects that the idea of sympoiesis in Haraway's sense is embedded in Wu's narrative.

Keywords: SF, Wu Ming-Yi, *The Man with the Compound Eyes*, Donna Haraway, Sympoiesis, 複眼人

1. Introduction

Confronting the Anthropocene, which was coined by Paul Crutzen to describe the era that which humans become an active geographical force (Crutzen and Stoermer, 2000), Wu Ming-Yi is one of a few Taiwanese writers who amalgamates the environmental and indigenous concerns with sci-fi elements to call for ecological consciousness. Wu graduated with a Ph.D. in Chinese Literature from Taiwan National Central University and has been teaching literature and creative writing at National Dong Hwa University since 2000. As a writer, artist, professor, and environmental activist, Wu is considered the leading writer of his generation. His works have been translated into several languages. *The Man with the Compound Eyes* (複眼人, Fu yan ren), hereafter *The Man*, is his first book to be translated into English. In 2018, his novel *The Stolen Bicycle* was nominated for the Man Booker International Prize. Wu also is the author of two books on nature writing. According to his background, it shows that Wu has a strong intention in environmentalism. In his interview about *The Man*, Wu shows his concerns about the environmental problems of Taiwan as he says that "Taiwan has been a victim of environmental degradation, due to Western companies setting up their high-pollution industries here. Of course, Taiwan also has to blame since its government does not protect the environment. At the moment, Taiwan is facing a choice: whether to become an environmental example for Southeast Asia or to become an abandoned world craving for economic growth" (Woodbury, 2020). Engaging sci-fi with Taiwanese elements, Wu was praised by Ursula K. Le Guin (2013) that "[w]e haven't read anything like this novel. Ever. South America gave us magical realism – what is Taiwan giving us? A new way of telling our new reality, beautiful, entertaining, frightening, preposterous, true.... Wu Ming-Yi treats human vulnerability and the world's vulnerability with fearless tenderness."

In *The Man*, Wu challenges the environmental problems by engaging the fictional story of Wayo Wayo. The main plot of the novel focuses on two characters, Atile'i and Alice Shih. Atile'i is a 15-year-old



boy from the Wayo Wayo tribe who lives on an isolated island. Atile'i must sail his boat out of the Wayo Wayo island, but as his boat sinks, he swims to an "island" that is a trash vortex. Atile'i manages to stay alive on the island. However, the currents have brought the vortex and Atile'i to Taiwan's eastern coast. Meanwhile, on the Taiwan island, Alice Shih is a literature professor who has been haunted for years by the loss of her husband and the inexplicable absence of her son who vanished during a trek. Alice lives in a house that was built by her husband near the sea but is now nearly fully submerged due to erosion. When the trash vortex approaches Taiwan, it is accompanied by a massive wave that destroys Alice's sea house and the Seventh Sisid café of Hafay. At the same time, the coast of Taiwan, as well as the weather, are impacted because of the trash vortex. After the event, Alice is searching for her cat when she runs into Atile'i who is suffering from a leg injury. Then, the exchanges between Wayo Wayoan and Taiwanese culture occur when Alice and Atile'i hide together in a hunting hut of Dahu. One day, Alice determines to visit the location where she believes her husband's body was discovered after he died while hiking. The novel reveals that Alice's husband encountered a man with compound eyes who informs him that he is dead and Alice's son Toto died years ago and that the son's presence was a result of Alice's writing and a delusion on her side. In the end, Atile'i departs from Alice in search of Rasula, his Wayo Wayoan lover. But, Atile'i never knows that the Wayo Wayo island has been extirpated by a tsunami.

According to Wu's environmental concerns together with Taiwan's local issues, it makes his narrative unique to challenge the anthropocentric values. Presently, humans realize that the Earth is facing the sixth extinction that is impacted by human interference. To deal with the problem from the humanities perspective, we may need a narrative that can undermine anthropocentric thinking and able to help defer humans from getting to the point of no return. In this regard, this paper takes Wu's *The Man* as an example of Chinese science fiction that offers valuable thinking towards the Earth system. Wu's novel could become an interpretation that helps us rethink and understand the relationship between humans and nonhumans. Also, studying his novel would contribute to the knowledge of environmental humanities, Chinese literature, and science fiction.

It is ambiguous to regard Wu as a science fiction (SF) writer because SF generally refers to a popular genre that highlights science and technology such as futuristic space journeys, cyborgs, cyberpunk, or other high-tech settings. Rather, Wu's works often emphasize environmental issues. However, *The Man* is one of his works that share some sci-fi features and could be account for "SF" in Haraway's sense since Wu deals with the Anthropocene and his narrative shares some entity with Haraway in terms of the "SF" narrative and "sympoiesis" thinking. To cope with the environmental problems, Haraway criticizes the term Anthropocene because it is insufficient to sustain the future and the environment of mankind. As Haraway puts it, "(8) Anthropocene is a term most easily meaningful and usable by intellectuals in wealthy classes and regions; it is not an idiomatic term for climate, weather, land, care of the country, or much else in great swathes of the world, especially but not only among indigenous peoples" (Haraway, 2016, p. 49). In her view, the term Anthropocene is problematic because it is not inclusive enough. So, she attempts to submerge the Anthropocene with "the Chthulucene." Regardless of H. P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu, the term Chthulucene is inspired by a spider named Pimolia Cthulhu to represent the tentacular thinking. As Haraway indicates, "Specifically, unlike either the Anthropocene or the Capitalocene, the Chthulucene is made up of ongoing multispecies stories and practices of becoming-with in times that remain at stake, in precarious times, in which the world is not finished and the sky has not fallen—yet. We are at stake to each other. Unlike the dominant dramas of Anthropocene and Capitalocene discourse, human beings are not the only important actors in the Chthulucene, with all other beings able simply to react" (Haraway 2016, p. 55). To challenge the anthropocentric perspective, Haraway proposes an "SF" storytelling. In her view, "SF" is not an abbreviation of science fiction, but it is an umbrella term that includes many possibilities. In Haraway's words, "SF is a sign for science fiction, speculative feminism, science fantasy, speculative fabulation, science fact, and also, string figures" (Haraway, 2016, p.10). Comparatively, this kind of storytelling appears in Wu's *The Man* since it contains female speculation of other cultures, the imaginative catastrophe, or scientific facts about the trash vortex. Moreover, the novel also shows the idea of symbiosis that demands coevolution between humans and other species. So, the concept of "sympoiesis" from Haraway is employed to explain



the relationship between humans and nonhumans in the novel. To Haraway, “Sympoiesis is a word proper to complex, dynamic, responsive, situated, historical systems. It is a word for worlding-with, in company. Sympoiesis enfolds autopoiesis and generatively unfurls and extends it” (Haraway, 2016, p. 58). The concept of sympoiesis can undermine the notion of humans as an autonomous unit, yet underscores the complex Earth system. Therefore, these concepts of Haraway will help us understand his narrative that conjures up a lot of stories such as the Trash Vortex and its effects, the Taiwanese indigenous people, the Pacific islanders, and the Norwegian scientists. It shows that the idea of SF and sympoiesis play a central role in his imagination of the Chthulucene and multispecies. In doing so, there are two main discussions in this paper. In the first part, his “SF” entity in the novel is examined. In the latter part, we will discuss how his narrative conforms to the idea of sympoiesis thinking.

2. Objectives

This paper aims to use the Harawayian concept of “SF” to examine

- 1) how Wu uses the Trash Vortex as an implication of SF
- 2) how Wu’s narrative is able to speak for the nonhumans without the anthropocentric tone.

3. Materials and Methods

This paper applies the comparative literature methodology to analyze Wu’s *The Man with the Compound Eyes*. Due to the storytelling that fuses with sci-fi, climate change, and environmentalism in *The Man*, the concept of SF of Donna Haraway is applied to examine Wu’s narrative. To Haraway, “SF” is not the abbreviation of sci-fi but a term that enables us to rethink the Anthropocene. As Haraway (2016) points out, SF “is practice and process; it is becoming-with each other in surprising relays; it is a figure for ongoingness in the Chthulucene” (p. 3). Applying Haraway’s idea, this paper will compare Wu’s elements of sci-fi with the concepts to examine his imagination of Taiwan and the human future. Focusing on his SF narrative and literary device, the study will discuss how Wu uses his imaginative man-made catastrophe as an entry point to implant the idea of the sympoiesis thinking that denies human exceptionalism to the reader.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. *The Garbage Vortex as “SF”*

4.1.1 *Sarcastic hyperobjects and representation of slow violence*

Wu merges his “SF” narrative with science fantasy and scientific facts to create a realistic tone, as the novel writes: “It’s not an island. I should call it the Trash Vortex...Some thirty years ago, scientists discovered ocean currents had been carrying people’s garbage into a huge floating trash dump ” (Wu, 2013, p. 115). In terms of Wu’s literary device, the vortex can act as a “string figure” or “SF,” but it serves as a “hyperobject” that enacts the “slow violence” in the novel. Timothy Morton (2013) “coined the term hyperobjects to refer to things that are massively distributed in time and space relative to humans.” Five characteristics of hyperobjects are 1) viscous, 2) molten, 3) nonlocal, 4) phased, and 5) interobjective. In this regard, the vortex is viscous because it attracts and is tied to others’ waste; it is molten because of its massiveness; it is nonlocal since it disperses its impacts to other locations; it is phased because it can be perceived by many dimensions; it is interobjective that formed by disposable objects from the globe.

Wu uses the hyperobjects to demonstrate its effect of slow violence. Before the vortex crash on Taiwan, the close-up details of the vortex were described by Atile’i who was drowning in the vortex. As the novel portrays, “[t]he subaquatic flotsam was a tangled mess, but a large wave could disturb its ad hoc order. Given that the island was translucent and in a constant state of change, it was no wonder Atile’i tended to get a bit lost at first when he went diving” (Wu, 2013, p. 35). He calls the trash island “Gesi Gesi.” The word Gesi in the Wayo Wayoan language is mainly used to describe “what one does not understand” (Wu, 2013, p. 170). Due to his observation, he assumes that the vortex is hazardous, as he “saw there were actually lots of dead sea turtles around the island. When he butchered them, he often found indigestible objects in their stomachs” (Wu, 2013, p. 35). Later in the late chapters, Wu inserts the scientific fact that reveals its “slow violence.” As the novel writes, “Based on scientific analysis, about a fifth of the trash is from ships and oil



rigs, while the rest has been dumped into the ocean by Pacific Rim nations. Because the confetti of plastic rubbish is translucent and lies just below the water's surface, it is not detectable in satellite photographs. It can only be seen passing along the hull of a ship. The tiny plastic pellets of which the Vortex is composed act like chemical sponges, absorbing hazardous chemicals like hydrocarbons and DDT, which then enter the food chain. People have also discovered lighters, toothbrushes, and plastic syringes in the stomachs of the dead seabirds and sea turtles that mistook these things for food. Dr. Eriksen said that what goes into the ocean goes into these animals and onto your dinner plate. It's that simple" (Wu, 2013, p. 122). It appears that Wu's imagination of the Vortex is built on the existed environmental scientific information. The Vortex itself could be described as "slow violence" in Rob Nixon's sense that refers to "[c]asualties of slow violence—human and environmental—are those casualties most likely not to be seen, not to be counted" because its impacts are too slow so that everyone is neglected (Nixon, 2011). Throughout the novel, the truth of the Vortex has not been discovered and resolved. This left the Vortex as a mysterious object to mirror the ignorance of humans as well as the Taiwanese government that is not sincere to manage the Vortex and does not have a plan for a long-term environmental issue as Ali, a junior high school classmate of Dahu who is a supervisor at a deep ocean water company says: "You know what? The past few years the government's poured tons of funding into reducing the amount of garbage in the Vortex, but it's actually a scam" (Wu, 2013, p. 156).

Unlike the narrative of speculation in mainstream sci-fi films such as *The Day After Tomorrow*, *Armageddon*, or other catastrophic blockbuster films, Wu reverses the convention of catastrophic speculation through the collision of the Vortex. The mainstream sci-fi pattern tends to resolve the conflict to protect humans from the "sudden" event, for instance, destroying the meteorite or eradicating the alien species, and bringing humans back to a normal state, or the resurgence of the earth. On the contrary, in *The Man*, the landing of the Vortex is depicted as being tantamount to the landing of the apocalyptic meteorite, but the alien object is paradoxically generated by humans. Moreover, in the scenario humans cannot suddenly stop or destroy the trash Vortex and let it randomly float to other countries as if it has no "owner." By the time the Vortex hit Taiwan, it is sarcastic that every media that has gathered around the coastal spots to speculate the catastrophe have missed the event because of the hailstorms. "The hailstorm stopped as soon as it had started, but because of the hail, everyone missed the moment they'd all been waiting for when the Trash Vortex hit the shore in several giant waves. The hail was also the reason why everyone scrambled up onto the road and escaped the deluge" (Wu, 2013, p. 130). The intrusion of the Vortex is depicted as negligible which casts sarcasm to such a grand event as if it is not as important as other catastrophes. "The wave only produced one or two crests before it subsided and allowed the beach to reappear. But buried in a grotesque agglomeration of junk, the beach was radically altered, giving people the misapprehension they had landed on a distant planet" (Wu, 2013, p. 131). In this regard, the narrative obscures the predominant pattern of sudden catastrophe in a sci-fi film. As Rose Hsiu-li Juan (2016) points out, "[t]he Trash Vortex is therefore not to be understood as a mainstream sci-fi spectacle but a visionary one that concretizes the environmental otherness in the age of the Anthropocene. It is a symptom of the alienated nature of human creation" (p. 82).

As such, the Vortex is ironized as a "man-made" natural object that cannot be solved by humans. Wu's narrative echoes Haraway in terms of the rejection of sky-gazing. As Haraway argues, "Potnia Theron/Melissa/ Medusa give faciality a profound makeover, and that is a blow to modern humanist (including techno-humanist) figurations of the forward-looking, sky-gazing Anthropos" (Haraway, 2016, p. 53). Haraway criticizes the arrogance of the Anthropos that always look up to the sky but ignore the problems on the Earth. Correspondingly, Wu's man-made environmental disaster on the ocean could be read as a reverse version of the disasters from the sky or outer space. It appears that Wu attempts to challenge the anthropocentric attitude by the implementation of the Vortex to invite the self-reflection to a paradox that humans cannot resolve their "own" Trash Vortex. To some extent, the Vortex could be regarded as a "string figure" that exposes the complex web of lives and calls for a spectacle for the otherness.

4.1.2 An entanglement of the "SF" object

In terms of "SF" in Haraway's sense, the "speculative fabulation" is quite prominent in Wu's story. The term is derived from French connotation, which is "much closely tied with everyday storytelling practices of storytellers who aren't all writers, who aren't all professionals" (Haraway, 2017). In a similar vein, Wu



tells a story by using the Vortex to bring the comparison between two islands: Wayo Wayo and Taiwan. The “SF” object is a bridge between the Wayo Wayo premodern culture and modern civilization. It is intertwined object that can serve as a “string figure.” The everyday story that contrasts the nature/culture separation of Taiwan with the nature-bound Wayo Wayo that adheres to the sea is unfolded. For example, their salutations such as “Are you going to the sea?” “Shall we test our luck at the sea?” and “You must remember me a story of the sea,” are expressed in the morning, noon, and night respectively (Wu, 2013, p. 12). Their lifetime is not restricted to the cosmic calendar, as “[t]hey did not ask how old people were, but simply grew tall like trees and stuck out their organs of increase like flowers. Like the obstinate clam, they just passed the time” (Wu, 2013, p. 13). The Wayo Wayoan language and voice are analogous to seabird: “The tonality of the Wayo Wayoan language was sharp and sonorous, like birdsong, with each utterance ending in a light trill and plop, like a hungry seabird that swiftly dives and breaks the waves in search of prey” (Wu, 2013, p. 12).

As for the relationship between the Vortex and the Wayo Wayo, its effects of hyperobjects bring Atile’i to encounter Alice. One scientific effect of the Vortex that the novel did not mention is its “free radical” entity. It can transport plants and animals to move into oceans beyond their normal habitat. These alien habitats will lead to an imbalance of the ecosystem. Atile’i became a demonstrator of the effect. And, Wu demonstrates the effect by using Atile’i who became a catalyst for symbiosis thinking towards other cultures and nonhumans. Unlike techno-capitalism Taiwan, the premodern Wayo Wayo has to abandon their people to save the resources for the next generation and control the population. Due to the island’s limited resources, the island has a practice of second-son sacrificial rite that at the turn of 180 full moons, every second son must sail off to the sea of no return, and in the night before the event, the island women can ambush and make love to him. Second sons like Atile’i are compelled to leave the island to keep the island’s population at a sustainable level. That is the reason why Atile’i sails out of Wayo Wayo, drifts to land on the Trash Vortex and eventually washes up on Taiwan’s east coast. In this process, the Vortex acts as a bridge between two cultures. The Wayo Wayoan tradition is an important departure that Wu uses to make a chance to contact the outside world for Atile’i. Also, Atile’i represents the experience of the “nonhuman others” since Wayo Wayoan people are left out of the human civilization and are not accounted to be equally humans. The imagination of Wu raises the recognition that other cultures could be annihilated from the overall global climate crisis. In reality, the Wayo Wayo is inspired by an existed ethnic group, Tao. In Wu’s words, “[f]or the story, I read many books from the field of ethnography, and, of course, about a beautiful island named Lanyu and its inhabitants, Tao. Wayo Wayo is very much an ethnic group defined by the ocean, aiming to communicate with other civilizations defined by land” (Woodbury, 2020). Thus, the Wayo Wayo island can serve as an allegory for Taiwan. If Taiwan ignores the global environmental destructions, the island will be annihilated like the Wayo Wayo island.

In terms of the relationship between the Vortex and Taiwan, the landing of the Vortex exposes the ethnic group’s problems that are left out of the development of the nation. Aside from criticizing the Vortex as a product of human interference, Wu also criticizes Taiwan’s development through his narrative. Not only the peripheral islander who suffers from the Anthropocene and the Capitolocene, but the indigenous minorities on the island also represent to be the first people who were left out of the civilization and sacrifices to the environmental crisis. As the novel portrays, “Many of them are Pangcah. The word means ‘people,’ and it’s what the Amis aboriginal people around here prefer to call themselves. Most of the Pangcah in Haven is involved in the recovery work. I’m afraid that this is it for this stretch of coast and for the fishing ground too. Part of the sea culture of the Pangcah people has been ruined. To Han Chinese people, all the pollution means is that there’s no more money to make from the sea, but for the Pangcah it’s different: the sea is their ancestor, and so many of their traditional stories are about the sea. Without ancestors, what’s the point of being ‘Pangcah’?” (Wu, 2013, p. 240). Pangcah is one of the several indigenous tribes in Taiwan who share some similarities with Wayo Wayoan islanders in that their lives adhere to the sea. Wu mirrors that the development of Taiwan has disconnected humans from nature. It shows that the Vortex and the rising of the sea level influence the Pangcah sea culture. However, Wu uses the coming of the Vortex as a “string figure” in the Harawayian sense to provoke the reconnection with nature. The most prominent example is Hafay, a friend of Alice, who is Pangcah people. Due to her deprived life, she has to follow the rule of the urban Han



people and become a masseuse who has to do the “dirty” service to make money to build a cafe house on the coastal area, Seventh Sisid. Ironically, her café that has been built with her money was devastated by the Vortex. When the time the Vortex hit, Wu reveals the reconnection to the nature of Pangcah. As the novel writes, “[h]er keen Pangcah intuition was soon proven right when the wave sloshed in as if suddenly raising the height of the sea. It almost dragged the Seventh Sisid into the ocean when it receded” (Wu, 2013, p. 131). It shows that Hafay has reawakened her instinct that has been lost all these years through the urban Han society. One could say that the Vortex is the intangible object to invoke the ecological consciousness and the connection to nature that has been lost by living in modern Han society.

Not only Hafay, but the coming of the Vortex also brings Sara who is a Norwegian marine biologist, and Detlef who is a scientist to Taiwan. An aboriginal Banun, Dahu who is a friend of Alice has to escort them travel to the coastal area because they have to do some research about the Vortex. During their work-related journey, they are falling in love with the natural environment of Taiwan. But at the same time, they have realized the evil side of Taiwan’s infrastructure development. As Wu writes, “Dahu was about to turn onto a county highway that had been pushed through by the local government about seven or eight years before. Local politicians claimed that the rationale for the road was improving transportation in remote areas and completing the ring road around the island. Later it was demonstrated that the road had been built for the sole purpose of conveying nuclear waste to a small southern village for dumping. It had absolutely nothing to do with making life more convenient for the local villagers” (Wu, 2013, pp. 292-293). Paradoxically, the development is not for the citizen’s sake but that of the capitalist. Surrounded by the Vortex as an SF object, the Vortex is not the same as other disasters as in the mainstream sci-fi films but became praxis of “SF” that brings nonhumans, indigenous people, islanders, scientists, and scientific facts. into play. As such, The Vortex, on the one hand, is a science fantasy that is a reverse version of speculative catastrophe as we usually see in sci-fi films to call for environmental concerns. On the other hand, the Vortex is an imagined catastrophe that helps expose problems of other ethnic groups that have been excluded from human civilization and modern society.

4.2. *Listening of humans and sympoiesis thinking within “SF”*

4.2.1 *“SF” and the listening to nonhumans*

Haraway always emphasizes the importance of narration, as she advocates “[t]he worlds of SF are not containers; they are patternings, risky co-makings, speculative fabulations” (Haraway, 2016, p. 14). And, Wu Ming-Yi also shares the same concern. Within his “SF” narrative, Wu accomplishes a redemption between humans and nonhumans. But, how this narration could be produced without the anthropocentric ideology? To speak for nature, one might argue that the narrative of Wu would fall into a trap of an andromorphic speaking. Instead of speaking of nature, Wu makes human characters listen to and speak for the nonhumans, which corresponds with the concept of becoming with and the sympoiesis of Haraway.

The obvious scenario that exhibits the trace of becoming-with is the exchange of languages between Alice and Atile’i. Whereas Atile’i acts as a representative of the nonhumans who has been brought by the Trash Vortex, Alice represents the “white” Taiwanese people who have been disengaged from nature. Encountering with the islander, Alice and the reader at the same time learn the existence of other peripheral cultures that human-nature relationship is seamless. Also, during the time she spent with Atile’i in the forest, she gradually reconciles Earth Others. As Wu portrays, “She [Alice] was growing less afraid of the mountain as she became more familiar with every little path she could take to get down, and with the rate of growth of every plant, every clump of grass along the way. So this was what mountain was like, the same as a person: the more you know, the less you fear. But even so, you still never know what it’s thinking. And just like you never know what a person is going to do next, you never know what mountain is going to do next, Alice thought” (Wu, 2013, p. 242). It appears that Alice realized the subjectivity of the mountain. In Wu's narrative, nature (the mountain) is personified like a person that you may know the face but not his mind. The speculative fabulation of Wu unveils the ongoing and becoming-with between humans and nature. Not only Alice, but the reader also experiences the language and culture of the fabricated Wayo Wayo through the invention of Wu. In this regard, the mountain, and the forest in the novel act as quasi-active agents that humans must “listen” to. The mountain “enchants” Thom to climb down the cliff and have a conversation



with the man with the compound eyes. The mountain “guides” Dahu to find Thom’s dead body in the mountains (Wu, 2013, p. 125). So, nature is not romanticized as a recreational area that humans can carelessly visit, but nature can be cruel that can take away people’s lives. The depiction of nonhumans in the novel is similar to the Chthulucene of Haraway that “[t]he Chthulucene does not close in on itself; it does not round off; its contact zones are ubiquitous and continuously spin out loopy tendrils. Spider is a much better figure for sympoiesis than any inadequately leggy vertebrate of whatever pantheon. Tentacularity is sym-chthonic, wound with abyssal and dreadful graspings, frayings, and weavings, passing relays again and again, in the generative recursions that make up living and dying” (Haraway, 2016, p. 33). Echoing the Chthulucene, nature and the mountain is portrayed as tentacular figure that can be good and evil at the same time. As such, the human-nature relationship is like the string figure that is interweaving to enact stories of living and dying.

4.2.2 *Sympoiesis narrative and the power of memory*

In Wu’s “Chthulucene” storytelling, his narrative not only attempts to undermine the andromorphic and anthropocentric values but also reveals the idea of sympoiesis. The idea of sympoiesis and memory is revealed through the character “the man of the compound eyes” in the novel. As he says, “No life can survive without other lives, without the ecological memories other living creatures have, memories of the environments in which they live. People don’t realize they need to rely on the memories of other organisms to survive. You think that flowers bloom in colorful profusion just to please your eyes. That a wild boar exists just to provide meat for your table. [...] That a sambar deer, its head bent low to sip at a creek, is not a revelation...When in fact the finest movement of any organism represents a change in an ecosystem” (Wu, 2013, p. 281). Appeared as *deus ex machina*, the man functions as a god who reveals the truth of the earth system--symbiosis. The figure of “the man” is imagined calling for the new paradigm of human perception for nature. It is in the same sense as Haraway that nature is not autopoiesis, but “sympoiesis.” Wu’s narrative engages many layers of sympoiesis stories through human memories. In the end, the reader realized that the child has been dead, but they can be existed because of Alice’s memory and her ability to write a story. When Thom asks the man with the compound eye if his son is dead, the man replies: “Not exactly. At least for a certain period of time, by a kind of tacit understanding, he lived between you and your wife, didn’t he? He lived, like a chain. He didn’t die by the regular definition, only he wasn’t alive anymore. No other creature can share an experience like this. Only human beings can, through writing, experience something separately together” (Wu, 2013, p. 281). In other words, human memory is crucial and has the potential to speak for the dead and memorize for the lost.

In another example, when Atile’i departs from Alice. It shows that Alice truly understands the Wayo Wayoan culture, as she says: “Very fair, I replied and for the first time, I realized I could ask him back. ‘Is the weather fair on your sea today?’ ‘Yes it is, extremely fair,’ Atile’i replied. I don’t know why, but right at the moment, we both began to cry” (Wu, 2013, p. 180). The dialogue can imply the idea of memory through language acquisition. First, throughout the novel, Alice never knows why Wayo Wayoan people must answer “Very fair” whenever someone asks about the weather. But she realizes the cultural connotation of the phrase eventually. Second, due to linguistic memory, it explicates that both can memorize each other from language learning. In this manner, the Wayo Wayo still exists in Alice’s memory, so that, she can help the Wayo Wayoan islanders memorize their existence. Also, the function of memory and writing has underpinned the existence of her child. Thus, human memory has the power to speak for the dead, yet solely humans have the ability to reach the resurgence with the tentacular thinking in the Chthulucene. When Alice is writing a story of the man with the compound eyes, it implies that the Wayo Wayo story would be in her book as well. Then, these stories of multispecies could not be vanished, even if the Wayo Wayo have been exterminated.

The absence of the child and the father not only signifies the idea of eliminating the patriarchal ideology but also replaces it with the ideology of “making kin.” To Haraway, “[k]in is an assembling sort of word. All critters share a common “flesh,” laterally, semiotically, and genealogically. Ancestors turn out to be very interesting strangers; kin are unfamiliar (outside what we thought was family or gens), uncanny, haunting, active” (Haraway, 2016, p. 103). Comparably, making kin with the islander, the trauma of Alice has been recovered by nature and Atile’i who brought the ideology of becoming-with and co-evolution to the urbanized Taiwanese Alice as well as the reader. In the end, Atile’i insists on departing to find his lover and



return to the Wayo Wayo island, which Atile'i never know it has been vanished by the tsunami. Though, Alice did not force Atile'i to stay in Taiwan. The ending signifies respect for the nonhuman others without humans interfering. As such, the relationship between Alice and Atile'i becomes a sympoiesis example that reinforces the idea of Haraway's "making kin not babies."

5. Conclusion

Harawayian's concept of "SF" has expanded the sci-fi interpretation of Wu's *The Man with The Compound Eyes*. The concept demonstrates that Wu's SF helps provoke humanistic and ecological concerns for the Anthropocene. His narrative achieves the resurgence for humans and nature with his sympoiesis storytelling and tentacular thinking through the implication of the Trash Vortex, regardless of andromorphic speaking for nature. Resembling Haraway's SF, his narrative is engaging "about recuperation in complex histories that are as full of dying as living, as full of endings, even genocides, as beginnings" (Haraway, 2016, p. 10). Although in terms of sci-fi, *The Man* rarely discusses the scientific knowledge in detail, which makes it ambiguous to classify as a mainstream sci-fi, *The Man* possesses many criteria of Harawayian "SF" by "worlding" the world with the storytelling of multispecies. While Harawayian "SF" offers a new approach towards Taiwanese literature that deals with the Anthropocene, indigenous people, and nonhuman others, Wu's SF writing contributes a new horizon for Taiwanese fiction that infuses with sci-fi, fantasy, scientific facts, and environmentalism. Besides, studying Taiwanese SF with Haraway's concept would be an example for the exploration or interpretation of other literature from different cultures that also deal with the Anthropocene with different narratives.

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