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From Anthropomorphism to Becoming-Animal: Animal Agency in Zhang Guixing's Nanyang Imagination

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Abstract

Taiwan-based Malaysian Chinese writer Zhang Guixing (Chang Kuei-hsing 張貴興) has long devoted his literary energy to crafting various types of animals in fictional works set in the Nanyang. Conventional critique seeing Zhang's fiction as a reflection of a deep-rooted animality in human nature implies a binary mode of thinking that prioritizes humans over animals. By reconstructing the genealogy of Zhang's animal writing and excavating the potentially subversive force of animal agency, this paper instead suggests that Zhang's animal writing provides a unique non-anthropocentric vision in dealing with human-animal relationships. Zhang's animal writing has been gradually deepened and complicated as his literary career has unfolded, but he has always been thinking with animals through a range of writing techniques. In early works such as the short story "Grassland Prince" (草原王子) and the novel *Siren Song* (賽蓮之歌), Zhang deploys anthropomorphism as a method of humanizing animals and thereby bringing about the possibility of human-animal interaction. This boundary-breaking trajectory extends to his subsequent works which could be read in light of Deleuze's philosophical notion of "becoming-animal." In *The Naughty Family* (頑皮家族), *Elephants* (群象), *Monkey Cup* (猴杯), and *Wild Boars Cross the River*

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(野豬渡河), Zhang creates a fluid kaleidoscopic space in his imagination of the Borneo rainforest, where humans and animals overlap with and even transmute into each other. By closely engaging critical animal studies within Sinophone literature, this paper also uses Zhang's animal writing to rethink the existing discourses on Sinophone literary studies that have been overshadowed by human-oriented issues such as linguistic politics, ethnic difference, and national identity. In an animalized Nanyang world that enacts multiple becoming, there are no static diasporic trajectories, but only vitality and changeability.

Keywords: Malaysian Chinese literature, Zhang Guixing, animal, anthropomorphism, becoming-animal

Living on the same planet, animals and humans share each other's destiny, but for a long time, humans have tended to regard animals as alien and even inferior species. With the recent rise of critical animal studies and the increasing scholarly attention being paid to the environmental crisis and ecological sustainability, this anthropocentric trend in thinking about animals has been challenged, and scholars have also incorporated animal rights into their moral considerations. Literary representations of animals have a long and rich tradition in both Chinese and Western cultures. As Haiyan Lee has observed, due to the importation of European realism, which largely focuses on human concerns, modern Chinese literature is "a decidedly anthropocentric undertaking" (1) and its portrayals of animals are marginal and insignificant. In contemporary Taiwan literature, however, a particular genre named nature writing expresses a special care for living species and the environment, showing us cultural and ecological entanglements between humans and animals, land and sea.[1] Taiwan-based Malaysian Chinese writer Zhang Guixing (Chang Kuei-hsing 張貴興) has also devoted himself to the creation of nonhuman animals in fictional works, but Zhang is hardly a nature writer or an animal rights activist. In an interview he describes that animals for him are the natural existence and living together with them is his most primitive life experience. Probably because of such experiences, his animal writing set in the Borneo rainforest is able to display a non-anthropocentric Nanyang imagination, one that has not been much commented on.[2]

Of the very limited studies of Zhang Guixing's animal writing, Lin Yun-Hong argues that rather than discussing national and ethnic issues Zhang reveals a deep-rooted animality in human nature. But if we look at Lin's article, which was published twenty-five years ago, from the perspective of today's critical animal studies, we will find that Lin's logic of criticism is anthropocentric, insofar as it claims that animals are suitable for describing the beastliness of morally degraded human characters, implicitly suggesting a hierarchy in which humans and humanity are superior to animals and animality. Do animals in Zhang's

[1] For a study of nature writing in Taiwan from an ecocriticism approach, see Yu-lin Lee's book, 擬造新地球：當代臺灣自然書寫 *The Fabulation of a New Earth: Contemporary Taiwanese Nature Writing*.

[2] Nanyang, the "South Seas," geographically denotes a region between southern China and Southeast Asia. Since the seventeenth century, the Nanyang has become an attractive destination for a large number of Chinese migrants. Brian Bernards points out that "the literary trope of the Nanyang crosses colonial, national, and linguistic borders to express cultural affiliation through the multiple trajectories of migration and creolization" (*Writing the South Seas* 8). Contemporary Mahua (Malaysian Chinese) writers evoke the Nanyang to imagine the histories of Chinese overseas migration, exploring the cultural and political significance of this tropical region.

novels really serve as part of a rhetoric of human values? How should we reflect upon the binary mode of thinking that puts humanity in opposition to animality? How can we, as humans, transcend ourselves and bring other species into our existential experience and imagined orbit? In answering these questions, this paper seeks to reconstruct the genealogy of Zhang's animal writing and excavate the potentially subversive force of animal agency, an agency that could defamiliarize humanist conceptions, intervene in the formation of humanity, and even undo the belief of human superiority.

Drawing on two theoretical concepts, namely, anthropomorphism and becoming-animal, this paper especially focuses on an important transition in Zhang's animal writing: from simply making animals like humans to letting them mutually transform into each other. In the first section of the paper, I examine how Zhang employs anthropomorphism to humanize animals and ponder on the possibility of human-animal interaction in his early works, including the short story "Grassland Prince" (草原王子) (1980) and the novel *Siren Song* (賽蓮之歌) (1992). The Deleuzian philosophical notion of becoming-animal sheds light on the following sections, in which I discuss how the breaking of the boundary between animals and humans in Zhang's later novels, *The Naughty Family* (頑皮家族) (1996), *Elephants* (群象) (1998), and *Monkey Cup* (猴杯) (2000), activates a world of openness, fluidity, and multiple transmutations, challenging cultural essentialist notions of humanity and Chineseness as well as manifesting an ecological vision that revises the human-centered colonial narrative of Nanyang history. Last, the paper offers a reading of the alternative mode of telling history in Zhang's newest animal novel, *Wild Boars Cross the River* (野豬渡河) (2018), and draws a conclusion by reflecting upon the limits of human-oriented discourse in Sinophone literary studies.

The Anthropomorphic Lizards

In order to discern some basic themes, modes, and techniques of Zhang Guixing's animal writing, and to see how his portrayals of animals share a common lineage but have become more sophisticated as his writing path has unfolded, I start my discussion with the short story "Grassland Prince" (Caoyuan wangzi 草原王子) published early in his literary career. While Zhang remembered this story only as a work done for practice when he came to Taiwan for his college education, "Grassland Prince" actually marks a significant beginning of his animal writing. Edward Said defines such a beginning as "the first step in the intentional production of meaning" through which we can see a writer's

writing position and the subject with which s/he is concerned (5-6). A beginning designates an intention that "includes everything that later develops out of it" (12). Depicting an encounter between a monitor lizard and a human family in Borneo, "Grassland Prince" is this kind of beginning and shows how Zhang gives animals unusual centrality in his Nanyang imagination, as well as his commitment to thinking about the human-animal relationship. In this story, a monitor lizard from the grasslands adjoining the family house, repeatedly sneaks into the yard to prey on livestock. The family tolerates its intrusion and does not drive the monitor away until it attacks the narrator's uncle, which induces the family to take action to kill it. Told in the first person from a 14-year-old boy's perspective, this story displays the family members' different attitudes towards this uninvited visitor: the boy's father, uncle, and big brother regard the monitor lizard as nothing but a pest; while the boy and his younger brother are impressed by the monitor's agility and bravery and so praise it for being a powerful and fearless prince in the grasslands. The younger brother is much more sensitive to many invisible traces of the monitor lizard when it is hidden in their house, and he worships the animal prince even more. At the end of the story, when the injured monitor is trapped by the fence, the younger brother secretly opens a gate in the fence to help him escape.

Portraying the lizard as an animal prince from the children's point of view conforms to an aspect of human's psychological development noted by Freud: "Children show no trace of the arrogance which urges adult civilized men to draw a hard-and-fast line between their own nature and that of all other animals" (147). But "Grassland Prince" does not merely aim to explore child psychology in a fictional way. Rather, it delves into the possibility of the affinity between humans and animals by connecting children with animals and placing them together in opposition to adults. There is no arrogance in the minds of the boy and his younger brother, and they are able to live with the monitor lizard in a non-violent way and endow it with human features. This humanized treatment of animals is the so-called "anthropomorphism" that is often adopted in literature and popular culture when depicting animals. But in critical animal studies, anthropomorphism is quite controversial. The question is whether or not using human languages to attribute human characters, feelings, or values to animals is only wishful thinking based on an anthropocentric bias. However, if anthropomorphism makes animals like humans and thus blurs the boundary between them, then it also implies a non-anthropocentric vision. If animals share a common will and personality with us, then they do not stand on the opposite side to humanity. In this sense, anthropomorphism could also forge a new basis for communication and interaction between animals and humans. As

Erica Fudge suggests, "if description using human language and human ideas is not possible, what is? How can we fail to see with our own eyes? . . . we can only see what we see . . . we can only describe what our language allows us to describe. It is better to (slightly) humanize than to be silent about and ignore animals" (132).

I would argue that Zhang's use of anthropomorphism is not so much anthropocentric but rather aims to elicit the full spectrum of interspecies imagination. Towards the end of the story, soon after the escape of the lizard prince, drought causes fire in the grasslands and destroys the lizard's habitat. When the boy encounters the lizard again six months later, the prince is ugly, dirty, scarred, and dying. When they make eye contact, the boy can hardly believe this battered prince: "When it saw me, its only remaining left eye slowly opened . . . we stared at each other without moving . . . " (186)[3] Similar to the moment of epiphany in Western initiation stories, witnessing the monitor lizard's misfortune exposes the protagonist to a sense of vulnerability and mortality, which entails a "loss of innocence"—a transcendence of his previous simple and naive worldview. Here, it is the animal that enters into the realm of human experience and enlightens the protagonist's understanding of life and death.

In relation to eye contact between animals and humans, Derrida offers a philosophical reflection on the sense of shame he felt when his naked body was gazed on by his cat. He criticizes the anthropocentric tendency in the Western thinking of animals: "In the first place there are those texts signed by people who have no doubt seen, observed, analyzed, reflected on the animal, but who have never been *seen seen* by the animal" (382). The double passive form in "been *seen seen* by the animal" is meant to question humans as fully self-contained knowing subjects and also to claim that animals can also take part in the formation of human subjectivity. In "Grassland Prince," Zhang makes no such philosophical comments on the mutual gaze between the boy and the monitor lizard, yet he emphasizes that the gaze lasts almost fifteen minutes and implies how meaningful this encounter could be. Through the boy and his younger brother's closeness to the monitor, and the shock caused to the boy by the subsequent appearance of the lizard, this story envisions a human world which is subject to the intrusion of animals in not only a physical but also a spiritual way.

While "Grassland Prince" is a childish tale that reflects Zhang Guixing's efforts to integrate human and animal lives, his first novel *Siren Song* (Sailian zhi ge 賽蓮之歌) continuously probes into human-animal intimacy by focusing

[3] Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Chinese are by the author of this paper.

on sensuality and sexuality. In this novel, the human world is further opened to animals, sometimes to the extent that animals and animality fundamentally shape humans' sensory and erotic experiences. Intriguingly, the protagonist, a junior high school boy, also experiences a moment of eye contact with a monitor lizard which emerges from the reeds in the backyard of his house. When the boy looks at the monitor from the study window, the vigilant lizard immediately notices him: "When our eyes met, maybe the lizard had been watching me for a long time . . . a weird, tedious, and uninteresting gaze, between the two of us but with different purposes, started" (91). However, this eye-to-eye tension does not last long as the monitor lizard soon disappears into the grass. Then the boy continues to follow the traces of the lizard by putting himself into the imaginative position of the lizard. After the monitor hunts in the grass and kills and eats its prey, its sexual desires are aroused so that it drags into the water a human girl who is squatting beside the stream washing clothes to satiate its lust. Then the narrative turns back to reality: "[s]creen window, frames, lock, counterweight slot, wall and ground are sprinkled with white liquid; and the prickly durian shell leaves speckled marks on the other dry palm . . . in a visual ecstasy and trance, I saw a girl carrying two baskets of clothes under a rack, humming a vaguely brisk Malay ballad" (102). Here the boy fulfills his sexual fantasy through his animalized stand-in, as the "white liquid" refers to both the durian juice and the boy's semen. Why does the boy associate his desires with the monitor lizard? Is the animal here simply a symbolized projection of human feelings and sexuality? In order to answer these questions, we need to go back to the main theme of this novel.

Siren Song is an autobiographical novel that tells of the erotic awakening of a young teenager through his three love affairs. Water born, growing up with water, the protagonist constantly associates his life experiences with the natural world in the Nanyang. At the beginning of the story, the narrator writes in a reminiscent gesture: "When I think, especially when it involves some kind of emotion or desire, my reason and judgment will be completely distracted by its color and shape. When I read, watch, and listen, I will be aware of its existence in some forms of perception, and I lower my head to reflect" (7). The protagonist's exploration of his sexual desire is mediated through high culture—classical books, paintings, and music—but he also refers to his libidinal impulses of puberty as *ta* (牠) (it), the graphic form of the third person pronoun used for animals in Chinese. His love objects are fierce girls with what seem like more or less animal characteristics: his first love and classmate, Anna, is a strong and energetic basketball player; the neighbor's niece, namely the laundry girl mentioned above, has "the extension, gesture, and sound of a newborn animal" (90);

the narrator even devotes a large portion of text to describing the animality of his last girlfriend, Catherine, such as her feline eyes. The boy constantly meditates on his animalized sexuality by connecting his body and mind with the natural world through visual, auditory, olfactory, and other instinctual modes of perception. Zhang depicts the protagonist's sexuality as an expression of his bodily experiences, resonant with the primal natural environment, to the extent that human libidinal drives are inspired and affected by the fluid vitality of animals and plants in the Nanyang. Animals and animality thus do not serve as an anthropocentric projection of human sexuality, but rather are part and parcel of the flowing and vibrant sexual energy itself. But *Siren Song*'s exploration of human-animal affinity is still limited to personal memory, interior landscapes, and bodily desires. The portrayals of animals in the later novels are integrated with historical, cultural, and political issues and demonstrate more critical effort, which can be understood in light of Deleuze's notion of "becoming-animal."

Becoming-Animal

Deleuze established a poststructuralist philosophy in which an ontology of difference and becoming refuses the fixed meanings provided by traditional philosophical concepts such as being and identity, which have been privileged in the history of Western thought. In his view, life is not a closed system but rather a dynamic state of constant motion and overall change. In *Anti-Oedipus*, a work Deleuze co-authored with Guattari, the authors come up with a notion of "schizophrenia" to rethink a philosophy of all life. Their notion of "schizophrenia" refers neither to a psychotic state nor to a psychoanalytical understanding that degrades the individual to the level of a primordial and uniform mind. On the contrary, they claim that an individual's life should be open to new experiences, always in the process of becoming and relating. In the tenth chapter of their later work *A Thousand Plateaus*, "1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible . . . ", they map a plateau of becoming which ranges from "becoming-animal," "becoming-woman," and "becoming-imperceptible" to "becoming-everybody/everything." Deleuze's "becoming-animal" does not mean simply that a human becomes an animal or that an animal has the characteristics of a human. The human-animal relationship offered by the "becoming" is thus not an interchangeability in the dichotomy of subjective/objective positions. That is to say, the significance of "becoming-animal" lies in the fulfillment of life's potential of movement, one often repressed by existing norms, in the process of becoming, rather than a result of who becoming

whom. When in becoming a certain object or event has moved or escaped from its original shape and space, this is called deterritorialization.

For Deleuze and Guattari, neither philosophy, nor cinema, nor literature mechanically represent the world; instead, they demonstrate the power of multiple becoming.[4] In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, they read and celebrate Kafka's animalist stories and the act of becoming-animal in them. They give becoming-animal the meanings of potentiality, oscillation and defamiliarization: "Becoming-animal is a potentiality that is gifted with two equally real poles—a properly animal pole and a properly familial one. We saw how the animal oscillated between its own becoming-inhuman and an all-too-human familiarization" (36). This defamiliarization of the "all-too-human" provides a non-anthropocentric perspective to think about the possibility of multiple life forms between the binary conception of human *or* animal, which could yield rich insights in our understanding of human-animal relationships in Zhang Guixing's Nanyang imagination.

In *The Naughty Family* (Wanpi jiazu 頑皮家族), Zhang for the first time mobilizes a variety of animal resources to imagine the Nanyang and the Borneo rainforest. This novel combines family history with animal geography and tells the story of an overseas Chinese family who migrates from China to the island of Borneo. The male protagonist Kui Wanlong (夔頑龍) (naughty dragon) and his children are all named after animals or legendary creatures. For example, Wanhu (頑虎) (naughty tiger), a mute child who knows how to survive in the rainforest, releases a trapped python back into the rainforest and they thus become friends; the python then helps Wanhu to punish the villains whom he intentionally leads into the rainforest. Wanhe (頑鶴) (naughty crane) keeps birds and can tell the type of birds just by the sound; when the Japanese army searches for Wanhe in her bird garden, the birds fly out to cover and hide her. But the relationship between humans and animals in this novel is not always reciprocal and mutually beneficial, they can also be in conflict with each other. In order to establish their home, the human settlers have to get rid of the four evil pests (tigers, pythons, monitor lizards, and monkeys), and when these overseas Chinese finally withdraw into the rainforest to resist the Japanese army, they also kill animals for food. The co-

[4] Claire Colebrook distinguishes between machinic becoming and mechanism. A machinic becoming can transform itself by making an active connection with the outside world, whereas a mechanism is a "self-enclosed movement" simply caused by outside events (56). Actually the concept of machine is key to understanding the process of becoming. Because a machine is connected by different parts with no center, it is always in a process of connection and production. In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Deleuze and Guattari describe Kafka's writing as a literary or expression machine.

existence of humans and animals on this island leads to multiple human-animal relationships, including those that could be envisioned as becoming-animal, which are first reflected in the motif of reproductive desire in the novel. When Kui Wanlong and his wife Xiao Lan (小蘭) land on the island after a long period of drifting at sea, "a fear of losing descendants made them make love crazily on the tree roots" (24). Xiao Lan is portrayed as a plump, energetic woman with an animalized reproductive power. Her children are also born close to animals. When the eldest daughter, Wanfeng (頑鳳) (naughty phoenix), is being born in a cow stall, a cow nearby is also giving birth to its calf; when the eldest son Wanxiong (頑熊) (naughty bear) is born, the family is killing a dog, an omen of his early death; when the second son, Wanhu (頑虎) (naughty tiger) is born, Xiao Lan is climbing up a tree to chase a goat; the third son, Wanbao (頑豹) (naughty leopard), is born on a rainy day under the watchful eyes of a flock of domestic animals near the stall. Xiao Lan as a female character abundant with fertility is a typical character in Zhang Guixing's other novels, such as the boy's mother in *Siren Song*. However, in *The Naughty Family*, women's fertility is transported to the fictional history of migration and settlement, where human reproduction is "becoming" animal breeding, thereby creating vitality for the island and metaphorically representing the adaptability and survivability of the overseas Chinese who have settled down and taken root in the Nanyang.

In *The Naughty Family*, the becoming-animal or the deterritorialization of animals is also showcased by the motif of Chinese martial arts, including Kui Wanlong's weapons collection, his martial arts teaching career, and his duel with Zhao Yan. Kui Wanlong's "Five-animal Xing Yi Martial Arts" (五禽形意術), created by himself and passed along to his five children, is inspired by Hua Tuo's (華佗) five-animal boxing, Shaolin boxing, and the Xing Yi Quan (形意拳) of the Shanxi and Hebei schools. While the islander eliminates the four "evil pests," the pests also provide inspiration and techniques for his martial art, which eventually becomes the "Six-animal Xing Yi Martial Art" and adds the "Faithful Fowl Xing Yi Martial Art" (忠禽形意術), which is created by imitating the actions of a rooster. These animal elements in martial arts, often understood as a symbol of Chinese culture, offer us an alternative way to think about the issue of Chineseness. As Ng Kim Chew remarks about the famous martial arts author Jin Yong (金庸), the "Chinese details" in Jin Yong's martial arts novels are a pseudo-encyclopedia that reflects the overseas Chinese's inauthentic imagination of China. In a similar way, Zhang animalizes the Chinese martial arts in *The Naughty Family* by reinventing the "Six-animal Xing Yi Martial Art," whose inauthenticity is formed in its mixed meaning of animality, locality, and

cultural identity. In this invention, the gestures of animals and poultry in the Nanyang reshape humans' bodily actions and martial arts techniques, giving rise to a dual deterritorialization of the cultural China embedded in the Chinese martial arts imagination. The Nanyang region deterritorializes the geographical origin of China and Chineseness, while the animal deterritorializes human culture and civilization.

In the subsequent two novels, *Elephants* (Qunxiang 群象) and *Monkey Cup* (Houbei 猴杯), Zhang's animal writing becomes more mature and complicated. Zhang not only makes humans become animals, but also conversely makes animals into humans—humans and animals become each other and are deterritorialized into unstable categories. As Deleuze and Guattari suggest, "There is no longer man or animal, since each deterritorializes the other, in a conjunction of flux, in a continuum of reversible intensities" (*Kafka* 22). *Elephants* and *Monkey Cup* tell the chronicles of a Chinese Malaysian family in Borneo and Chinese setters' complex relationship with Western colonists and indigenous populations. The style of *Elephants* and *Monkey Cup* is highly expressive and imaginative, depicting the rainforest landscape as a colorful kaleidoscope. In the two novels, analogous words such as *nitai* (擬態 mimicry) and *moni* (模擬 simulation) are often used to convey a dynamic of multiple becoming, embodying the similarity, correlation, and mutual transformation between humans, animals, and plants. Humans become animals, plants become animals, and animals become other animals, something that is seen in the following extracts:

> The lake behind the stall is covered with duckweed, mimicking green rain frogs, snakes, waterfowl, dragonflies and butterflies. (*Elephants* 1) [5]

> The boy lies on the tree trunk like a leopard cat, his hair is like a night owl with the corners of its mouth lifted, and his eyes are like those of a monkey-eating eagle—he is mimicking these three predators of the common coucal. (*Elephants* 12) [6]

> The sea of clouds is getting dark, while the sunset is gone like a red turtle; mist pervades the field, and the common coucal crawls under the bushes like a lizard . . . (*Monkey Cup* 184) [7]

> Grandfather is in low spirits and in low voice. But under the influence of the scavenger, with his limbs stretching, he is like a mantis, a predator that mimics branches

[5] 畜舍後的湖泊張曼大萍，擬態著蔥綠的雨蛙。蛇。水鳥。蜻蜓。蝶。

[6] 男孩趴在樹幹上的姿勢像大山貓，頭髮像夜鴞聳著兩隻背角，眼神如食猴鷹，模倣三種獵食大番鵐的獸類。

[7] 雲海黯晦，夕日如紅龜逝去，野地瀰漫煙霾，大番鵐在矮木從下像蜥蜴爬竄……

and leaves . . . (*Monkey Cup* 264) [8]

In terms of characterization, the mother in *Elephants* is a mute who can only make sounds like a duck. The grandfather and father of the Shi family are both abnormal characters who behave like animals and have been imprisoned in a pigsty. The grandfather eats crabs, frogs, and other small animals; the father barks like a beast every hour or two in the stall and also eats papers—torn pages from Chinese canonical books and paintings—for food. His animalized feeding instinct deterritorializes human civilization and symbolizes the ineffectiveness or invalidation of Chinese cultural systems in the rainforest world.[9]

The big rhinoceros named "Governor" (總督) in *Monkey Cup* is a typical animal character featured as becoming-human. When the first-generation Chinese migrant, the great-grandfather of the Yu family, claims and cultivates the waste land, he manages to drive away Governor, who has lived in this field for many years. Governor has witnessed his parents' horns cut off by English hunters, and when he matures, he knows that he has the power to take revenge against his human enemies and so deliberately destroys their cultivated land. The anthropomorphic Governor almost becomes a human figure, having the attributes not only of memory and thought, but also of belief and intention. The great-grandfather and grandfather of the Yu family eventually capture Governor and imprison him in a pit under the kapok tree, making him the land keeper of the Yu family. The grandfather grows up with the imprisoned Governor and establishes a deep relationship with him. After Governor dies, he buries his corpse in the ground and insists on protecting it from being eaten by lizards. For the grandfather, Governor's death mirrors his own decrepitude, as he sighs: "After Governor's death, mine will come soon" (264). In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari distinguish three types of animals: the first type are family pets—sentimental and Oedipal animals; the second are "animals with characteristics or attributes" (240)—mythological and prototypical animals; the third are "more demonic animals, pack or affect animals" (241), which are also a type of becoming-animal. But Governor confounds this classification. It is both a domestic animal of the Yu family and a symbol of their powerful and influential plantation industry, and it is also a type of becoming-animal, moving back and forth between wild beast and domestic pet, human and animal.

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[8] 祖父情緒闌珊，聲音低迷，但受了腐食者影響，四肢始終大剌剌打開，如款擺肢體模擬枝葉的掠食者螳螂……

[9] Both Andrea Bachner and Mei Chia-ling point out Zhang Guixing's deconstruction of the Chinese writing system and its embedded Chineseness in *Elephants* and *Monkey Cup*.

Animals and Ecology in Elephants and *Monkey Cup*

The notion of becoming-animal is one that no longer assumes that the human is the measure of all things, that everything starts from human concerns, as conventional philosophical thoughts have suggested. But neither does becoming-animal claim that animals are the measure of all things. Deleuze is not willing to deliberately endow animals or any other "becoming" side with a kind of identity politics, because the process of becoming never stops. What matters here is the possibility of creating another life form in the flow of endless becoming. But we should also acknowledge that, becoming a socially dominated minority such as animals or women, gives the Deleuzian concept of becoming a layer of antagonistic political significance. In this sense, we can also utilize the power of becoming-animal to rethink the colonial narrative of the Nanyang in Zhang Guixing's fiction and uncover Nanyang's natural and ecological history, in which animals actively respond to and can resist human activities.

At a micro level, Zhang Guixing often presents the ecological space in an extremely detailed way, capturing the energy flow between humans and animals in different micro-ecosystems. In traditional realistic novels, details, as a part of the whole, often serve for the complete and comprehensive development of the theme; they animate the environment and characters and so emphasize the authenticity of the panoramic world. The details of the rainforest in Zhang's novels do not function like this; they are not merely used to construct a complete rainforest space or constitute a complete environment and atmosphere. Instead, the details escape from the large rainforest space to open up a series of micro worlds. In this respect, Zhang's writing style resembles the structure of the ecosystem. We know that an ecosystem has no fixed boundaries or limits: it can be a forest, a tree, or even a leaf. Rainforests are among the most diverse ecosystems on earth, full of communities of various sizes. The details of the rainforest in Zhang's novels have the potential to become small and independent ecosystems, which feature productive energy exchanges among animals, humans, plants, and non-living things. *Elephants* begins with the description of the two old wells outside the Shi family's vegetable garden and bathroom. The wells have a long history. They are "broad and deep" and "the ecosystems of the two wells are different from those of new wells" (3). The wall of the well is covered with algae, ferns, and fungi, and there are frogs and fish eggs in the water. When the rainy season comes, the ecology of the well changes accordingly and the big fish swim into the well and jump up to peck at all kinds of creatures on the wall. They also peck at the grandma's cold fruits hanging in the well and even bite off the fishhook placed there by the protagonist boy and his brother.

When the next rainy season comes, the big fish will swim back to the wild. Such details present the micro-ecologies associated with the old well, which include ecological changes inclusive of animals' uses of natural rhythms to find prey sites, which in turn reveal the endless patterns of the natural world as well as its complexity and multiplicity.

Humans are also involved in the micro ecosystem in a bizarre fashion. At the beginning of *Elephants*, the grandfather of the Shi family, who is imprisoned in a pigsty, discharges his feces into the lake through a hole in the floor. Meanwhile, the jumping fish swim upstream to eat the intestinal worms inside the feces. Here, feces surprisingly become a source of food and nourishment for fish. Also in *Elephants*, a week after the grandmother's disappearance, the protagonist finds two "eggs" floating in the well, and a "small fish of the size of dogs' teeth" and a "big fish of the size of an ox horn," who compete for the "eggs" (a source of food) (9-10). When he eventually finds the body of his grandmother emerging from the bottom of the well, he realizes that "the eggs" are her eyeballs. This unconventional description of death dramatically converts human death into an ecological operation. In ordinary conceptions, feces and corpses often are represented as being unclean and disgusting things—the abject. In *Elephants*, they are transformed into nutrients for animals and so inserted into the ecosystem's energy circulation, and so they are deconstructed and elide rigid, established cultural meanings. Zhang Guixing's novels manifest an ecological world in which both humans and animals are members of the same dynamic ecological system, interactively participating in the material energy cycle, thereby forming into an infinite moving track of becoming-other.

At the macro level, *Elephants* and *Monkey Cup* juxtapose family histories and the natural and ecological history of the Nanyang rainforest. In these two novels, the repetitive scenes where humans destroy the rainforest vegetation and hunt local wildlife reflect Zhang's critique of human exploitation of the natural world. Humans hunt animals for food or for animals' horns and skins in exchange for money. In *Elephants*, Yu Jiatong (余家同), who is the captain of a Sarawak Communist group, the Yangtze River Troop (揚子江部隊), treats animals in an extremely brutal way. During the heyday of the troop, the members feast every day on wild mountain boar, monkeys, and monitor lizards. Also, obsessed with ivory, the troop is known as the "elephant-hunting team." Even in the midst of battle, Yu leads his men to the depths of the rainforest to hunt animals, trying to find the legendary huge elephant herd. However, they never find it. Through the story of this invisible elephant herd, which might have been extinct for a long time and has become only an imagined existence in this novel, the novel actually outlines a history of Bornean elephants: hundreds of

years ago, the elephant was the most dominant species on the island, and eventually they were driven into the tropical rainforest by indigenous inhabitants. From the late seventeenth century on, ivory brought great wealth to western colonists, and they formed elephant hunting teams to enter into the rainforest to slaughter the elephants. After hundreds of years of being hunted by humans, the elephant herd is believed to live a restricted life in the rainforest, like the life of human hermits, and they "have learned all the wisdom to protect [their] family and escape from humans" (32). Do elephants really have the wisdom to use the rainforest to resist humans? Is "elephant wisdom" just a cover for human exploitation of animals and the ecology? Here the ambiguous rhetoric regarding the escape of elephants expresses an irony towards human's violence against animals.

The description of the Bornean plantation system in *Monkey Cup* more clearly shows how humans exploit animals and ecology, and more importantly, how animals and ecological systems actively respond to human activities. After the great geographical discoveries in the sixteenth century and with the colonial expansion of western imperialism, European powers, especially Britain and the Netherlands, arrived in Borneo and started to clear it. The great-grandfather of the Yu family embodies a form of settler colonialism, as he takes over the British coffee garden industry in a devious way and expands it into a large plantation with tea, pepper, gum, poppy, and logging plants. The great-grandfather bribes the British colonial officials and exploits both Chinese laborers and the aboriginal peoples, the Dayaks, to turn the Borneo rainforest into his private property. The rhino Governor mentioned earlier in this essay is a representative of the local animal species in Borneo that are tamed and exploited by the Yu family. While Zhang shows how human colonization changes the ecological structure of the Borneo rainforest, he emphasizes the power of ecosystems and the unextinguished agency of the rainforest species. In *Monkey Cup*, where Zhang writes about the death of Governor, the focus is ecological reactions to the animal's death. The rotting smell of Governor's corpse attracts many menacing scavengers—the monitor lizards. The lizards and other wild species have already occupied the plantation area and their populations are multiplying themselves. At this stage, the plantation system is on the edge of collapse. The grandfather tries to drive away the scavengers in order to preserve Governor's body, but finally he fails to defeat them. The monitor lizards dig up Governor's corpse and feed on it. The death of Governor not only symbolizes the decline of the plantation system and the Yu family, but ecologically turns into a recirculation of energy and matter. The victory of the scavengers heralds the return of the plantation to wilderness. Under such an ecological law, humans' modification of the rainfor-

est is reversed and the rainforest is reabsorbed by the natural universe over time. As Brian Bernards suggests, the discourse of nature in Zhang's Nanyang "reverses the hierarchies of plantation coloniality and can thus be read as a kind of counter-colonial poetics" ("Plantation and Rainforest," 326). By depicting animals as an agent in the ecological arena of the Nanyang, Zhang implies animals could become the counter-power to human's colonial exploitation of the rainforest.

The Animalization of History in *Wild Boars Cross the Rive*

The animal kingdom in Zhang Guixing's fiction welcomed a new cluster of members when his most recent book *Wild Boars Cross the River* (野豬渡河) was published in 2018. Compared to the focus of the family story in his previous works, it touches more on historically embedded experiences of war and violence in Japanese-occupied British Borneo during the Second World War. This novel fictionalizes a Chinese community Zhuba village (豬芭村) whose people, especially members related to the patriotic organization, the Committee of Homeland Victims Support (籌賑祖國難民委員會), have suffered from Japanese troops' brutal killing. Against the historical backdrop of colonial invasion and local resistance, animals, again, weave a spell over our understanding of the meanings of conflicts, survival, and humanity.

During the Japanese occupation that lasts three years and eight months, men, women, children, and animals, die in many cruel and grisly ways. But Zhang's novel is not designed to critique the evil of violence and its historical variations. The narrative style of his animal writing, including the use of descriptive words to perform a sensory and detailed observation of all the living and non-living things in the tropical surrounding, as well as the collage of animal tales and natural sciences of ecology and zoology, reconfigure the historical encounter between Japanese occupation and the Chinese community in the Nanyang, as a stage contested by a series of animal powers and forms. Consequently, the traumatic scenes and events in the novel are often told from a viewpoint refusing any interpretations that call for moral and political clarity. Though Japanese invaders act as the cruelest killers, some of them are portrayed in a spiritually sophisticated way. The Japanese soldier Ito (伊藤雄) alias Kobayashi Jiro (小林二郎), who has guided the Japanese troops to the Zhuba village, is also described as Buddha-faced, kindhearted, and desperate to pursue romantic love. His decapitation motivates his daughter, another Japanese agent, Emily (愛蜜莉), to avenge her father apart from carrying on her intelligence

activity; she cuts off the head of the village leader, Emperor Zhu (朱大帝), and exchanges it with the Iban for the lost head of Kobayashi. In the crisis of humanity, the villagers are also not purely innocent, and some of them are deeply contaminated by violence. For instance, Emperor Zhu leads the Chinese villagers to ambush wild boars and fight against the Japanese army, but this bravery and heroism are accompanied by his frequent sexual exploitation of young girls in the village. The novel even creates an intertextual relationship between the degenerated Emperor Zhu and the invisible, vicious boar king (豬王), who leads boar herds to attack the village and commit violence (388).

Insofar as there is no apparent distinction between evil and good, perpetrator and victim, humans and animals, this multiple blurriness is indicated by the trope of masks, that is to say, the multifarious plastic masks sold by Kobayashi and played with by children in the village. The masks symbolize unrecognizable identities and unpredictable desires, and they refer to the blurred boundary between humans and animals in the plot as well as the novelistic experimentation of becoming-animal. Zhang synthesizes many animal motifs already expressed in his previous works, such as animals and reproduction, which is illustrated by the incredible fertility of boars, snails, guppies, and other animals. This fertility helps them survive in the dangerous natural environment threatened by the Zhuba villagers and the Japanese troops. The novel also describes the protagonist Guan Yafeng's (關亞鳳) animalized sexuality by juxtaposing the scene where the copulation of boars is mediated by their urine and the moment when Yafeng's sexual desire is triggered by Emily's urination in the underbrush. Human characters and animals have an intertextual relationship, becoming each other and sharing each other's characteristics and habits.

There are many domestic animals: the Chinese graveyard keeper Grandmother Ma's (馬婆婆) pet white parrot loves yelling the name of her former English husband; Emily's black dog resembles its owner in terms of a mysterious quality; Lazy Jiao's (懶鬼焦) headless rooster even holds potential for being considered the prototypical animal of this novel, as it denotes meanings of decapitation and killing, which have pervaded the entire novel. The boars are ferocious and aggressive beasts that invade the village, destroy farmland, and attack humans every July and August when they cross from the tropical rainforest of West Kalimantan to the hilly area to find food and mating places—a phenomenon called "wild boars cross the river" by local villagers. The wild boars represent a naturally and biologically determined primitive force and, in some cases, the violence itself; they exist in a state of savagery, which is driven by the forces of momentum of survival and copulation.

In the preface to the novel, David Wang clearly points out how Zhang's

new work deviates from national narratives: while the novel centers on the ravage and slaughter of Chinese villagers by the Japanese army, it avoids elaborating on the patriotic sacrifice of overseas Chinese. Moreover, descriptions of the Committee of Homeland Victims Support as well as the imaginary homeland (China) in the novel are vague and unclear (Wang 5). The retreat of national consciousness paves the way for a more fluid narrative space of staging animal actors, including wild species and family pets, and their proximity to humans in Japanese-occupied Borneo. By engaging with historical interrogations of violence in such an animalized way, which makes it difficult to easily intertwine that strategy with humanist inquiries, political inclinations, and national sentiments, Zhang offers an unorthodox way of telling history beyond anthropocentrism. In doing so, Zhang considers the common and interchangeable situations of all creatures and how they all are penetrated by forces and histories of violence.

Coda

The existing discourses on Sinophone literary and cultural studies often focus on human-oriented issues such as creolization of language, ethnic difference, and national identity, paying scant attention to representations of the non-human animal and its critical agency. "Sinophone" as a term related to utterance and articulation, should not omit the natural world. For example, Shumei Shih's original formulation of the concept of "Sinophone" comes from her analysis of the variety of actors' accents and the linguistic dissonance in the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (4). Admittedly, the abundant natural voices and animal cries cannot be fully described by written language, but Zhang Guixing still tries to capture them in a careful way of mimesis. In *Wild Boars Cross the River*, birds' cries are heard as:

> *kee-kee-kee-kee-kee*
> *yeep-yip-yip-yip*
> *chit-chit-chit-tee*
> *croo-wuck, croo-wuck, croo-wuck*
> *boob-boob-boob-boob-boob* (404)

and

> *click-hrooo, click-hrooo, click-hrooo* (405)

Emily, like Wanhe in *Siren Song*, is able to memorize and imitate these sounds, and she believes that it is foolish for humans to give names to different kinds

of birds. Her refusal to impose human language on animals and the way she follows birds' own voices show Zhang's unique non-anthropocentric vision. Zhang's animal writing challenges human-oriented modes of thinking by recovering animals' and animality's vital position in the formation of humanity. In his early works, such as "Grassland Prince" and *Siren Song*, Zhang uses the method of anthropomorphism to open the human world to animals, while in his later works, which include those that extensively bring the rainforest space to life and include *The Naughty Family, Elephants, Monkey Cup*, and *Wild Boars Cross the River*, humans and animals gradually overlap and even transmute into each other. In an animalized Nanyang world that enacts multiple becoming, there is no fixed diasporic yearning or gesture of "against diaspora," only vitality and changeability.

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從擬人論到流變-動物：張貴興南洋想象中的動物能動性

摘要

馬華作家張貴興在其南洋想象中呈現了蜥蜴、禽鳥、野象、野豬等眾多令人印象深刻的非人類動物。過往論者認爲張貴興的小說意在批判人性中根深蒂固的獸性，此一觀點暗含人類高於動物的階序關係，落入了人類中心主義的窠臼。本文試圖重建張貴興動物書寫的脈絡，分析其刻畫動物、處理人與動物關係的獨特方法，從中挖掘潛在的批判性力量。張貴興的動物書寫隨著他的小說生涯逐步深化，塑造的動物形象也愈臻複雜，但他始終通過一系列文學技巧將人類世界向動物敞開。在早期作品〈草原王子〉、《賽蓮之歌》中，張貴興以「擬人論」的寫法將動物人化，爲人與動物提供了互動的可能。這種對人與動物之間界線的打破，亦爲其小說帶來了德勒茲「流變-動物」所蘊含的開放性視野。在《頑皮家族》、《群象》、《猴杯》、《野豬渡河》等後續作品中，張貴興展演出萬花筒般多重流變的婆羅洲雨林空間，人與動物彼此重疊甚至相互轉化。本文從動物研究的角度閱讀馬華文學，希望以張貴興的小說爲例，在現存華語語系文學研究中關注語言、種族，及國族政治等以人爲導向的議題之外，發現另一創造面向與理論潛力。在張貴興筆下的「動」物南洋中，沒有靜態的離散軌跡，只有著生生不息的活力和變化。

關鍵字： 馬華文學、張貴興、動物、擬人論、流變-動物