

## ■ Ecological Redistribution and Historical Sustainability in Wu Ming-yi's Two Novels

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### Abstract

This paper discusses how literary imagination reflects on and intervenes in the discussion of sustainability and makes Taiwan studies sustainable on a global scale in Taiwanese writer Wu Ming-yi's two novels, *The Man with the Compound Eyes* (*Fuyan ren* 複眼人) and *The Stolen Bicycle* (*Danche shiqie ji* 單車失竊記). Drawing on contemporary theories of ecocriticism in conjunction with French philosopher Jacques Rancière's theorization of "redistribution," this paper argues that *The Man with the Compound Eyes* performs an act of "ecological redistribution" through which it not only actively engages in global production of environmental literature but also critiques the Han-centered historiography and settler multiculturalism in the local context of Taiwan. Furthermore, by re-conceptualizing interethnic representation in *The Stolen Bicycle* and placing this novel into integrated world history, I contend that Wu's novel challenges the colonial hierarchy structuring the relationship between the anthropologist and the ethnographic object by depicting an interethnic encounter between a Han novelist and an indigenous photographer. In so doing, *The Stolen Bicycle* demonstrates the potentiality of "historical sustainability" by revisiting the period of World War II in order to show the complexity of Taiwan's history and its multiple connections with world history, or more precisely, Taiwan's "sustainable relations" with the world. Thus, in Wu's literary imagination

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and intervention, the relationship between Taiwan and the world is always in the process of becoming, always resilient, renewable, and sustainable.

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How can Taiwan, an island with its successive and layered history of multiple colonialisms, as well as the study of Taiwan, be sustainable in both theoretical and practical dimensions? The concept of “sustainability,” according to American ecocritic Lawrence Buell’s analysis in *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*, is used in “applied ecology and economics to denote a mode of subsistence and more specifically a rate of agricultural or other crop-yield that can be maintained without detriment to the ecosystem” (148). And the phrase of “sustainable development” conceptually encapsulates the notion that humanity “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (148). However, in his essay, “How Sustainable is the Idea of Sustainability?,” John P. O’Grady argues that “the notion of sustainability is riddled with uncertainty and very difficult to pin down . . . in its privileging of *duration* or *permanence* as a value, sustainability runs counter to a fundamental principle in nature” (3; emphasis in original). He questions that if the nature of reality and the essence of the world, as described in literature or in philosophy, are floating, transient, and vulnerable, and all things and entities within the world are always subject to change and decay, then how can our environment and all forms of entities within this world stay the same as they are? If we further look at the theoretical insights of French poststructuralists, at least in Derridean deconstruction, that both the signifier and the signified are traces in the realm of language and that the mechanisms of signification are chains of supplements, then the process of meaning-making should be seen as a wobbling and unstable network which unceasingly links signifying elements together. If the concept of “sustainability” is also a temporal idea since it considers the needs of the future generations in the *longue durée*, then how can one really predict what the future will be like and what future generations will need in order to meet their requirement of sustainability? In other words, if we concur with O’Grady’s argument that nothing staying the same “is the very basis of history itself” (3), then the notion of “sustainability” is not as sustainable as it asserts to be. The notion is, instead, somewhat indefensible, abstract, and even dogmatic, if not entirely impotent.

If “sustainability,” as O’Grady has revealed, is self-contradictory and worthy of skepticism especially in the field of the humanities (such as literature, philosophy, religion, and so forth), then how can this notion be useful for us to rethink and reimagine the future of the humanities? O’Grady’s deconstructive analysis of “sustainability” does not suggest that we discard the very idea of sustainability, but instead encourages us to re-conceptualize this term from a different perspective. The calls for sustainable development and the pursuit of

sustainability are not to preserve or maintain an everlasting essence of things and eternal nature of the world, but to establish a “proper and sustainable relationship” between human and non-human, as well as the world. In this sense, the notion of “sustainability,” I argue, must be interpreted as a form of “relationality,” instead of any ontological and epistemological invariability. If “sustainability,” in the linguistic register of Derridean theorization, is itself a “signifier” whose signification can only be captured and deciphered in relation to other signifiers, or more precisely, in the network of signifying systems, then this notion is undoubtedly subject to change and open to different possibilities in the world of uncertainty, ambiguity, transiency, and complexity.

This paper attempts to ponder over and further deepen O’Grady’s insight of sustainability by examining Taiwanese writer Wu Ming-yi’s two novels, *The Man with the Compound Eyes* (*Fuyan ren* 複眼人) and *The Stolen Bicycle* (*Danche shiqie ji* 單車失竊記).<sup>1</sup> Starting his writing career around the 1990s, Wu has become well known as the most prominent writer-scholar of Taiwan nature writing and served as a literature professor at National Dong Hwa University in Taiwan.<sup>2</sup> In the preface to the 2003 anthology of Taiwan nature writing that he edited, Wu expounds that the emergence of Taiwan nature writing pertained to the environmental and sociopolitical conditions and transformation of Taiwan beginning in the 1980s. These include the environmental degradation attributable to urbanization and industrialization of the highly capitalistic society of Taiwan, as well as the setbacks of Taiwan’s diplomatic relations and its marginalized international position since the late 1970s. The above resulted in a “local turn” of Taiwanese writers to engage in literary production regarding environmental concerns, local situations, and historical memories that are tied to the land of Taiwan (“Qianyan” 14-15). Furthermore, informed by the ecological discourses embedded in Euro-American classics of nature writing, Taiwan nature writing, although it still has been inspired by the cultural and aesthetic sources from classical Chinese literature to an extent, not only distinguishes itself from classical pastoral literature (in which human activities and feelings play the most significant part whereas nature serves merely as a backdrop); it also posits “nature” per se in the forefront by incorporating intellectual qualities (scientific knowledge, for instance) into literary expression and stressing authors’ in-person

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<sup>1</sup> The two texts of Wu Ming-yi studied in this paper have been translated into English by Darryl Sterk. I will consistently use Sterk’s translation in this paper and provide the paginations for both the translation and original texts (the pagination of the translation appears first, and the second one refers to the original text).

<sup>2</sup> In addition to his literary works, Wu has been devoted to the study and theoretical construction of Taiwan nature writing, and has published research essays and books centering on this genre.

experience and nonfictional engagement. More importantly, Taiwanese nature writers have to go beyond anthropocentric blind spots and move towards a new environmental ethics based on their alternative understanding of Taiwan's geography and history ("Qianyan" 12-13).<sup>3</sup>

As a multitalented artist, photographer, and environmental activist with great knowledge of entomology, biology, and ecology, Wu has experimented on incorporating natural and scientific knowledge with his poetic expression of writing in many of his works based on the ideas illustrated above. His works with specific focus on butterflies, such as *The Book of Lost Butterflies* (*Midie zhi* 迷蝶誌) and *The Tao (Way) of Butterflies* (*Die dao* 蝶道), have brought innovative visions to Taiwan nature writing and garnered significant attention from critics.<sup>4</sup> Recently, Wu further extended his scope to writing fiction about Taiwan history in transnational perspectives and has completed remarkable full-length novels, including *Routes in the Dream* (*Shuimian de hangxian* 睡眠的航線) and *The Stolen Bicycle* (the later work was nominated for the Man Booker International Prize in 2018). Through his novels, we can clearly see that Wu has broadened the spectrum of Taiwan nature writing by integrating environmental concerns and ecological ethics into the fictional genre, considering ecology in relation to spatiality and temporality, as well as geography and history. Wu's literary articulation as a form of ecological activism provides fruitful insights to reconsider the concept of sustainability and its relationship with literature and culture, as well as the dialectic dynamics between the local and the global.

Methodologically and theoretically, I mobilize contemporary theories of ecocriticism in conjunction with French philosopher Jacques Rancière's formulation of "redistribution" to analyze Wu's two works. The notion of redistribution, in the Marxist view, refers to a means of social mechanism in which wealth and resources are distributed according to more ethical, socially just, and fair principles. Rancière has further developed and translated this concept into a theoretical terminology for exploring the politics of aesthetics and literature. He notes that politics "makes visible what had no business being seen, and makes heard a discourse where once there was only place for noise" (*Disagreement* 30); the politics of literature and aesthetics is to intervene in the predominant

<sup>3</sup> For more detailed discussion of Wu's theorization and his practice of Taiwan nature writing, as well as the development of Taiwan nature writing as a literary genre and discourse, please also see scholarship by Shiu-huah Serena Chou ("Sense"), I-ling Hsiao, Hui-feng Shin, and Liang-ya Liou.

<sup>4</sup> For instance, Yu-lin Lee also utilizes the framework of ecocriticism along with French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's theoretical concept of "becoming" to read Wu's nature writing on butterflies. Please see Yu-lin Lee's *Nizao xin diqiu* [*Fabulation of a New Earth*], especially Chapter One; see also Hui-feng Shin and Shiu-huah Serena Chou ("Sense").

relationship between “space and time, the visible and the invisible, speech and noise” (*Politics of Literature* 4). To put it differently, the way in which literature and art manifest their power of politics and potentiality of democracy is to destabilize and interrupt any dominant, determined orders of relationship between ways of doing, making, being, seeing, and saying, and re-imagine new forms of relationality between the sayable and the unsayable, the visible and the invisible, and the audible and the inaudible, through verbal, visual, and other modes of art (*Politics of Literature* 11; *Politics of Aesthetics* 45). From the perspective of social science and ecological economics, theorists have revealed that “understanding of ecological distribution conflicts” plays a pivotal part in environmental justice and can “take an active role in shaping transitions toward sustainability,” as ecological distribution conflicts “bring to light unsustainable resource uses affecting people and the planet as well as conflicting values over the environment” (Scheidel et al. 586). This view of “ecological distribution,” I believe, offers constructive insights to re-conceptualize the humanities, or more specifically, the realms of literature and art, through the lens of Rancière’s notion of “redistribution,” because literature and art not only reveal such ecological distribution conflicts via their diverse media specificities (narrative, rhetoric, visual or audio devices, etc.), but also reflect on these unsustainable resource uses and conflicting values by artistic performance of redistribution towards social and environmental justice and sustainability.

On the basis of Rancière’s thoughts of aesthetic politics, as well as the insights of “ecological distribution” and ecocriticism, this paper proposes two theoretical concepts—“ecological redistribution” and “historical sustainability”—to read Wu’s two novels *The Man with the Compound Eyes* and *The Stolen Bicycle* respectively so as to discuss how literary imagination participates and intervenes in the discussion of sustainability, and how it makes Taiwan (studies) sustainable on a global scale. *The Man with the Compound Eyes* has been translated into several different languages and well-reviewed by scholars through the lens of ecocriticism with different analytical focal points and theoretical approaches.<sup>5</sup> Inspired by the insights of existing scholarship, this paper attempts

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<sup>5</sup> To briefly outline these analyses germane to ecocriticism: Shiuuhuah Serena Chou places *The Man with the Compound Eyes* in the context of what Ursula K. Heise has termed the “transnational turn” in ecocriticism and discusses the novel’s articulation of “ecocosmopolitanism,” which may partially explain the international reach and reception of the novel (“Wu’s *The Man with the Compound Eyes*”). Rose Hsiu-li Juan, taking cues from Timothy Morton’s concept of “hyperobject” and Rob Nixon’s critique of “slow violence,” analyzes how Wu manifests a kind of “garbology of living” through the colossal spectacle of the Pacific Trash Vortex (PTV), and how the novelist takes an ethical action against “slow violence of environmental degradation” through his literary intervention and engagement (85). In a similar vein, Kathryn Yalan Chang offers a “material-oriented environmental reading” of the novel,

to deepen the ecocritical discussions with its particular focus on the novel's ecological articulation of interethnic relations between the indigenous and non-indigenous by bringing Ranci ere's theorization of redistribution to the table. Moreover, through a comparative analysis of *The Man with the Compound Eyes* and *The Stolen Bicycle*, this paper scrutinizes the way in which Wu embodies his ecological thoughts in his historical reconstruction of the Asia-Pacific War, and how he envisions a new ecological ethics in both geographical and historical aspects. Briefly speaking, I define "ecological redistribution" as an act to reconfigure new ethical relationships between the human and non-human, the corporeal and non-corporeal, the living and nonliving, the indigenous and non-indigenous, as well as culture and nature, via Wu's local story with a global sense of place. For "historical sustainability," I discuss Wu's literary reconstruction of Taiwan's history based on a more reciprocal and sustained "intersubjective temporality" via characters' interethnic encounters, and the novel's revisit of World War II which highlights nonhuman entities (objects, animals, and plants) and their relationalities to excavate Taiwan's complex and multiple connections to the world in the context of integrated world history. I argue that *The Man with the Compound Eyes* performs an act of "ecological redistribution" through which it not only actively engages in global production of environmental literature but also critiques the Han-centered historiography and settler multiculturalism in the local context of Taiwan. Furthermore, by re-conceptualizing interethnic representation in *The Stolen Bicycle* and placing this novel into integrated world history, I contend that Wu's novel challenges the colonial hierarchy structuring the relationship between the anthropologist and the ethnographic object by depicting an interethnic encounter between a Han novelist and an indigenous photographer. In so doing, *The Stolen Bicycle* demonstrates the potentiality of "historical sustainability" by revisiting the period of World War II in order to show the complexity of Taiwan's history and its multiple connections with

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and discusses how *The Man with the Compound Eyes* explores the "material agency" and "subjectivity" of nonhuman nature or matters by inviting readers to "listen to the voice of nature" (106-07). Darryl Sterk, the literature scholar and translator who introduced Wu's novels to the English-speaking world, pays attention to the "demigod-like" image of "the man with the compound eyes" and analyzes the "videomosaic gaze" of this figure from the perspective of the "postmodern ecological sublime," by which he reminds us that the holistic, kaleidoscopic, and multidimensional vision is also a "product of technocapitalism" (188). Justin Prystash explores the theoretical and philosophical affinities between speculative realism and Daoism, contending that Wu's novel articulates a form of "reciprocal aesthetic entanglements between humans, nonhuman species, and inorganic objects" (512) by bringing both Eastern and Western philosophical traditions into "creative tension" (524). Robin Chen-hsing Tsai suggests an interdisciplinary approach of "new materialism of the brain" (865-66) based on Australian philosopher Glenn Albrecht's concept of "solastalgia" (a form of mental distress caused by environmental distress) to enrich the discussions of the Anthropocene hypothesis as well as ecological discourses.



world history, or more precisely, Taiwan's "sustainable relations" to the world.

### **Ecological Redistribution: *The Man with the Compound Eyes***

*The Man with the Compound Eyes* tells a story of a local town, Haven, located on the east coast of Taiwan (which alludes to the actual locale Hualien) with a global sense of place by characters with multicultural backgrounds. Taiwan in this novel is featured as the stage on which people from around the world encounter each other: Han literature professor Alice and her Danish husband Thom Jakobsen; Hafay, an indigenous Pangcah woman and the owner of the Seventh Sisid Café in Haven; Dahu, an indigenous Bunun who works as a taxi driver, mountaineer, amateur sculptor, forest conservationist, and volunteer for some east-coast non-governmental organizations, and his daughter Umav; the Norwegian marine biologist Sara and her German partner, Detlef Boldt, a mechanical engineer who participates in the project of the tunnel boring machine (TBM) design; and Detlef's old colleague engineer Li Jung-hsiang. Additionally, Wu conjures up a Pacific Trash Vortex (PTV) floating around in the midst of the Pacific Ocean that collides with Taiwan, through which the two protagonists who drive the central plot—Alice and Atilé'i (an indigene who drifts from the fictionalized Pacific island named Wayo Wayo to Haven via the PTV due to the collision)—are able to meet each other. By doing so, Taiwan is further connected with the Pacific world through the fabulation of Wayo Wayo by the novel's geographical imagination.

The commentary on sustainability of *The Man with the Compound Eyes* functions on both global and local scales. On the global scale, this novel consciously engages with the western tradition of nature writing and environmental criticism. In Buell's analysis of environmentalism as a series of waves, the first wave of environmental writing and ecocriticism is centered around region-oriented and place-based interest that emphasizes "scientific literacy" to describe natural laws through the scientific method as a means to rectify human subjectivism and cultural relativism. However, the dualistic assumption of a division between culture and science that needs to be bridged advocated by this first wave has been challenged by the second wave of ecocriticism. These next-wave environmental critics argue that the "borderline between science and culture is less clear-cut" as the natural and built environments in this world are historically and socially intertwined and all mixed up (*Future* 19-22). They thus suggest that the study of nature writing and discourses of science and literature "must be read both with and against each other" (*Future* 19). More importantly, the



dichotomy between the local and the global was also interrogated as the second wave environmental critics purported to envision place-based imagination on a global scale. The “nested quality of place,” Buell notes, often widens the “circles of place” (*Future* 67, 93) and bridges dialectic relations to a larger community because any experience of place and the structure of feeling, rather than restricting to regional boundaries, has always been in process and in motion, linking multiple locales and places together. In this way, re-conceptualizing place as a node within the global network means that globalism will not always suppress or reduce the specificity of place-ness, but can reshape new platial identities and imagination by creating new forms of eco-literature with a global sense of place.

*The Man with the Compound Eyes* participates and intervenes in the so-called “global turn” of environmental criticism and ecological discourses through various spaces and forms of encounter. Haven, or “H” city in the original text, is portrayed as a forefront of transnational encounters between Taiwan’s aborigines, Han settlers, foreign intellectuals, ecologists, and technologists. In other words, it is a microcosm of the global eco-community. The PTV functions as a metaphorical device that breaks the boundary between the real and the fictional worlds because it facilitates the encounter between Alice and Atilé’i, one from the actual location of Taiwan and another from the fabulated Wayo Wayo. Furthermore, Rose Hsiu-li Juan notes that the PTV can find its real-life counterpart in the aftermath of the 2011 northeast Japan earthquake and the following Fukushima nuclear disaster which astonished the world. In a similar vein, Shiu-huah Serena Chou points out that “the globalized local or the localized global in Wu’s novel reveals a cosmopolitan sense of the world and the readership of *The Man with the Compound Eyes* reveals the worlding of ecocriticism as a process of cultural adaptation and translation” (“Wu’s *The Man with the Compound Eyes*”). It is not too much to say that this novel timely latches onto the recent trend of the increasing attention to “non-Western literature’s engagement with both local concerns and global environmental issues” (Buell et al. 427). Wu’s literary articulation is indeed a response to the actual global events and current environmental phenomena, which attempts to engage in the global turn of ecocriticism in both literary and practical manners, and creates critical spaces for readers to think globally via its place-based imagination as a local practice.

On the local scale, this novel challenges the Han-centered historiography of Taiwan literature, particularly in settlers’ writing of indigeneity. As an island whose indigenous inhabitants are members of the Austronesian language group, Taiwan has been a de facto settler colony due to a large-scale Han migration from China to Taiwan since the seventeenth century. Indigenous peoples in Taiwan have been marginalized in the settler-centric historiography and other

forms of cultural productions for centuries. To borrow Eric R. Wolf's phrase, indigenes in Taiwan are the "peoples without history" as their voices have long been excluded and silenced from Han-oriented writing. It was not until the 1980s that indigeneity began to play a role in both literature and history thanks to a series of democratization and localization movements. Yet, this has not been an entirely smooth process: as Hsinya Huang contends, indigeneity has often been "appropriated and incorporated by Han Taiwanese writers in their hope to establish a distinct body of national literature and in constructing a narrative of Taiwanese national identity as native" (243). Additionally, in many literary works representing indigeneity authored by Han settlers, the indigenous elements are often depicted in a primitive mode of representation, often "uncivilized" or "barbarous," and different indigenous cultures are generalized in reductive and exotic ways. Cultural anthropologist Johannes Fabian has termed this phenomenon the "anthropological allochronism," a typical colonial consciousness which consigns indigenous subjects to the past to deny the "coevalness" of the researchers and the ethnographical subjects, turning these subjects into objects as a means to solidify the hierarchical power relations between anthropology and those objects of study (Fabian 32-34)—a phenomenon that is commonly seen in various imperial expansions and settler societies. It was not until the 1980s that this mode of "anthropological allochronism" was challenged by a new generation of Taiwan indigenous authors inspired by a series of indigenous social and cultural movements during the period.

On the other hand, the recent recognition of indigenous peoples in Taiwan's society and the inclusion of indigeneity in Taiwan literature in the name of multiculturalism, even though Han settlers do so with a sense of moral commitment and self-reflection, still remains problematic for both political and ethical reasons. Scholars have argued that, when multiculturalism is formulated by settlers, it can function as an assimilation project to incorporate indigenous subjects into mainstream settler narratives, serving as a colonial discourse to consolidate settlers' nationalism. According to Native American scholar Sandy Grande, settler multiculturalism has "operated in a homogenizing way, centered on unifying all peoples in the nation-state," and the discourse of cultural diversity, within the liberal model as defined by settlers, "could be expressed only within the preexisting, hegemonic frames of the nation-state, reading democracy as 'inclusion'" (47). While the logic of inclusion, or the "cunning of recognition" as termed by Elizabeth A. Povinelli in her case of Australian multiculturalism, is taken merely as a basis of national unity, and multiculturalism appropriated as grounds for "a new transcendental national monoculturalism" in various settler colonies worldwide (Povinelli 29), the indigenous claim of sovereignty and

their rights of self-determination are therefore undermined and disavowed by settler nation-states. As Ella Shohat and Robert Stam argue, multiculturalism is a “situated utterance, inserted in the social and shaped by history,” existing in “shifting relation to various institutions, discourses, disciplines, communities, and nation-states” (6). To put it another way, multiculturalism can be “top-down or bottom-up, hegemonic or resistant, or both at the same time” (Shohat and Stam 6), depending on who is speaking it, from whose perspective, and for whose interest one is deploying it as a discourse.

Wu’s novel astutely contests and negotiates with the above settler-centric representation of indigeneity and the discourses of settler multiculturalism in many ways. Rather than treating Taiwan indigenous characters as exotic others in settlers’ romanticization, Wu delineates several social issues that indigenous peoples confront in contemporary Taiwan, including ethnic discrimination and structural violence, drug abuse, prostitution, forceful eviction and relocation due to the “urban renewal project,” and so forth. While Wu portrays the above social issues that many indigenes face in contemporary Taiwan in a realistic mode, he does not stereotype the indigenous figures into insipid and flat characters (the multifaceted characterization of the indigenous intellectual-activist-artist Dahu serves as a good example in the novel). Through this nuanced representation, Wu critiques the Han-centered stereotypical imagination of indigeneity represented through bodies that can sing and dance (abilities developed as the consequences of a settler capitalist economy and commercial tourism in Taiwan). Most importantly, indigenous figures in this novel play active roles in local knowledge production by spotlighting their holistic ecological wisdom, which reflects on and critiques both the mainstream Han-centric and Anthropocentric worldview. The eco-cultural tour at the Forest Church managed by Dahu’s uncle Anu provides an alternative, sensorial, and ecological experience to tourists and the readers—the visitors are asked to “close their eyes and touch a tree root, lean on the tree and smell a wild mushroom, taste prickly ash leaves, and listen to a certain birdcall to judge how far away it was” (261/310). Anu believes that by doing so he (and a few of the visitors) can “smell, touch, hear or sense” the spirit of his son Lian who was accidentally crushed by a tree branch, as if Lian is still alive (261/310). Hafay appreciates the way “the weeping figs survived by growing aerial roots that went down, down, down until they reunited with the earth and helped prop up the parent tree” (262/312). The eco-cultural tour not only shows indigenous appreciation and respect of nature’s subjectivity, but also evinces the holistic cosmology ingrained in indigenous knowledge, or in Kathryn Yalan Chang’s words, a “transcorporeal bodily experience” between human and nature (104). Rather than taking indigenous tribal wisdom as some-

thing purely spiritual, esoteric, or entirely irrational (which would recommit the same mistake of primitivization and romanticization of indigeneity as other Han settler works), Wu remarks in one of his research essays that indigenous peoples' traditional wisdom and understanding of the world have the potential to converse with global ecological discourses based on contemporary scientific knowledge and technology ("Tianzhen zhihui [Innocent Wisdom]").<sup>6</sup> In James Clifford's words, indigenous tradition should be reckoned as "interactive, creative and adaptive processes," and the past is where one "looks for the future" (29, 57). The indigenous cultural resurgence is thus not an atavistic action to restore the tradition of the past, but a contemporary everyday practice toward the future.

Wu not only challenges the problematic logic of inclusion and settler recognition, he also elevates his work to another aesthetic and ethical level, which I would like to call the literary engagement of "ecological redistribution" derived from Rancière's theories. Rancière contends that the politics of recognition can establish one-dimensional and "asymmetric relations" between the active side who possesses the authority to recognize and the passive side waiting to be recognized, adding that in this model a reciprocal relationship and radical equality can never be fulfilled. As an alternative, Rancière rearticulates the notion of recognition through his theorization of "redistribution":

if recognition is not merely a response to something already existing, if it is an original configuration of the common world, this means that individuals and groups are always, in some way, recognized with a place and a competence so that the struggle is not 'for recognition,' but for *another form* of recognition: a redistribution of the places, the identities, and the parts. (Honneth and Ranciere 90; emphasis in original)

From recognition to redistribution, Rancière not only proffers an alternative political philosophy to examine equality and freedom, but also guides us to a new direction in approaching literature and aesthetics. The "politics of literature," in Rancière's formulation, means that "literature intervenes as literature in this carving up of space and time, the visible and the invisible, speech and noise," and most importantly, explores "the relationship between practices and forms of visibility and modes of saying that carves up one or more common worlds" (*Politics of Literature*, 4). The notion of redistribution thus avoids reproducing existing hierarchies or asymmetries hidden in the logic of recognition

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<sup>6</sup> This standpoint also echoes the current academic trend to bridge indigenous knowledge and Western science, trying to create possible "interfaces" between different knowledge systems. Please see Martin Nakata, Mason Durie, Pei-Lun Chen Chang (Tunkan Tansikian), Jayalaxshmi Mistry and Andrea Berardi, and Fikret Berkes and Mina Kislalioglu Berkes.

and opens possibilities of radical alterity of power relations and new forms of reciprocity.

By foregrounding indigenous values and knowledge via an act of ecological redistribution, Wu's novel interrupts the prevailing power structure between Han settlers and indigenous peoples, and the way in which knowledge is produced. This move can be understood as a response to the "new third wave of ecocriticism" that Joni Adamson and Scott Slovic have identified following Buell's ecocritical paradigm, which "recognizes ethnic and national particularities and yet transcends ethnic and national boundaries," contriving to encompass diverse ethnic dimensions in conversation with global environmental criticism (6). Wu's depiction of the indigenous communities in Taiwan, as well as their encounters with Han settlers and other foreign characters in the novel, brings the issues of social injustice attributable to Han settler colonialism in Taiwan and global environmental concerns into dynamic conversations, which also embodies the more recently emerging and ongoing "cross-pollination" of ecocriticism with other disciplines and fields, such as (post)colonialism, studies of marginalized communities, ethnic minorities, and indigenous knowledge (Buell et al.; Buell, "Ecocriticism"; Adamson and Slovic). Furthermore, by creating a local story with a global sense of place, Wu's literary intervention in ecological discourse not only formulates dialectic relations between the local and the global, but also presents new ethical relationships between the human and non-human, the corporeal and non-corporeal, the living and nonliving, the indigenous and non-indigenous, as well as culture and nature. This is best actualized through the "demigod-like" image of "the man with the compound eyes" in this novel. The voice of "the man with the compound eyes" is finally heard towards the end of the book, revealing the environmental ethics in conjunction with the politics of memory and writing, critically reflecting on and challenging the anthropocentric epistemology of human being. Let me quote this highly metaphorical and metafictional passage at length as follows:

...humans are usually completely unconcerned with the memories of other creatures. Human existence involves the wilful destruction of the existential memories of other creatures and of your own memories as well. 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 fish takes the bait just for your sake. That only you can mourn. That a stone falling into a gorge is of no significance. 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. (281/334)

By challenging the anthropocentrism of human memories and underestimation of the memories of other creatures or nonhuman beings, Wu not only foregrounds the significance of coexistence and interdependence between the human and nonhuman but also reflects on the politics and ethics of writing—the very medium by which humans document and preserve memories. Furthermore, the figuration of “the man with the compound eyes,” according to Darryl Sterk’s observation, symbolizes not only a total view of nature but also a “technological mediated vision of nature” (188), a consequence of postmodern techno-capitalism, serving as a device to reconcile mechanical advancement with the environment. By juxtaposing the ecological and scientific knowledge with the poetic literary expression, as well as interweaving the real and the fictional worlds, Wu deftly demonstrates how science and literature are mutually constitutive and intersecting in his ecoliterature. The above multidirectional and multilayered literary redistribution hence constitutes what I call the “ecological redistribution” as the ecosystem is not confined to the human world, but includes the integrated ecosystem, both the tangible and intangible, as a whole. This integrated ecosystem Wu conjures up also crystalizes what Ursula K. Heise has referred to as “eco-cosmopolitanism”—an attempt to “envision individuals and groups as part of planetary ‘imagined communities’ of both human and nonhuman kinds,” and an ideal towards a “more-than-human world” that connects “both animate and inanimate networks of influence and exchange” (61). Through the act of “ecological redistribution” Wu performs in *The Man with the Compound Eyes* with a self-awareness of global citizenship, the prevailing structure between Han settlers and indigenous peoples of Taiwan, as well as the aforementioned dichotomies and relationalities can be redefined and reconfigured in more ethical and ecological ways.

Nevertheless, Wu’s local intervention in global environmental literature still has its blind spots. Although *The Man with the Compound Eyes* successfully questions the hierarchical “anthropological allochronism” by underscoring the contemporaneity and coexistence of Han settler and indigenous characters in the local context of Taiwan, this novel still characterizes the fictional indigenous figure Atile’i and the Wayo Wayo Island in a somewhat exotic and primordial mode, particularly in its emphasis on the island’s second-son sacrificial ritual, Atile’i’s libidinal energy, and the secluded insularity of Wayo Wayo from the outside world. If we turn to indigenous anthropologist Epeli Hau’ofa’s theorization of Oceania in which the Pacific Ocean is a vast and expanding body of water that connects all Pacific Islands, Islanders, and Oceanian cultures together, instead of a barrier isolating them from one another, then Wu’s fabrication of Wayo Wayo seems to reproduce what Hau’ofa calls the “colonial confinement”

that cuts off the interrelatedness and mobility among these islands (32-39). Even though Atile'i is given certain forms of agency to challenge the Han settler centric ideology and worldview by his indigenous traditional knowledge, the interethnic encounter between Alice and Atile'i that bridges Taiwan and the Pacific world remains largely asymmetric—it is an interethnic relationship between a traumatized culturally elite settler and an outcast Pacific islander. What concerns me the most is that throughout the novel Atile'i is never given a chance to meet or have a dialogue with Taiwan's indigenous characters, which further constrains its interethnic encounter to a settler-to-indigenous relationality.

It seems that in order to redefine the contemporary Han-indigenous relationship of Taiwan and add colors to his literary imagining in this novel, Wu relies on another “primordial other” from a fictionalized Pacific island that happens to be, very ironically, indigenous. The fabulation of another Pacific indigenous people then paradoxically forecloses the possibility of deeper understandings of the actual Pacific world. Hau'ofa's utopian hope of “indigeno-cosmopolitan visions” (to borrow Clifford's phrase [198])—an expansive regionalism which goes beyond the geopolitical boundaries and forges transnational alliances among the Pacific Islands—has not yet come into existence in this novel. Yet, despite having the above limitations, Wu's literary engagement and effort should be acknowledged and taken seriously. The “ecological redistribution” expressed in this novel enables readers to reconsider our shared world and re-modulate human/nonhuman, culture/nature, literature/science, tradition/modernity, locality/globality, reality/fiction binaries by encouraging us to grow “the compound eyes” necessary to go beyond both the anthropocentric and Han settler centered worldview. Through this “ecological redistribution,” Wu has offered us a chance to cultivate a new kind of “eco-cosmopolitan environmentalism” that Heise powerfully explicates (210), and to reconsider the responsibility of being a member within our eco-community.

### **Historical Sustainability: *The Stolen Bicycle***

If *The Man with the Compound Eyes* performs an act of “ecological redistribution” through literary creativity, then *The Stolen Bicycle* further illustrates how a “dialectic confrontation” between different ethnicities, societies, and cultures can come into being based on a co-temporal condition by its reconstruction of “intersubjective time and history” as theorized by Fabian. Inspired by Italian neorealist director Vittorio De Sica's classic film *The Bicycle Thief*, the story of *The Stolen Bicycle* revolves around the interethnic encounter between the narra-



tor Ch'eng and the Tsou indigenous photographer Abbas, and their journey to trace the history of the "stolen bicycles"—the "iron horses" that have influenced their fate. Their encounter at the inception of the story resembles a typical anthropological relationship between the anthropologist and the ethnographical object, as Ch'eng represents the researcher (as well as the narrator of the novel) and Abbas the indigenous informant. However, the ethnographical fieldwork conducted by Ch'eng does not proceed smoothly as the storyline keeps being suspended, interrupted, and distracted due to the novel's narrative detours. In order to understand the connection between the two lost bicycles in both Ch'eng's and Abbas's family histories, Ch'eng visits Abbas's hometown, the Tsou tribal village in Nan-t'ou County, where more historical fragments and details are unpacked through the audiotapes that Abbas's father Pasuya left. Pasuya is an indigenous volunteer who enlists for the Takasago Volunteer Army and later joins the special operations force, the Silverwheel Squad, the Japanese bicycle military units sent to Southeast Asia when the Japanese colonial government launched the colonial policy of "imperialization" (*kōminka*) in preparation for the Asia-Pacific War. Following the traces of Pasuya's story, the two protagonists travel from Taiwan to the port of San'a on Kainan (or Hai-nan) Island and finally land at the Malay Peninsula during the period of the Asia-Pacific War. Pasuya is assigned to the southern expeditionary force and stationed in the jungle of Northern Burma, where the troops rely on animals such as horses, mules, and elephants as vehicles to transport supplies and weapons. In his time in the forest of Burma, Pasuya becomes acquainted with a Karen elephant tamer, a mahout, named K'nyaw. The story of the Silverwheel Squad then unfolds through the dialogue between the two protagonists during their journey.

Through the unfolding of the novel, the colonial hierarchy that structures the relationship between the anthropologist and the ethnographic object—the former the authority who documents the history and the latter the informant who can merely be observed and researched—is challenged and overturned in the historical reconstruction by the two protagonists. As described in this novel, piecing together the historical fragments and narrative segments is like "rebuilding one of the old police-station-cum-post-offices the Japanese had built in the mountains during the colonial period" (140/142). Also, the journey to excavate and reconstruct history is as if one has to use part of the lifetime to "delay the decline" of a bike in order to "salvage" it (319/332). The salvation of history lies in the interethnic coexistence and collaboration as the threads of the forgotten history of the Silverwheel Squad can only be unraveled through the co-reconstruction of Ch'eng and Abbas, equipped with multiple means of "mediation," including audiotapes, photographs, translation, electronic document

transmission, and so forth. In this sense, the coevally grounded reconstruction of history between the Han and indigenous characters shows readers the possibility of an alternative anthropological epistemology. The colonial binarism between the anthropologist and the ethnographic object is blurred as they are both active participants, both the constitutive elements of history and simultaneously the creators in the process of knowledge production “on the basis of shared intersubjective Time and intersocietal contemporaneity” (Fabian 148). This alternative anthropological epistemology created by the two protagonists articulates what Stephen A. Tyler calls the “postmodern ethnography”—a more ethical mode of ethnography which, by rejecting the “ideology of ‘observer-observed,’” “foregrounds dialogue as opposed to monologue, and emphasizes the cooperative and collaborative nature of the ethnographic situation in contrast to the ideology of the transcendental observer” (126). Tyler further elaborates that the purpose of postmodern ethnographic discourse is neither “an object to be represented nor a representation of an object,” nor a project which aims at creating “universal knowledge,” but rather, a reconstructive and mutual interaction, a “meditative vehicle,” a starting point of “a different kind of journey” (131, 140). These insights help explain the interethnic encounter and collaboration between the two protagonists, and their historical reconstruction as a form of “mutual dialogical production of a discourse” in their following journey (Tyler 126).

The initial journey diverges and then leads readers to various successive journeys. If the interethnic encounter in *The Man with the Compound Eyes* is still limited to a kind of asymmetric relationship between a Han settler elite and an indigenous Pacific islander (as we particularly see through the settler-to-indigenous encounter between Alice and Atile'i), then *The Stolen Bicycle* further explores a more reciprocal interethnic relationship and the possibility of a minor transnational alliance. This revisionist interethnic relationality is most clearly articulated by the two indigenous characters—Pasuya and the Karen elephant tamer K'nyaw. Their similar, though not exactly the same, experiences of colonization and the shared indigenous holistic worldview become the common ground of their interethnic friendship: they both believe that everything has a spirit and humans and animals can understand each other (Pasuya even tries to learn the language of the Karen in order to communicate with elephants), but at the same time remain aware of the limitation of anthropocentric experience as “elephants can make and hear sounds people can't” (214/220); they learn the “secret techniques of mountain survival” and “knowledge of mountain forest” from each other in the jungle (217/224); together they try to find a way out of the battle and witness the cruelty of the war—rivers with floating corpses and roads aflame; they pray for the spirits of the dead in their “ancestral tongues”

(218/225). Pasuya tries to “mimic the silent language” that K’nyaw speaks, “summoning the herd to send him on his way” after K’nyaw is struck by bullets and dies. Pasuya can still hear “the elephant herd tramping through the jungle” and remember “the stars arrayed around the silver wheel of the moon” years after returning home, with his left ear that is almost deaf. A part of Pasuya had been buried along with K’nyaw in the forests of Northern Burma and a part of K’nyaw’s souls survives in Pasuya’s memory. Their encounter therefore establishes a form of transnational minor relationality (to borrow Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih’s formulation of “minor transnationalism”) through which minority groups from different geopolitical margins are able to laterally connect with and understand one another, and more importantly, constitute a pivotal part in the reconstruction of history based on indigenous-to-indigenous coalition.

*The Stolen Bicycle* provides a new vision to understand the history of Taiwan and its relation to the world. The writing of Taiwan’s history has usually been confined to China-centric historiography, whereas Taiwan’s position in world history and its connections with other regions and areas have long been neglected and underestimated, particularly Taiwan’s historical ties with Southeast Asia. As Chih-fan Chen has noted, the historical accounts and memories of the Takasago Volunteer Army (as Pasuya’s memory in Northern Burma unveils in the novel) had also been intentionally forgotten and silenced for more than a half-century in both the Japanese and the Chinese Nationalist official historiographies; the two governments, although they were on the opposite sides of the war, both treated these memories as taboo for distinct reasons and remained reluctant to confront this intricate history (161). Wu adeptly copes with this double invisibility in both the Japanese and Nationalist official narratives of history via his literary imagination. If *The Man with the Compound Eyes* connects the island of Taiwan to the larger Pacific world mainly through its platial and geographical imagination, then *The Stolen Bicycle*, by tracing the story of the Silverwheel Squad, highlights Taiwan’s linkages with Japan and Southeast Asia through its historical specificity. If we further draw on the methodology of “relational comparison” proposed by Shu-mei Shih, then this historical connection is not only central to Taiwan’s history or Asian history more broadly, but also crucial to integrated world history. These connections seen in the novel echo Shih’s argument that we “have always lived in an interconnected world” co-produced by all parts and members of the world with specific relationalities (“Theory” and “World Studies”). Shih further notes that Taiwan in this relational world “is more than a node in a network, but also the place from which one theorizes about the world, as it is a crucial place that is a co-producer or

even initiator of global processes,” and the study of Taiwan must be treated “as part and parcel of the global formation as well as global processes” (“Forum” 211, 214). In light of Shih’s proposal, *The Stolen Bicycle* not only evokes events that have long been invisible in dominant retellings of Taiwan’s history but also provides a different viewpoint to approach world history by revealing a rarely known story of the Silverwheel Squad.

The politics of literature demonstrated in this novel is thus to make the forgotten history visible and heard, so as to actively participate in the formation of the integrated and interconnected world. In *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, Rancière points out that politics “breaks with the tangible configuration whereby parties and parts or lack of them are defined by a presupposition that, by definition, has no place in that configuration—that of the part of those who have no part” (29-30). And the political activity, according to Rancière’s formulation, “makes visible what had no business being seen, and makes heard a discourse where once there was only place for noise; it makes understood as discourse what was once only heard as noise” (30). If the idea of “sustainability” in the realm of the humanities, as O’Grady suggests, is to rediscover and re-envisage “the lost faces of the world”—be they artifacts, objects, ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, marginalized communities and societies, animals, nonhuman beings, geographical peripheries, the ecological environment, or the lost histories—then *The Stolen Bicycle* accomplishes this by unearthing the historical bond between Taiwan, Japan, and Southeast Asia that has previously been forgotten (or “stolen,” as the title implies), which exhibits a literary embodiment of what I would call “historical sustainability.” Most importantly, to rediscover history is not to restore the once lost history as it was, but to create “something new in the present that has recourse to the past” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 149), as seen in Wu’s literary articulation and historical re-imagination.

Markedly, this historical sustainability is largely based on Wu’s literary articulation of redistribution as can be seen in *The Man with the Compound Eyes*, an act of ecological redistribution between diverse forms of relationality—the indigenous and non-indigenous, the human and non-human, the corporeal and non-corporeal, the living and nonliving, and so forth. In addition to the cardinal plotline, Wu complicates this novel by structurally juxtaposing emails delineating Taiwan’s industrial history of butterfly handicraft in a semi-fictional form (A-hùn’s story composed by Sabina based on Sabina’s mother); chapters of the bike notes (in which Wu interweaves the narrator’s story pertaining to the histories of the “iron horses” with their use in commercial activities and in different wars in history, the rise and decline of the narrator’s old home in the Chung-hwa Market, etc.); the story of the Asian elephant Lin Wang (Ah Mei)

in Taipei Zoo that Squad Leader Mu told Shizuko, and Mu's story of the Chinese expeditionary force that participated in the Sino-British counteroffensive in India. The lost faces of history that O'Grady elucidates are rediscovered not merely through the novel's historical reconstruction via characters' interethnic encounters, they are also re-envisioned through diverse forms of relational encounters among objects and artifacts (bicycles, butterfly handicraft), animals (Asian elephants), technological mediation and communication, the transcorporeal experiences between the human and non-human (Pasuya and K'nyaw's experiences with elephants, as well as Squad Leader Mu's battle at "Fort Li," a massive banyan tree that Mu's company uses as their garrison against the Japanese in Northern Burma), and most tellingly, the growth and transmutation between the living and nonliving (as the "bicycle-embracing tree" that Abbas finds in the Shan village symbolizes toward the end of the story). Through these acts of redistribution, Wu reminds us that a more sustained form of interethnic relationality and intersubjective temporality of history not only necessitates human activities but also involves all kinds of non-human participation and interconnectivities, by which he once again interrogates and challenges anthropocentric value systems from the perspective of history. The lost faces of history therefore are able to be "unearthed" through Wu's ecological redistribution (just as the tree unceasingly lifts the bike up toward the sky), which makes *The Stolen Bicycle's* articulation of historical sustainability possible.

It is also worth noting that many details in *The Stolen Bicycle* reference Wu's own literary works: the novel insinuates that it can be somehow read as a continuation of Wu's previous novel *Routes in the Dream* as the characterization of Ch'eng resembles the protagonist in *Routes in the Dream*, who suffers from a sleeping disorder as well as a missing father in both novels; the depiction of the butterfly handicraft industry reminds those loyal readers of Wu of his nature writing focusing on butterflies in *The Book of Lost Butterflies* or *The Tao (Way) of Butterflies*; the spatiotemporal setting of the Chung-hwa Market alludes to and supplements several pieces in the short story collection, *The Illusionist on the Skywalk* (*Tianqiao shang de moshu shi* 天橋上的魔術師). The multi-stranded, multilingual, intertextual, and metafictional narrative structure of *The Stolen Bicycle* adeptly manifests the historical complexity and interconnectivity that run through Wu's literary imagination and aesthetic creativity, or what David Der-wei Wang terms "the aesthetics of the compound eyes," by which Wu approaches and pushes the boundaries of history (including the collective, integrated world history as well as his personal history as a writer) through multiple visions and dimensions.

Most importantly, the above details—historical fragments, nonhuman

beings, materials, nonliving objects, places and locations—not only relate the characters in *The Stolen Bicycle* and many of Wu's literary works together through different methods, but also function as different entries which invite readers to access world history via diverse paths. "History," as a field of study, in this vein, can be considered what Rancière refers to as "the poetics of knowledge," a discipline which does not belong to any specific group of people, but a "capacity of thinking" that can be attributed to anybody, a way of "looking at all forms of discourse from the point of view of that capacity" (Honneth and Rancière 150). In *The Names of History*, Rancière further expounds that "the poetics of knowledge" is not confined to the realm of history, but a study of "the set of literary procedures by which a discourse escapes literature, gives itself the status of a science, and signifies this status. The poetics of knowledge has an interest in the rules according to which knowledge is written and read, is constituted as a specific genre of discourse" (8). Every entry into world history functions as a monad (to borrow the term formulated by Gottfried W. Leibniz and Gilles Deleuze) which provides a specific viewpoint of thinking and looking at the world by mirroring other monads existing within it, constituting a unique expression of the entire universe (Deleuze; Phemister). All passengers can begin their intellectual adventures from any entry as there are "multiple paths that can be constructed to get to another point and still another one that is not predictable" (Honneth and Rancière 139). In the last chapter entitled "The Tree," Ch'eng gets on his father's bike, and all memories and histories of the past as well as the images of the characters and places in this novel are recalled again while riding. Wu describes how Ch'eng rides "onto the underside of a river, to a place where all the rivers in the world are connected, and see[s] in the underside of every river innumerable fish-men swimming, sculling and blowing tiny bubbles with the sum of all the breath they ever breathed when they were alive" (364/380). The metaphor of the rivers, as I see it, serves as the "inter-connected multiple paths" which constitute history and allow us to re-envisage "the lost faces of the world." Although literature is not history, and fiction is different from reality, both literature and history participate in the formation of the human world as they share the same signifying system. Most importantly, literature, like a monad, proffers unique viewpoints to look at the world and at history, and these views will ultimately become an indispensable part of world history. Thus, literature also enables us to imagine new possibilities of the future. In so doing, Wu shows how literature can reconstruct history and make it sustainable.

The interlocking relationality between history and literature is also underscored through the multilingualism in the novel:



In the world I grew up in, the word a person used for ‘bicycle’ told you a lot about them. *Jiten-sha* (‘self-turn vehicle’) indicated a person had received a Japanese education. *Thih-bé* (‘iron horse’) meant he was a native speaker of Taiwanese, as did *Khóng-bing-tshia* (‘Kung-ming vehicle’), named for an ancient Chinese inventor, *Tan-ché* (‘solo vehicle’), *chiaio-t’a-ché* (‘foot-pedalled vehicle’) or *tsu-hsing-ché* (‘automobile vehicle’) told you they were from the south of China. (8/11)

Each designation for “bicycle” serves as an entry of a unique history belonging to a specific geographical context, and these “histories” are all connected through the trajectory and materiality of bicycle, and further re-materialized and embodied through the vehicle of literature. To further elaborate on this point from the perspective of “the poetics of knowledge,” Taiwan, a seemingly small and isolated island located on the periphery of the Pacific Ocean, is not only an entry which can offer a specific view of the world, but also a path or route which connects itself to multiple entries within the world, sketching out infinite trajectories and itineraries with its inexhaustible energy and epistemological potentiality.

In a nutshell, *The Man with the Compound Eyes* offers readers an opportunity to contemplate the responsibility of being a global citizen in the eco-community, and performs an act of “ecological redistribution” through its literary creativity. *The Stolen Bicycle* not only challenges the colonial hierarchy structuring the relationship between the anthropologist and the ethnographic object by its revisionist interethnic representation, but also demonstrates the potentiality of “historical sustainability” by revisiting and re-historicizing the period of World War II to show the complexity of Taiwan’s history and its multiple connections with world history, or more precisely, Taiwan’s “sustainable relations” with the world. The ecological redistribution and historical sustainability I discuss respectively through my readings of Wu’s two novels are actually two sides of the same coin as they serve as the prerequisite for one another. As the “bicycle-embracing tree” symbolizes, the growth of the banyan tree (nature) pushes up the bicycle (culture) Pasuya buries, unearths the forgotten history of the Silverwheel Squad, and makes its historical connectedness with Taiwan visible. The entanglement of branches and leaves that wrap around the bike represents the transmutation and mutualistic interaction between nature and culture, the living and nonliving in an ecosystem, which also emblemizes the complexity and interconnected relationality of history. In this sense, the ecological environment is imperative for history to go on; in order for history to continue, all members (human and non-human, as well as living and nonliving) within this eco-community must involve themselves and take part in the action of redistribution toward a promising and sustainable future. In Wu’s literary imagination



and intervention, the relationship between Taiwan and the world is always in the process of becoming, always resilient, redefinable, and renewable, and that is how Taiwan, as a geopolitical nodal site in this relational world, as a multiethnic island with its diverse cultural landscapes, as literature, as history, and as a field of studies, can be sustainable.

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# 生態再分配與歷史永續性：論吳明益 長篇小說《複眼人》與《單車失竊記》

## 摘要

本文以吳明益《複眼人》與《單車失竊記》兩部長篇小說，思考小說創造的文學想像如何參與並介入當代關於「永續性」(sustainability)之相關論述，並透過全球性的視角思索台灣研究如何能夠永續發展的諸多議題。就方法學而言，本文首先爬梳西方當代生態批評(ecocriticism)的相關理論，並結合法國哲學家洪席耶(Jacques Rancière)所論述的「再分配」(redistribution)之政治/美學概念，演繹出「生態再分配」(ecological redistribution)與「歷史永續性」(historical sustainability)兩軌理論軸線來分別閱讀吳明益的兩部文學作品。本文認為，《複眼人》所展現的「生態再分配」不僅有意識地藉著台灣在地文學想像積極地投入當代的全球生態文學生產，彰顯台灣在全球生態文學圖景中獨特的文學風貌，更同時反思並批判台灣漢人中心的族群書寫以及定居者多元文化主義(settler multiculturalism)論述的侷限。《單車失竊記》藉由小說人物交織而成的原-漢跨族群相遇，一方面挑戰了漢人定居者主流文本中經常複製的、傳統人類學裡人類學家與研究客體間構建的殖民階層關係，另一方面企圖以一種整體性世界史的視域來描繪二戰時期台灣的跨族群互動及其與世界史之間錯綜纏繞的複雜性。小說所呈現族群與族群之間、台灣與世界之間在歷史進程中多元而繁複之關係性，使台灣與世界得以建立一種動態的、持續變動的，亦是倫理層次上更對等互惠的永續關係，即是本文嘗試論述之「歷史永續性」。

**關鍵字：**吳明益、生態批評、生態再分配、歷史永續性、定居殖民主義