

■ Animal Contact in Liu Ka-shiang's *He-lien-mo-mo the Humpback Whale*

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Abstract

This paper begins with a discussion of the scientifically damaging role that anthropomorphism has played in Western scientific thought, and turns to explore the ambivalent attitude that Liu Ka-shiang has always had toward science and literature. To Liu, the problematic of the representation of the animal pushes the ambivalence to its extreme, which leads to his constant anxiety. On the one hand, he has to represent what he sees, or what comes in contact with his naked eyes, and on the other hand, he knows very well the hegemonic power of seeing that shapes our worldview; it controls, manipulates, and forms the being of the object (live or not) under observation, and even such a physical experience as the sense of touch is under its control. In *He-lien-mo-mo the Humpback Whale*, Liu shows not only the power and horror of seeing, but more importantly, the life force of the genuine contact with the animal. Initiated by the physical touch, this animal contact, this contact with the other (animal) essentially embedded in the very being of each living creature, is the crucial point that defines the relationship between the human and the animal.

Keywords: Liu Ka-shiang, animal, seeing, touch, anthropomorphism, literature, science, Derrida, *He-lien-mo-mo the Humpback Whale*

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When it comes to nature writers in Taiwan, Liu Ka-shiang is definitely the one who cannot possibly be ignored. His work has been acclaimed as “the epitome of the history of Taiwan nature writings” (Huang Tsung-chieh 286), and he is “the most representative flag-bearer” (qtd. in Meng 99) of this genre. Liu is an amazingly prolific and versatile writer. From poetry, prose, novel, picture book, through social criticism, reportage, travelogue, historical document, to even tour guide book and pamphlet, Liu has had a go at all of them. He is a pioneer in developing various ecology-related genres, and he is the first and foremost Taiwan writer who cares and writes about the whales (Hsu, “Studies” 36). Out of his many whale writings,¹ *He-lien-mo-mo the Humpback Whale* (1993) attracts the most critical attention. In it, an aging anthropomorphized humpback whale called He-lien-mo-mo is determined to swim upriver to get himself stranded on the shallow bank, and the plausible reason he gives is that he cannot find purpose and meaning in life. There are numerous ways for him to commit suicide if he wants to end his life; why does he choose stranding? Why does he choose to strand himself on the river bank, instead of the beach? Why doesn’t he do it like other stranded whales have done before him? It is a much more difficult journey if we consider the size of the whale, the pollution of the river, and the danger of possible sightings by human beings. In this paper, I don’t intend to uncover the mystery of whale stranding, but by making use of Liu’s unraveling of the mystery, I intend to show Liu’s idea of being (in contact) with the animal on the one hand, and on the other, I argue that contact with the animal is the driving force to motivate Liu to go beyond over and over again the solipsistic sphere of anthropocentric manual touch and homogenizing visual capacity.

Anthropomorphism

Liu Ka-shiang has always been blatantly anthropomorphic in his representation of animals. Almost all of his animal characters not only talk, but feel and think like human beings. Even though there has been a long history in the scientific world of regarding anthropomorphism as a taboo word and a strictly forbidden practice, the fear of it seems to be a pure Western sentiment. The anthropomorphic proclivity of Liu’s animal fictions does not bother too much the critical

¹ Liu’s whale writings include a novel *He-lien-mo-mo the Humpback Whale* (1993), a picture book *When the Whale Feels Blue (But Not the Blue)* (1996), and seven essays: “Death of a Black Whale,” “The History of Whales in Taiwan,” “Goosebeak Whale,” “Sperm Whale,” “Right Whale,” and “How to Identify Different Whales?”.

reception by Taiwan literary circles. Only very few critics complain about it.² Most of the critics and scholars, when dealing with this feature, tend to understand it as a harmonious representation between the human and the animal. In his discussion of Liu's nature poetry, Meng Fan suggests that what characterizes Liu's penchant for anthropomorphism is "self involvement" (有我, literally "there is me," in contrast with the Buddhist concept of *Anātman/Nirātman*, that is, "no-self," 無我). It helps facilitate an intersubjective (or empathetic) exchange between the poet and nature (109, 128), and Meng concludes that "the self involvement is warm and gentle, while no-self is dry and coarse" (109). Wu Ming-yi believes that a latent poetic possibility is hidden in Liu's anthropomorphism, and Liu's scientific observation of the animals "becomes the writer's philosophical meditation in *He-lien-mo-mo the Humpback Whale*" (29). To Tan Chuang-lan, this characteristic gives people "an easy familiarity in the reading experience" (119). Wang Miao-ru praises Liu's observation of natural ecology (especially birds and whales) as a perfect combination between professional knowledge and a passionate soul (27; cf. Huang Tsung-huei, "Animal Advocacy" 85-86; Tseng 296; Kuo 50). Liu's animal fictions are apparently products of literary imagination, and their scientific knowledge (whether scientifically true or not) is only secondary to support the realistic façade of a creative work. In addition, the circle of biological science has acknowledged that not all forms of anthropomorphism are unacceptable. According to Randall Lockwood, there are four kinds of anthropomorphism: allegorical, personification, superficial and explanatory; the latter two kinds "have potential harmful consequences in science," while the former two, restricted to nonscientific writings, "are not a problem in science" (Rivas 9). Obviously, Liu's works are "not a problem," as long as he stays behind the line.

The real problem for Liu, however, is not a matter of separation of literature from science, but a matter of integration of science with literature. Literary imagination, no doubt, tends to contaminate the accuracy and precision of scientific discourse, and give the readers misleading information. However, if all the literary components are ruled out from the textuality of an animal fiction, then why bother to write it in the first place? A handbook for biology serves a much better purpose. This is perhaps why writing an animal fiction is more like fictionalizing the animal according to the writer's talents, or more precisely, according to the way the writer understands the animal from his human perspective. Even though we do not look like most of them, and we are perhaps different from the

² Tsai Shu-fen, for one, points out that the whale in *He-lien-mo-mo the Humpback Whale* has been "excessively anthropomorphized," and the death of the whale, echoing the ideas of existentialism, is "rather abrupt" (297-98).

animal in the intrinsic structure itself (consciousness, cognitive capacities, emotion, language, etc.), the extrinsic expansion of visual perception is one way or the other bending them to resemble us, and anthropomorphism is usually the main culprit. Anthropomorphism is understood as the attribution of human properties to non-human organisms, deities, and inanimate objects. In terms of literary works, animals in Aesop's fables, Olympian gods in Greek mythology and talking crows in ancient folklores are obvious examples. They are the projections and extensions of the complex human psyche and culture. When it comes to science,³ however, anthropomorphism becomes a taboo practice, especially for ethologists, who regard it as "a serious error that must be avoided at any cost" (Rivas 9). With only a few exceptions, European ethologists in the mid-20th century avoided the study of higher levels of animal cognition, intelligence and consciousness. Niko Tinbergen, among many others, points out, "Concepts such as 'play' and 'learning' have not yet been purged completely from their subjectivist, anthropomorphic undertones" (413). In 1980s, joy, friendship, love, jealousy, envy, anger and such-like emotional expressions were taboo vocabulary if they are referred to animal behavior. Jeanne Altmann, the American editor of the journal *Animal Behaviour* from 1978 to 1983, as Donna Haraway says, "negotiated fiercely with authors about whether such terms as rape actually describe what the animals are doing," even though the term "rape" had become perfectly scientific to many scholars "to designate forced sex among non-human primates and birds" (375n55). Haraway continues to point out that the fear of anthropomorphism is actually misdirected: "The point is not that rape or aggression does not happen among animals—far from it. The point is to pay comparable attention to and have testable hypotheses for the full spectrum" (375n55). The prerequisite for us human beings to seriously bear in mind is that we do tests according to the hypotheses we write for the spectrum we have constructed. The whole business is inevitably anthropocentric.

The accusation against anthropomorphism as a serious error, as many critics have observed, comes from a logical bias of anthropocentrism. If the subject under observation does not have what human beings have, it is either inferior to human beings or completely excluded from human beings. We have already witnessed the miserable life of women (the inferior sex) and animals (the term "non-human animals" is exactly the result of this forced categorization) through-

³ Allen and Bekoff have traced the possible origin of the fear of anthropomorphism to the early twentieth century: by then, "empiricism reached its zenith in the movement known as logical empiricism (or logical positivism) which emphasized that the meaningfulness of any concept depended on its reducibility to logical construction from observable, verifiable experiences" (4).

out the long human history. Some cognitive ethologists, who endeavor to rectify such egregious folly, have traced back to seek help from classical ethology, particularly Charles Darwin's theory, and advocate that there is an evolutionary continuum between the human and the animal (Prerost 885-86; Simmons 62-63). Darwin argued, "There is no fundamental difference between man and the higher animals in their mental faculties" (448). That was in 1871. In 1877, he began to tackle the possible link that we had with the lower animals, such as puppies, kittens, lambs in terms of pleasure and pain, happiness and misery (Burghardt 26). In 1881, Darwin went on to make a bold statement that even the alleged lowest animals were also possessed of mental faculty in his study of "the inner life of earthworms" (Crist 6).

The lines of argument following Darwin successfully usher the non-human animals into the realm of human beings. The differences that lie between the animal and the human are regarded as a separation in degree, not in kind in the evolutionary spectrum. Such scientific inclusion, however, does not necessarily guarantee a better understanding of and treatment of animals; otherwise women would have already enjoyed such privileges as men do long ago. What can be guaranteed is a re-affirmation of the human beings on top of the animals in the hierarchal system of the great chain of being.

But how do we know that human beings have the properties that we claim we have? Actually, we don't. The claim is strangely founded on a circular reasoning. Consciousness, for example, "is assumed in advance to be uniquely human, and any suggestion to the contrary is then dismissed as anthropomorphic. This is mere reiterating a prejudgment that consciousness is uniquely human" (Griffin 494), and for that matter, how do we know that cognitive capacity, emotion, pain, language and many others are really "uniquely human"?⁴

The Complicity between the Visual and the Haptic

The controversy revolving around anthropomorphism is usually a question of "have" and "have-not." What Darwinian biological continuum re-affirms is the value of anthropocentrism, if not anthropomorphism, with man as the only absolute point of reference to include or exclude species according to his standard. Man ceases to be man if such a separation between "have" and "have-not" disappears. As Marjorie Garber says, "the desire to establish a firm borderline

⁴ For more details of how anthropomorphism works positively in Liu's animal fiction *Hill of Stray Dogs*, see Huang Tsung-huei (2009).

somewhere, anywhere, between humans and other beasts—a desire inherited from both Judeo-Christian religion and the philosophy of Descartes—has resulted in a kind of scientific gerrymandering, a constant redrawing of boundaries to suit the intellectual politics of the time” (qtd. in Salih 96). The demarcation is made, as Giorgio Agamben observes, to cater for the constitutive necessity of humanity: “Man has no specific identity other than the *ability* to recognize himself . . . to define the human not through any *nota characteristic*, but rather through his self-knowledge, means that man is the being which recognizes itself as such, that *man is the animal that must recognize himself as human to be human*” (26). With the circumlocutory logic, the power of self-recognition is initiated by what Agamben calls “the anthropological machine,” an optical machine “constructed of a series of mirrors in which man, looking at himself, sees his own image always already deformed in the features of an ape. *Homo* is a constitutively ‘anthropomorphous’ animal” (27). The all-seeing eye, which occupies the decapitated top of the pyramid on the US one-dollar bill, accounts for its power to shape, modify and set the parameters for the cultural condition of human beings.

It is exactly the all-seeing eye that defines the enormous monstrosity of a whale in the first chapter of Liu’s *He-lien-mo-mo the Humpback Whale*.⁵ With the movement of a school of spadefish, like the panning of a panoramic surveillance camera, the reader inch by inch inspects every part of the body of the huge “monster” (as it is addressed by the fish throughout the entire chapter), the tail fluke, the black dorsal fin, the ventral pleats running from the belly area to the tip of the lower jaw, the two huge flippers, and the enormous mouth. All the way through the exploration, the school of spadefish is constantly shocked, scattered away, and soon gathered together again. They are also awed by the shape of the monster’s mouth, “the largest mouth they had ever seen; if the monster opened its mouth, it could easily swallow them in a single mouthful” (19).⁶ The eye, “the most important contact point of the strange creature” (20), much bigger than any of the spadefish, is the last body part to show up. “When they made eye contact . . . the school of spadefish was horribly frightened, scurrying two to three meters away” (20), as if relinquishing the scopic power to the giant eye, which soon afterwards affirms the sea monster’s identity as a whale.

The monstrosity, the enormity, the brutality, the death incarnate and a host of extended cultural implications, describe the overwhelming power of the eye (of

⁵ The beginning chapter of the novel is Chapter Zero. Throughout the entire Chapter One, the identity of the creature is not revealed until the very end: “the school of spadefish just had an encounter with a whale” (21). It can be any whale, not necessarily *He-lien-mo-mo*.

⁶ Unless otherwise specified, all quotations from Liu’s *He-lien-mo-mo the Humpback Whale* are my translation.

the whale). It gives existence to the self, and dominates the life of the others. Shiao-he, an elementary schoolboy, is also victimized by such an anthropomorphic gaze. When he spends the night with his Grandpa in the woods, he feels that “behind the trees, there must be something watching them” (35). His fear of the invisible eye later assumes animal forms in a dream of his. Shiao-he is playing a simple tune on a harmonica. He closes the eyes, and plays it over and over again. When he opens the eyes, he finds wild animals from nowhere around him: two rats, standing erect like kangaroos with their hind legs, four or five night herons and owls, and some crakes and rabbits. All of them are staring at him, quietly and tensely. When he stops playing, “all the watching animals, being upset, began to make noises. He could not help but play on, and the animals were quieted down” (172). He plays for quite a long time. He is terribly exhausted and his jawbone aches so much that his cheeks, swollen like a balloon, seemed to burst, “but he didn’t dare to stop” (172).

What would the animals do to him if Orpheus stopped playing lyre in the middle of the tune? Would they pounce on him and tear him into pieces, like what Maenads did to Dionysius, or like the crazed fans of our times do to their celebrity idols? The presence of the *homo erectus* rats bring the fear of anthropomorphic gaze to the limit where the humans and the animals are equally threatened. The eye contact rivets the attention of the human-like animals, and re-directs it to control human behavior. To contact, “to touch closely together” (OED), conveniently allows the eye to find its way into complicity with the humanistic hand. The making of the hierarchy is therefore co-structured by the eye working hand in hand with the sense of touch.

Touch, according to Derrida, has been privileged by the Western metaphysical tradition (from Plato, to Kant, Husserl, and Merleau-Ponty) as a way of assuring access to immediate presence (Naas 261). This haptocentric tradition affirms the lived body to experience itself simultaneously as touching and being touched, and this simultaneous auto-affection of the body, accordingly, causes the possibility of an autonomous subjectivity to arise, to present itself to itself, as a presence free of any mediation (Seron 466). This is where the human hand comes into play. Kant, among many others, points out, “Nature seems to have endowed man alone with this organ, so that he is enabled to form a concept of a body by touching it on all sides” (qtd. in Derrida, *On Touching* 42; cf. 152-53, 201). We are what we touch with our hands, while animals do not have hands. They can have antennae, tentacles, trunks, claws, paws, flippers, but they cannot and do not have hands. They touch without any possible access whatsoever to the object they are touching. Human hands, on the other hand, touch more and therefore touch better. The equation “hand = human touch = touch in general” (Kamuf 17) finds

its way systematically into a metonymic appropriation of all tactile discourses to man, and man alone. This *humainisme* (“humanualism”; *On Touching* 152, Derrida’s neologism),⁷ on the basis of anthropocentrism, designates touching with human hands as properly human, a teleological assertion that forecloses any possible formation of the subjectivity of the other beings.⁸

This is why Derrida laments in his *On Touching* (2005) that the multiple heterogeneity of the sense of touch deliberated in Aristotle’s *De Anima* has been drastically one-dimensionalized into “an anthropology of the hand” (Flakne 42), which privileges “a symmetry . . . between the touching-touchable and the seeing-visible” (Derrida, *On Touching* 41). The intimate relationship is explicitly stated by Edmund Husserl: “Solipsistically there belongs to every position of my eyes an ‘image’-aspect . . . of the seen object and thus an image of the oriented environment. But also in the case of touching an object, there belongs to every position of my hand and finger a corresponding touch-aspect . . . of the object, just as, on the other side, there is a touch sensation in the finger, etc., and obviously there is visually a certain image of my touching hand and its touching movements. All this is given to me myself as belonging together in co-presence . . . and is then transferred over in empathy” (qtd. in Derrida, *On Touching* 178). This example, “the visible hand touching a visible object,” as Derrida explains, “defines the typical situation upon which Husserl establishes the privilege of touch in the strong sense—as the possible of ‘double apprehension’: touching-touched. And this possibility, which depends on the hand or in any case a visible part of my body, presupposes a surface, the visibility of it, and . . . the possibility of moving toward empathy . . .” (*ibid.* 179). Empathy, therefore, is possible on a hierarchy of the senses where the haptic is guided by the scopic; as Flakne puts it cogently, “the eye that sees is the eye that grasps, be-holds (hence com-prehend, con-cept, be-griff, and so forth)” (43).

The eye sees and seizes that which is “belonging together in co-presence,” as Husserl affirms. Those which do not belong (or are not proper) to humanity are to be made absent from the (human) world, either because they are poor in the world, or because they are not entitled to have the world at all.⁹ What is allowed to be co-present with the human is the touchable, and once being touched (as

⁷ This is Derrida’s word play on the French philosopher Maine de Biran (1766-1824), who emphasizes the close relation between the human hand and the sense of touch.

⁸ Kamuf observes, “None of the thinkers Derrida engages with [in *On Touching*] except Nancy, has anything much to say about touch and animality, or about touch and machines, prostheses, technology, or technics in general” (17).

⁹ The sense of exclusion does not necessarily represent Heidegger’s intention, but it does represent a general interpretation (however erroneous it might seem) which leads to consequences of the treatment of animals nowadays.

if by the fingertip of King Midas), they become the same as what the human imagines himself to be. As for the untouchable, they are like impurities, which have to be refined away from the “golden” humanity. The human subjectivity is therefore formulated by avoiding contact with the impure animality in order to keep itself intact. Tactility proves to be an essential modus of (human, all too human) “being in the world.”

This is especially true if we consider Shiao-he and his Grandpa's first few encounters with the animals. In a dream, Shiao-he is chased by a locomotive, which at first crawls like a giant caterpillar, but gradually picks up its speed; he climbs up to a tree, only to find many tiny caterpillars all over his body; startled, he falls from the tree, and the locomotive continues to chase after him (25). The nightmare consists of extremely incompatible images (the machine and the insect, the inanimate and the animate, the huge and the tiny, the heaviness and the lightness, the strong and the frail, the steely-armored and the squishy-squashy), and what's really scary takes place at the moment when the incompatible conveniently become the interchangeable, simply because they look alike in shape. The innate fear of touching the caterpillars becomes a life threat that he might be crushed by the monstrous locomotive. The contact with the animal is tantamount to getting in touch with the cultivated phobia of the most primitive animality buried deep inside the unconscious. The nightmarish horror, in real life, re-emerges in Shiao-he's encounter with a little crippled cat when he and his Grandpa visit Yieh-sang (the two adults have a fishing game for marbled eels): “The small cat limped out of the camper, and crouched beside Shiao-he's feet. He was taken aback. He was always afraid of cat's claws. Even if it looked puny and feeble, he was still full alert” (71). The non-contact with the real animal, potentially “red in tooth and claw,” implies a psychological defense mechanism constantly in confrontation with the latent ferocious animality of the unknown species.¹⁰

In contrast with Shiao-he, his Grandpa seems to be completely immune to any form of animal contact. In a scene where the Grandpa is left alone in front of a ramshackle old camper van where Yieh-Sang dwells, he glances over what is inside the van, and reminisces about what happened between them in the past:

The Grandpa leaned forward and took a closer look. The gramophone was covered with a thick layer of dust. A crippled cat rubbed up against his calf as it passed by. This stuff in front of him was almost the same as ten years ago when he first came to visit Yieh-sang. Ten years ago, they had a fight over. . . . (69)

¹⁰ Shiao-he's contacts with different animals represent a gradual process of his personal growth from ignorance to sympathy characteristic of the *Bildungsroman* novels (Hsu 2000: 8; Chang Shu-mien 2008: 12). Growth, for Liu, however, is never without ups and downs. It is indisputable that Shiao-he's psychological and moral state has become more matured, but maturity does not necessarily indicate harmony.

He goes on to submerge himself in the memory of the past. The cat never appears again in a context with him. He has no reaction at all to the touch of the cat, as if nothing had happened. This cat, this particular cat, limping by while slightly touching him, does not bring him out of the Cartesian thinking-I into the contact zone with the animal. To the Grandpa, the cat doesn't seem to exist at all. His contact with *He-lien-mo-mo* is basically the same, even though the two animals differ tremendously in size.

Human Touch

When Yieh-Sang and the Grandpa see the huge stranded whale looming in front of their eyes, they are totally shocked. Nevertheless, the Grandpa soon calms down; “he did not pay attention to what Yieh-Sang was saying, and he did not seem to see the whale, either” (159-60). He begins to mind his own business. Where they are is the spot they chose to have the fishing game. The Grandpa's decoy to allure the marbled eels is a wooden rat, and Yieh-sang's is a wooden duck. They planted their decoys around this area. “The Grandpa walked around the whale, looking everywhere anxiously to retrieve his wooden rat, only to find the wooden duck right beside the whale. He picked it up conveniently. His feet slipped, and almost got him into the swamp. The Grandpa put his hand against the whale to steady himself,” and “out of his surprise, all of a sudden, he felt a special kind of tightness and thickness only the whale skin had, and at the same time, a coldness as icy as steel seeped into his palm. Immediately he had a strange feeling of awe. It had never occurred to him in his research on fishes. At this very moment, he began to look at the whale and realized the fact of its existence” (160). That night, the Grandpa doesn't sleep well. He gets up early in the morning, and finds himself unusually distracted from his work. “His mind was fully charged with the image of the whale. He was thinking of the tactility the moment when he touched the whale. He didn't know how to deal with the tactility” (174).

The Grandpa's inability is essentially caused by an epistemological dilemma. The phantasmagoric interchangeability in Shao-he's dream seems to spread around the swampy area. They want to fish eels; instead, they attract a whale. The Grandpa wants to have his wooden rat back; instead, he finds his opponent's decoy. He wants to bypass the whale. He watches, but he refuses to see. For any living organism known or unknown to the scientific field, there is always a methodology for the Grandpa to follow if he wants to study it. But a stranded gigantic whale “alive in a space that never belongs to it” (158) totally challenges (and therefore sabotages) his long-standing confidence to grasp the truth of life, perhaps, as the

narrator says, because the whale is like an “alien species” (158), “a strange life form from outer space” (159). Nick Kaldis, who has published several English translations of Liu’s works, is absolutely right about the essentially difficult task to verbalize the experience of the contact with the *otherness* of nature: “During this process of transcription, the person’s original experience of the irreducible and always to some degree impenetrable otherness of nature is at risk of being colonized by the writing process that records and preserves the moment in a familiar narrative structure. For the essential otherness of nature can never be fully manifested in written form, and literary attempts to convey that otherness and/or one’s immersion in it risk reducing nature to a unified and knowable concept within a rational-discursive linguistic format” (“Steward of the Ineffable” 87). Difficult as it is, we still have the inevitable responsibility to share what we have experienced; as Kaldis reminds us, “To maintain a private relationship to nature therefore is to reject a responsibility—the importance of sharing and reviving an appreciation of vulnerable or vanishing spaces in and encounters with the natural world. It is also tantamount to abandoning nature to those who would develop and defile it for economic gain” (*ibid.* 86). To understand the difficult nature of a task is one thing, but not to do it because of the difficulty is quite another. The fear of anthropomorphism is basically a professional ennui to shy away from the academic responsibility on the one hand, and on the other, it is anthropocentrism at work to preserve the self-interests of human beings.

How do we understand an extraterrestrial life form? What has happened to the Grandpa (the visual shock and the tactile thrill) soon fades away from his experience. When he has a big fight with Yieh-sang over whether they need to rescue the whale or not, he says, “This whale is completing the last step in the process of its life. Our being here is a pure accident. We should turn our eyes away from it” (165). Chang Rei-fen’s comment on the relationship between the human and the sea bird (in Liu’s *The Albatross Forever*) seems to be a case in point here; the human and the sea bird are destined to maintain a kind of life module where the human can only watch the bird from afar, but there is no way for him to participate in the bird’s community, because the desire to cross over the boundary is something “beyond the comprehension of ordinary human beings” (96). As a fish expert and researcher, the Grandpa, however, is no ordinary man. Confronting the presence of the living whale about to die, he chooses not to see it, or more precisely, he chooses to excommunicate the ET from his scientific research. The living whale seems also like a taboo vocabulary of anthropomorphism for him, and immediately it is filtered out of his cognitive mind. Like the other animals, as Iris Murdoch sadly observes, leading “the sheer alien pointless independent existence” (83), the whale is a mere figment of scientific imagination.

Put it into the literary X-file, and the case is solved. After the mission of rescuing He-lien-mo-mo fails, the Grandpa murmurs to himself, "I like the way we crossed each other, kind of contact . . . as if nothing had happened" (200), as if he has gone to watch an adventure film; when he walks out of the theater, all the emotional excitement (laughing, crying, screaming, etc.), being funneled down through a rational catharsis, has been conveniently left behind in the domain of the fictionalized world.

What is fictional, however, is not necessarily unreal. What has been shied away from by the eye finds its way to get in physical contact with the observer. The physical touch with the whale that challenges the Grandpa's scientific training is a very real experience. It is not an experience like a chance UFO sighting, but a real physical encounter with an alien being. To the Grandpa, the impact on his intellectual mind is surely not a pleasant experience. To He-lien-mo-mo, the physical contact with the alien soil surprisingly is something like laying at anchor the safe harbor of his homeland after a lifelong journey.

Animal Contact

To He-lien-mo-mo after he grows up, any form of contact has always been an unpleasant and painful experience in the ocean: the violent physical head-butting with the other male humpbacks, the greedy sea gulls' pecking at the barnacles on his back, the collisions with cruise ships, and the dangerous encounter with a school of killer whales. His contact with the land, that is, getting stranded on the river bank, supposedly the most painful of them all, turns out to be a euphoric experience: "He-lien-mo-mo carefully and slowly slid into the reed bushes that he had dreamed for so long to strand himself. The soft sludge under his body gave him a fresh sensation . . . he knew that his life had separated itself from the ocean, and he arrived at another world" (106). Is this "another world" the world on the other side, the world of death? Stranding for a whale is after all committing suicide. The determination to swim against the current to the river reaches is a heroic act, but to many scholars, staying there stranded at the symbolic level is incomprehensible because it seems to be a gesture of total nihilism. All the problems are left unsolved. Yang Zhao says, *He-lien-mo-mo* is a "story about a life of lost meaning. . . . There is a skeptical undertone which replaces all the positive seeking . . . the humpback whale in the fiction represents not a point of departure, but an endpoint . . . not a clear high-pitched treble, but a sad and old trembling last voice . . . there seems to be a central meaning in the fiction: He-lien-mo-mo is determined to swim to the upper reaches, as if once it were accomplished, all

his problems would be solved. This is what He-lien-mo-mo thinks, and this is what the readers think, but till the end of the fiction, we find that all the 'why's' are left unanswered. We don't know what the answer is, because He-lien-mo-mo doesn't know it, either" (qtd. in Hsu Tsung-chieh, "Studies" 79). The search for an ultimate meaning, which will provide all the answers to the "why's," as a matter of fact, is the life philosophy of White Fang, a bull much more strongly built than He-lien-mo-mo. Like a combat machine highly skilled in fighting techniques, White Fang (the name alone is emblematic enough to channel the readers back to the principle of the survival of the fittest in Jack London's animal fictions) defeats He-lien-mo-mo every time they encounter. He is obviously the alpha male, the hero archetype, constantly on his way to seek bigger challenges, and therefore to establish his heroic identity—a central theme in Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949). To acquire the experience of stranding is that which defines White Fang's ultimate heroic make-up. He is not afraid of death. What he is afraid of is he cannot leave behind him a good reputation which defeats death. Fame will keep him immortal. Immortality is the answer to all the questions.

But White Fang's philosophy doesn't work for He-lien-mo-mo. When He-lien-mo-mo spots White Fang's skeleton strewn on the beach, he "was so frightened that he swam away immediately" (157). What really scares him away is the *nada* after death. It is hard to associate a pile of bones and skeletons scattered on the beach with immortality. Shelley's "Ozymandias," if you wish, appropriately captures the death scene of White Fang: "Nothing beside remains. Round the decay / Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare, / The lone and level sands stretch far away." For He-lien-mo-mo, getting himself stranded is not so much a suicidal act in exchange for personal immortality, as a nostalgic urge to reconnect with the ancestral past.

He smelt the land, and felt the sensation of a space and time without sea salt and waves. In this place completely separated from the ocean, the meaning of life became ambiguous. It seemed that he had returned to the original point of life. (107)

The meaning of life becomes ambiguous, and so is White Fang's powerful influence on him. What really drives him on is not White Fang's heroism, but perhaps a primordial instinct. It is popularly believed in evolutionary biology that whales descend from *Mesonychidae* ("middle claws"), an extinct family of omnivorous-carnivorous land mammals some 65 to 34 million years ago, and this evolutionary speculation provides one possible cause of whale stranding. According to F. G. Wood, cetaceans still maintain the instinct of their amphibious ancestors. When they are under tremendous pressure, they tend to regress to "fundamental and

primitive behaviors . . . and attempt to return to dry land, that is, strand themselves deliberately” (Forrester 244); among various possible causes of whale stranding,¹¹ Liu seems to favor this kind of “psychological atavism.” (“Death of a Black Whale” 37-39). The genetic memory, dormant at least for 34 million years, is activated when they can no longer bear the stress. Stranding, after all, is not a suicidal act, but a self-defensive mechanism to seek for a safe place, which for human beings is called “home.” No wonder when He-lien-mo-mo finally settles himself on the river bank, he feels that “he had returned to the original point of life” (107).¹² The upriver swimming is a home-coming journey. Stranding doesn’t put an end to his life, but by connecting with the past ancestry, opens up possible paths to a future.

What have been reconnected are not only He-lien-mo-mo and his ancestors, but human beings and animals. In an essay about the death of a stranded black whale, Liu recalls the kin connection he has with the dying animal:

When I stood on Da-An Beach, and with binoculars watched the ‘black whale’ 100 meters away from me in the waves, I was reminded of the common mammalian ancestors that they and we had once shared, and the several million years since we parted ways. Between the black whale and me, the distance seemed to be a historical abyss, and there was no way to cross it. I watched the whale struggling in its death throes; even though the time of million years has divided us into two different species inhabiting vastly different living environments, divergent paths after all lead us to the same destination—death. Though I watched the whale from afar, it seemed to be right in front of my eyes, and somehow connected itself with my destiny (“Death of a Black Whale” 41).¹³

The unbreachability of the historical abyss is brought into sharp focus by the modern visual technology (binoculars as the cinematic camera lenses), and the vivid contrast between “being here” and “dying out there” in effect renders Liu completely helpless. However, ironically it is this awareness of radical passivity in the face of death that creates “an uncanny and disturbing proximity” (Kaldis,

¹¹ The cause of whale stranding has so far been a scientific mystery. The prevalent hypotheses include: “(1) echolocation problems associated with gently sloping beaches, (2) pelagic animals feeding in inshore areas unfamiliar to them, (3) harassment by predators such as sharks, (4) unusual underwater noises such as explosions, (5) pollutions, (6) storms, and (7) disease” (Forrester 242).

¹² He-lien-mo-mo’s journey of swimming upriver always “reminds him of the blue ocean where he spent his childhood” (47), and “like a tiny fish fry . . . [he] quietly lets himself go with the waves” (30); and soon afterwards in the beginning of the next chapter, “The tropical waters, star-studded with coral islets, is the breeding ground in the winter. The cubs of He-lien-mo-mo’s tribe were all born there. Thinking of the childhood, he was so happy that for several times he slapped the water surface with his pectoral fins” (48). When he first went upriver with White Fang, He-lien-mo-mo said, “Ah, I am reminded of my childhood” (91). The entire sixth chapter is devoted to the sweet childhood memory He-lien-mo-mo had with his mother.

¹³ A few parts of this paragraph are Kaldis’s translation (see Kaldis 2008: 93-94).

“Steward of the Ineffable” 94) between man and other species.

Death therefore is that which brings the man and the whale together. Stranding is not necessarily suicidal, and the place of stranding, contrary to what the Grandpa speculates (“a space that never belongs to it”),¹⁴ is a birthplace where the whales millions of years ago were born. He-lien-mo-mo is not an alien outside the kingdom of animalia; he is in fact an alien inside the kingdom of animalia.

The problematic dyad of home and alien (inside and outside, touching and being touched, life and death) can perhaps be summed up by Derrida's solecistic construction “*se toucher toi*” (“to self-touch you,” as translated by Peggy Kamuf) in *Le toucher* (the title of Derrida's book on Jean-Luc Nancy). Derrida says, “in order for me to be touched in this way by you, I have to be able to touch myself. In the ‘self-touching-you,’ the ‘self’ is as indispensable as you. A being incapable of touching itself could not bend itself to that which absolutely unfolds it, to the totally other who, as totally other/like all others [*comme tout autre*], inhabits my heart as a stranger. There isn't any anthropological limit here, and this should be valid . . . for all ‘animal’ or ‘divine life’ . . . with regard to this possibility of self-touching-you” (*On Touching* 291). I touch myself touching you, and in this act of touching, I desire to get in contact with the wholly other lodged inside me by ek-sisting from myself, releasing the masterful and subjective self-possession to the other (MacLachlan 57-58; Miller 37-38). The auto-affection is always already an “auto-hetero-affection” (Derrida, *On Touching* 292). This heterogeneity in relation to the formation of subjectivity is not a site of dialogical reflexivity on the basis of I-Thou rivalry, nor a gradual convergence into a transcendental permanence. Rather, it is that which is made possible by the recognition of the vulnerability, or the radical passivity, that we (human and non-human animals alike) are thrown into. In the face of death, we can suffer.

The auto-affection is White Fang's survival mode. No matter what he touches, he turns it into what he desires. The hetero-affection motivates the Grandpa's decision on something beyond his scientific investigation. To He-lien-mo-mo, what is outside (an alien from outer space) is essentially inside (a native unfamiliar with his homeland), simply because that which has been alienated into the collective unconscious fosters the seeds for the future to come. What is to come in the future is understandably alien to our comprehension. Something like a seed buried deep inside us; we do not know what kind of seed it is, and therefore we do not know what kind of tree it would grow into, but whether it would become

¹⁴ Note the phrasing of the Grandpa when he describes the relationship between the land and the whale. “A space that never belongs to the whale” seems to imply that the space (the land, the continent, the earth, and the world), first and foremost, belongs to the human, echoing once again Heidegger's proposition that “man is world-forming,” while “animal is poor in the world” (186).

a tree in the future depends on our recognition of it as part of us, an other which is always already within us.

Liu quotes an unidentified cetacean expert by saying that the real aliens are in fact already here on the earth—they are the whales in the ocean. Liu urges us to ask ourselves how the whales do their thinking, how they sing songs and play games, and how they, after the long history of being slaughtered by human beings in the past, can still choose to be with us (*Emotive Natural Excursions* 160). Just as what the sperm whale feels in Liu's picture book *When the Whale Feels Blue* (1996) when he dives to the ocean floor, and stays there with his own solitude: "That is the most lucid moment / Perhaps, he sees the most vulnerable self, / Perhaps, he sees the most indomitable self, / or perhaps, he sees part of himself that he has never seen / . . . / On the darkest ocean bed, always wanting to grow some new sprouts, from his own old decaying body."¹⁵ The contact with the land is not so much a tragic absurd ending for He-lien-mo-mo, as the beginning of the whale's life symbiotically entrammelled with his author's life.¹⁶

Liu's Return to the Animal

The sense of togetherness with the animal is vividly portrayed in the Preface to this novel. Liu writes about the experience of his marine military service: "When I was out at sea, the place I slept was in the second-class cabins near the bow anchor; for a marine creature, this place, if I may, is reasonably where the brain"¹⁷

¹⁵ There is no page number of this picture book. The slash represents the page division.

¹⁶ In the following poem "Exile of the Mangrove Swamp" (Kaldis's translation with a slight modification), Liu shows the similar sentiment that the decaying is the preparation for the future to come:

A cluster of finely-woven green sprouts
 Like the crowding of tiny fishes
 Searching with difficulty for a spot
 against the current
 The location where their ancestors disembarked
 Once vast as the sea
 They continue in exile
 Amidst tetrapod blocks and mounds of garbage
 Preparing to recline into a posture of decay (Kaldis 2008: 93)

¹⁷ Liu seems to be usually fascinated with the image of the brain, or the head. The literal transliteration of the Chinese title of this novel is "Zuo-tou-jing He-lien-mo-mo." "Jing" means "whale," and "zuo-tou" is Japanese kanji 座頭, referring to a Chinese lute-shape fruit, loquat (*Eriobotrya japonica*). The loquat's shape resembles the humpback's body. Another Chinese nickname for the humpback is "Big Wing" whale, obviously from the two large long flippers, which can be as long as one third of its body. Liu chose "zuo-tou" mainly because, as he said, "I like the word 'tou' [head]. I want to describe something related to my literary taste, and therefore I chose 'zuo-tou' instead of 'big wing'" (qtd. in Hsu, "Studies" 151).

occupies for most of the fishes and sea mammals. I had to squeeze myself into that little narrow space with low-ceilings, and allow my exhausted body to take a rest, trying to feel nothing" (4). If Liu "is" the brain of the whale, can he feel what it is like to be a whale? When he was writing *He-lien-mo-mo*, as Liu said, he repetitively listened to the humpback songs on CD, and also in order to understand and experience what it is like to be a stranded whale dying of lack of oxygen, he very often went swimming in the swimming pool of the nearby community, and held his breath under water until he could not bear it any longer, and suddenly jerked upwards at full speed to the surface, "like the breach of a whale" (*Emotive Natural Excursions* 105; Lee 96).¹⁸ The boredom and the insecurity of the military marine life also gave him the chance to experience what it is like to be dead. He wrote, "Sometimes, I was asleep full of fear the entire night, and other times, unexpectedly, I peacefully and happily enjoyed the special solitude created by the long sea voyage. I believe this kind of capricious feeling is an experience of exploring death. Death, the last growth of life, I experienced it prematurely as if in a trance" (4). The last growth of life as an experience of death, as Liu argues in

¹⁸ Liu's position of critical anthropomorphism is also shown in the following examples: Shiao-he asks his Grandpa, "Are there things that all animals know, but we do not know?" (151). "How do we know if we are not birds?" (54). Shiao-he asks his grandpa whether the birds with anklets feel very uncomfortable; the responses of the two adults, who are quite familiar with this kind of procedure, reflect their unconscious anthropocentrism. The grandpa answers, "Not made of iron," and Yieh-Sang explains to Shiao-he, "its lead anklet, specially made, doesn't affect flying" (54). What Yieh-Sang seems to be concerned with is the self-efficacy of daily activity, while the Grandpa's answer ironically in a very implicit way shows that he understands how the bird would be hurt if it wears iron anklets. Iron will get rusty, and will definitely cause damage to the bird's legs. According to Liu, among all the wild animal observers, the painter is always the one who can really capture the spirit of the animal. The painter he refers to is Richard Ellis, a world renowned whale painter. Liu writes, "The initial task of whale-painting requires him to take a charter boat and go out to sea, waiting for a whale to show up. He must take the photo himself, even jump overboard to swim with the whale. He must have a direct experience of the depth, the light and the shadow of the water, and the time spent under water, together with the whale" (*Emotive Natural Excursions* 146). Another example of Liu's position of critical anthropomorphism is his experience with albatrosses: in an interview, he said, "Basically, the albatross is very approachable. If there are a hundred albatrosses out there, and you are among them on all fours, they won't bother to budge. Eventually you will regard yourself as one of them, especially when you are on a no-man's island full of birds, you are the only human with the albatrosses, simply like Jane Goodall, who has been with the primates for so long that whatever she acts and thinks becomes softened. It's a fascinating state of mind. I myself like that kind of feeling very much" (Huang Tsung-chieh 322). Liu said, "The wisdom of the whale this enormous animal began to attract me. What kind of ways the animal will use when it thinks? Or what kind of perspective it will take when it looks at us? This kind of question never occurs to a naturalist, but as a creative writer, I tend to tackle with fun questions. For example, when I see a photo [of a whale], I always think, what on earth does it see in us?" (qtd. in Hsu Tsung-chieh, "Studies" 148). About Liu's stance of critical anthropomorphism, see also Liu's comment on his experience of hang gliding like a bird in Huang Tzu-ting (69), or as Chien Yi-ming explains that the significance of *Pinochia the Wind Bird* and *He-lien-mo-mo the Humpback Whale* is an attempt "to imagine the other" (18); that is, Liu tries to enter into the birds' and the whales' inner world, and bring the readers to experience the feeling of flying and diving with them. Liu puts aside the observer, and let the birds and the whales speak.

When the Whale Feels Blue, “is not really escapism, instead, it is a more active participation and responsibility / On the darkest ocean bed, always wanting to grow some new sprouts, from his own old decaying body”. It is the death of an old self in order to get in contact with the animal other, the absolute other, or the alien that lodges inside us.

On several occasions, when asked what he thought about his published writings, Liu has always showed a similar sense of detachment from them; as Liu said in an interview, “I don’t want to repeat myself, and I’d rather not look back to the past” (qtd. in Hsu Tsung-chieh, “Studies” 38). We wouldn’t be surprised when he responded to the question about his cetacean writings: “I feel that I have already been far away from that world, far away from the world of my works . . . because for a creative writer, it’s something like you pull yourself out of your creation when it is done. Therefore, what you inquired just now doesn’t seem to belong to me. That’s what I feel” (qtd. Hsu Tsung-chieh, “Studies” 158). This kind of phoenix-like destruction of the older self can be traced back to what he did to his first published poem collection *Down the River*. It was published when Liu was an undergraduate student, but one week later, he burned all the copies he had. Liu said, “I think the act can be understood as a way to show the author’s self-abandonment to despair and degradation. We can take lizard for an example. When a lizard is in a dangerous situation, it sheds its tail and runs away” (Lee 93).

The discontent with his past works and the rebellious spirit against the capitalistic society¹⁹ constantly drive him like an explorer “to seek and study the unknown things . . . to go beyond yourself in order to acquire life force” (Liu, *The Explorers* 3). This “beyond” is usually a Hegelian dialectical beyond, a tentative synthesis of two diametrically opposed components, and in the case of animal fictions, they are the conflict and the compromise between biological science and literary imagination. Sometimes Liu regrets that he “goes too far in pursuit of the truth of natural knowledge, and allows [himself] to be far away from the kingdom of aesthetics for quite a long time” (Liu, *The Fairies* 200). Other times, Liu believes that he has to “cut off the sensitivity and sensibility . . . [and] cut off poetic imagination” from his nature writing, so that “natural science can be the master” (*ibid.* 5). As Tseng observes, back in around 1985, Liu began to be bothered by the conflicts between science and literature in his nature writing, and the conflict

¹⁹ The rebellious spirit permeates Liu’s early works, usually a severe critique of the political corruption and bureaucracy of the modern society under the control of capitalism and governmentality. In his later works, he confesses, the rebellious spirit is still out there, but it “rebels against his own past works” (Chou 124).

was escalated to direct confrontation during 1992 and 1995 (308-09). Tseng genuinely observes that Liu's concern has been constantly oscillating between scientific precision and poetic imagination.²⁰ The constant oscillation, as Liu says, is initiated by his "anxiety reflex": "When the criteria for observation are so complex, perhaps we must recognize that the so-called 'anxiety reflex' exhibited in a nature writer's works is an immanent principle; peaceful quietism is a castle in the air, a disavowal of and escape from reality" (qtd. in Kaldis, "Steward of the Ineffable" 85).²¹ Each time when he cuts himself off from the past works, it's like a stranded He-lien-mo-mo, in an uncharted territory of his own creative unconscious, waiting to be born again.

The death experience can be serenely poetic, like a vessel dry-docking in the shipyard: "That night, I stood in front of the bow of the vessel, listening to the dripping sounds here and there until the dawn; let the vessel drip until the last drop of seawater is gone" (5), as if the vessel had its own will power to decide when to stop; and in a metonymic symbolism, it can be brutally violent in the case of a stranded whale: "He [He-lien-mo-mo] continued to blow spouts . . . using all his energy to drain all the water from his body, even to the extreme as if he were blowing out his internal organs, brain pulp, life experiences, and all the other old stuff. He blew and blew until there was seemingly nothing left, with foam at the corner of the mouth. His body was completely paralyzed, then he passed out" (143). As violent as an act of exorcism, when the demon/old self is expelled, a bright future unfolds: "When the sunlight first struck the enormous black body in its entirety, the decrepit hull covered by rust and mottled spots was finally silent" (5). It is by now indistinguishable between the vessel and the whale called He-lien-mo-mo, and between the whale and the writer called Liu Ka-shiang. When the water is completely drained out of the body of the vessel (and of the whale), "I seemed to come back from the ocean to the land" (5).

Taiwan Animal

Liu says in an interview, "I was gradually aware vividly of the fact that the way we understand and represent animals in Taiwan is a lot different from those

²⁰ After 2000, as Tseng argues, Liu has reached a state of hierarchal equilibrium where scientific precision is guided by the poetic imagination. Liu's complexities of personality are perhaps reflected in his constant oscillation between literature and science. Kaldis describes Liu as a man being "at once enigmatic, energetic, shy, introspective, loquacious, sensitive, righteous, opinionated, generous, scholarly, philosophical, creative, and, above all, considerate" ("Birdwatching with Liu Kexiang").

²¹ Kaldis's translation.

in the children's literature and animal fictions by, say, the Chinese novelist Shen Shi-xi. The topic alone is different: topics about the stray dogs, sandpipers, even whales, are the creative writer's concern and inspiration because they are of this island. Those are the animals Taiwan creative writers would encounter, and people in Mainland China will never deal with this kind of topic. Therefore, you see sandpipers, stray dogs, whales and albatrosses, and you take it for granted to meet up with them. . . . It's impossible for them to show up in the novels of Mainland China" (Huang Tsung-chieh 319).²² What Liu observes is perhaps true for stray dogs. They are collectively a very unique Taiwan social phenomenon. They are part of our daily experience, and their behavior is definitely different from that of Lassie taking the long trek from Scotland to her Yorkshire home. This is perhaps why Liu argues that "Animal fictions have their own nationality. Every country has the characteristics of its own animal fictions, and these characteristics do not belong to the other countries" (*ibid.* 318).

But Taiwan people don't get to see the whales every day. We acquire information about them through newspapers, magazines, mass media and mostly children's literature and translated works. As Liu points out in the Preface to his picture book *When the Whale Feels Blue*, "an inedible impression I have had from childhood is the bad-tempered big whale in *The Adventure of Pinocchio* and the undefeatable white whale in Melville's *Moby Dick*." In both works, the whales are species like "the extinct dinosaurs or horrible monsters" with a "mysterious and enormous destructive power" (Liu, "The Wow" 159). These characteristics are what Liu thinks Western people have seen in a whale, with which He-lien-mo cannot possibly identify: "As a whale, what is his ultimate goal? Fighting, mating, breeding, feeding the young, and also, group hunting, group singing, group playing. Is that all? All these taken-for-granted matters however give him a really hard time" (142).

For quite a long time, animals have been taken for granted as beings without having their own life. They are symbols of cultural significance, representations of human emotions, test subjects of medical laboratories, cash cows to bring profits for the zoos and theme parks, machines to improve agricultural, industrial, and social progress, foods to be brought on the dinner table, leather jackets and fur coats for apparel industry, and many more. The animals can be anything except being themselves. That is why the sperm whale is never a whale but either an omen for bad luck or a cannibalistic monster. Hsu Tsung-chieh suggests that Liu has endeavored to shed new light on the image of the sperm whale in *When the*

²² Kaldis, "As Liu Kexiang has written, Taiwan nature writing has struggled to free itself from, among other Western and Chinese traditions, both abstract idealism and eremitism" (2008: 89).

Whale Feels Blue; perhaps Liu “wants to say something fair for the sperm whales” (Hsu Tsung-chieh, “Studies” 88). To Liu, the enormous head of the sperm whales always reminds him “of the French deconstructive philosopher Michel Foucault with his bald and wrinkled forehead” (*When the Whales Feels Blue*) and therefore, “the world’s heaviness belongs to them.” In contrast, the world’s lightness belongs to the humpback whales, whose “sudden breach is like the libertine spirit of the French genius poet Arthur Rimbaud, full of energy and strength.” If the sperm whales are philosophers, then the humpbacks are minstrels, dancers, and school children (“Emotive Natural Excursions” 141, 145-46). He-lien-mo-mo, who meditates on the meaning of life and death, is apparently the composite figure of sperm whale (Foucault) and humpback whale (Rimbaud). His life demonstrates the unbearable lightness/heaviness of being. The apparent contradiction, the contradiction between the nature and the science, between the poet and the philosophy, between the lightness and heaviness, between the human and the animal, has to stop, so that Liu can move on to the next level deeper into the contact with the alien animal other.

Conclusion

According to Liu’s definition, the animal fictions have to include the following components: “anthropomorphization, fictionalization and allegorization, all of which are the manifestation of one’s aspiration. Basically they [animal fictions] are probably closer to the genre of science fiction” (Lee 97). The alien in *He-lien-mo-mo the Humpback Whale* can be the whale, or the narrator, or the author, or any other living organisms. Being with the animal is not necessarily to speak for the animal, or to let the animal speak. It is not a question of whether some specific vocabulary is appropriate or not to describe the animal, but a question of whether the vocabulary brings the human and the animal together in a contact zone where life begins. As Haraway comments, “Belief that one is protected from anthropomorphism by using a term that is already considered technical would be laughable if it were not so damaging to science. Careful practice of therio-anthropomorphisms can lead to much sounder scientific investigation than belief that some idioms are free of figuration and others are polluted with culture” (376n55). To Liu Ka-shiang, it is the recognition of mutual vulnerability in the face of death that brings the “with” to all beings.

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劉克襄《座頭鯨赫連麼麼》中的 動物接觸

摘要

本篇論文首先探討化人主義在西方科學思想上所扮演的負面角色，然後轉而研究劉克襄長期以來對於科學和文學的矛盾情結。對劉克襄來說，再現動物時所碰到的問題更激化此矛盾，也導致他不斷的焦慮。一方面，他只能描述他肉眼所看到的事物，但另一方面，他深刻知道視覺的霸權如何模塑我們的世界觀。視覺掌控、操弄並塑造觀察對象（不論有無生命）的存有，甚至如碰觸之類的肉體經驗也為其所控制。在《座頭鯨赫連麼麼》中，視覺確實有其霸權和恐怖，但更重要的，劉克襄也展現出真正觸摸動物所帶來的生命力。接觸動物，或是與動物他者的接觸，乃是定位人類與動物的關係之關鍵所在。

關鍵字：劉克襄，動物，視覺，碰觸，化人主義，文學，科學，德希達，
《座頭鯨赫連麼麼》