An Ecotranslation Manifesto: On the Translation of Bionyms in Nativist and Nature Writing from Taiwan

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This chapter considers the translation of bionyms—plant and animal names—in modern literature, in the context of mass bionym extinction. For just as many species are now threatened with extinction, so are many bionyms. And just as we seek to protect biological diversity, so we should protect bionymic diversity, because it is a part of the cultural diversity on which humanity can draw to solve environmental problems and to live in harmony with the creatures that have been pushed to the periphery by industrialized civilization. As a way of protecting bionym diversity, I present my own bionym translation manifesto: translate the local bionym literally either as a loanword or a calque, with the common bionym in the target language as a complement and the scientific name as a global equivalent. That is at least three bionyms in three languages. My bionym manifesto is therefore polyglot. My polyglot bionym manifesto may seem overly demanding for a nativist writer like Huang Chun-ming, but it suits a nature writer like Wu Ming-yi, who makes a point of naming and renaming individual species in different languages in his works.

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I begin with Huang's essay "Waiting for the Name of a Flower" by considering one bionym in particular, which I contextualize locally before finding complements for it globally. The discussion of Huang's essay should serve as a primer in the basic biological background I think every ecotranslator should have. In a brief transition, I lay out my manifesto in the context of scholarly literature on ecotranslation. In this context, I argue against any attempt to lay the blame for bionym extinction at Linnaeus's feet. I also argue for a respect for the scientific knowledge that establishes natural equivalence as a foundation for ecotranslation. I then consider the translation of bionyms in Wu Ming-yi's writings, non-fiction and fiction. The conclusion reflects on how the eco in ecotranslation might apply to the translation of bionyms, specifically whether there really is a need for diversity in bionyms analogous to the ecological need for diversity. Looking ahead to future research possibilities, I also reflect on the fact that referring to a biological organism is not the only thing a bionym can do.

6.1 Waiting for the Name of a Flower with Huang Chun-Ming

In his essay "Waiting for the Name of a Flower" (Huang 1989), the Taiwanese nativist writer Huang Chun-ming remembers waiting for the name of a flower. For the longest time nobody who passed by knew the name. Not the schoolboys on bicycles. Not the civil servant on foot. Not the young lady riding a pair of wheels. Finally, an old lady, walking her grandson home, told him that "It's called a riffraff flower, because it serves no useful purpose. It's been called that in these parts for as long as I can remember," which leads Huang to the conclusion that he himself is riff-raff, because he spent his time to no useful purpose, waiting for the name of a flower.

Huang's true concern in this essay is his own modernity, where modernity is a style of life that has separated him from the soil his ancestors farmed. He ironizes modern buzzwords by putting them in quotation marks, then applies them to himself. For instance, the "leisure" he obviously enjoys, having nothing better to do than wait for the name of a flower. To the grandmother, whose life has been labor-filled, leisure would sound like indolence. In this encounter between Huang and the old lady, Huang is the modern, even though he is the nativist writer. For a nativist (*hsiang-t'u*) writer like Huang, estrangement from the soil (*t'u*) of one's

homeland (*hsiang*) means forgetting the traditional way of life, which the grandma in the story leads.[1] The schoolboys, the civil servant, and the young lady all think Huang is a weirdo, and even if they took him for normal they would all be too busy to take the time to stop and chat. The grandma, by contrast, answers his question and invites him over for dinner, because she has the friendly warmth that Huang associates with the salt of the earth.

But in "Waiting for the Name of a Flower," the earth also seems to mean the natural world. For it is not just that Huang does not know the name of the flower. In fact, he has never noticed this particular kind of wildflower before. The grandmother, on the other hand, is quite familiar. "It's a creeper with thorns," she says, "what grows around people's yards." Of course, from the perspective of science, the old lady's dismissive appellation is less than ideal. Riffraff flower could, after all, apply to any number of flowers for which no use has been found. Surely each species should have its own name, rather than being consigned to the trash heap of nomenclature. Still, her knowledge beats Huang's.

Though he falls short of the old lady in this respect, Huang is not quite the leisured modern who is ignorant of the natural world. He is closer to the soil than the schoolboys, the civil servant, and the young lady, for he displays some awareness of the kind of ecosystem he is visiting. He is standing on an embankment close to the estuary of the Lan-yang River, located in I-lan County in northeastern Taiwan. Standing there, he is aware of the type of plant that is typical to that ecosystem. We sense his awareness because he notices four plants whose names he does know, and which he has seen in this type of terrain before. And this is where it gets complicated. It does not get complicated for the reader of the Mandarin Chinese essay, for whom the names of the plants may not even register, because they are mentioned once, never to be referred to again. But for the Chinese-to-English translator, the four botanical names lead into a maze of plant nomenclature, both common and scientific. The size of the maze depends on the translator's interest and knowledge. Sometimes too little knowledge is a dangerous thing. But too much knowledge can also be a dangerous thing. The translator has to know when to stop acquiring it and make a choice. But before making that choice, let us begin to explore the maze.

The first plant Huang notices, the only one I will have the leisure to discuss, is the horse-whip herb. A horse-whip is a highly branched herb that can grow to about a meter tall with lobed green leaves and spiked

mauve flowers. "Horse-whip herb" has been selected, as it were, by Huang from a number of common names by which the plant is locally known. According to the Plants of Taiwan (PoT) database, the first resource any Taiwanese ecotranslator should check, this plant goes by, or has gone by, a number of other names: iron horse-whip, iron fishing-rod, tea-leaf herb, and dragon-tooth herb.[2] The provenance of these Chinese names is not immediately clear, but the Chinese-English ecotranslator can keep the following principle in mind: the Chinese names of a plant listed in the PoT might survey the botanical nomenclature of the entire world. They might come from nineteenth-century Western nature enthusiasts like Robert Swinhoe. They might come from Japan, for Japanese botanists had studied Taiwan's flora systematically before the Kuomintang arrived in 1945. They might also come from different parts of China, because of the massive influx of "mainlanders" around 1950.

In addition to Mandarin bionyms, the PoT also lists Taiwanese (also called Southern Hokkien) names brought by immigrants to Taiwan from Fukien Province in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and sometimes the Taiwanese duplicates the Mandarin: *bé-pin chháu* is horse-whip herb, *hih bé-pin* is iron horse-whip, *thih tiò-kuann* is iron fishing-rod, and *tê-bí chháu* is tea-leaf herb. The question is: did the Taiwanese come from the Mandarin or is it the other way around? That "tea-leaf herb" in the Chinese is literally "tea-rice herb" suggests that the direction of influence in this case is from Taiwanese to Chinese, because "tea rice" is the Taiwanese term for tea leaf. If the term was originally Chinese it would have been *ch'a-ye ts'ao* not *ch'a-mi ts'ao*, *ye* for leaf, not *mi* (*bí* in Taiwanese). That leaves dragon-tooth herb as the only term mentioned in the previous paragraph without a Taiwanese analog. According to the *National Language Dictionary* (*Kwo-yü Ts'u-tien*), dragon tooth is a word for dumpling. Whatever the relevance of a dumpling to this species of plant, the term dragon-tooth herb is definitely not Taiwanese.

To a lesser extent, the PoT also lists terms in Hakka and in languages spoken by people who have been officially recognized as indigenous since a constitutional amendment in the mid-1990s. In the case of horse-whip herb the PoT reports that the Paiwanese people, who live about a hundred miles south of I-lan, call the plant *marupoyopoyomu*. *Marupoyopoyomu* was recorded in katakana in a 1928 name list of Taiwan's flora by the Japanese botanist Syuniti Sasaki, and romanized from the katakana by Yang Tsai-yi (1982). At some point the PoT should be updated with the romanizations developed for Taiwan's indigenous languages by Paul Jen-kuei Li (2004) who has written about plant names in Formosan languages. As I write,

teams of indigenous intellectuals all over the country are compiling collections of short articles on plant nomenclature, whose results, ideally, will eventually be incorporated into the PoT. And as we shall see in the second half of this chapter, indigenous bionyms are important in Wu Ming-yi's nature writing. But Huang Chun-ming shows no awareness of them. He selected the term horse-whip herb from a set of Mandarin and Taiwanese synonyms, because that term was the first to come to mind.

One wonders, though, if he managed to select a local term? Is horse-whip herb perhaps unique to Huang's home county of I-lan. No, horse-whip herb appears for the first time in Taiwanese historical records in the mid-eighteenth century in the *Revised Feng-shan County Gazette*, which is to say from the area today called Kao-hsiung, in the southwest of the island.[3] But the term is attested much earlier in China, in a medical treatise called *Further Records of Famous Physicians* (*Ming-yi pie-lu*), dating to the third and fourth centuries CE (Li Jingwei et al. 2004: 178). In other words, there is nothing I-lan about it. The only reason Huang selected it is because it is the name by which he knew it or thought his readers would know it by.

Still, the name by which Huang knew it is evocative. It is not an arbitrary association of sound and sense. For plants arbitrarily associated with a sound, all that the translator can usually do is find the corresponding term, if there is one, in the target language. What other way to translate rose, roughly [ɹoz] in International Phonetic Alphabet symbols, is there besides *mei-kuei* [mei-kʷei]? By contrast, horse-whip herb would seem different under another name, because unlike rose (or *mei-kuei*) it is descriptive, comparing the plant to a riding crop. For readers in Taiwan who can recognize the plant, horse-whip herb also evokes a mental image of the actual plant. The problem in translation is that "horse-whip" on its own cannot possibly evoke an image of the actual plant, only of a horse-whip. Given that the schoolboys, the civil servant, and the young lady do not know the name of the flower for whose name Huang is waiting, they might be as ignorant of "horse-whip herb" in Chinese as the reader of the English translation. This is the problem for Huang's modern readers, in Chinese or in English translation, who are estranged from tradition and from nature. Huang was primarily concerned with educating people about tradition, but readers of his essay might be inspired to learn more about nature. Today, with Google and Wikipedia, his readers in Chinese can look up pictures of the plant, which might be the first step toward noticing it in daily life, developing a personal connection to it, showing concern for it, caring about it.[4]

6.2 Searching for the Name of a Plant with Carl Linnaeus

Readers in English translation might also be able to look up pictures, because "horse-whip herb" is listed on certain websites as the Chinese name of the plant in question. But to make sure the English reader gets the picture, the translator would almost certainly supply a common name in English. The common name—the entrance to a different maze—is either verbena or vervain. Verbena and vervain, it turns out, are cognate. The Latin *verbena* was adopted into French as *vervain*, and both were adopted into English, though their meanings have narrowed considerably. In the Middle Ages, the French term *vervain* was an "herbaceous plant much valued medicinally," according to the Online Etymology Dictionary. In Latin, *verbena* is "leaves or twigs of olive, myrtle, laurel, or other sacred plants employed in religious ceremonies." Verbena and vervain are the most common common names, but verbena goes by, or at least it has gone by, many other names in English, not just vervain but also simpler's joy, where a simpler is a preparer of simples, meaning herbal formulas. It is also called holy herb, bringing in the religious associations of *verbena* and *vervain*. Apparently, it is called ironweed in the United States, because of the high iron content of its roots (Ahmed et al. 2012: 68). An education in the nomenclature of an organism is an education in its natural and cultural ecology.

Alas, these terms are no longer in current use; the reader is likely to have seen them for the first time. As a modern ecotranslator, I feel sad that these local terms, which reflect traditional uses or outstanding properties of the plant, are passing away. I also find poignant Renato Tomei's elegy to traditional nomenclature in her "Multilingual Phytonymy: Ecotranslation and Vernaculars," a chapter in the book *Descriptions, Translations and the Caribbean: From Fruits to Rastafarians*. Tomei studied Caribbean plant terminology, which she terms "phytonymy." According to Tomei's account, Caribbean phytonymy has for the most part lost currency, or has even been forgotten. Tomei not only helps us remember but also proposes a theory of our forgetfulness: we can blame Linnaeus, because "the systematic model of the Linnaean system caused phenomena of loss and language erosion to names of plants in native languages" (2016: 34). In support of this claim, Tomei references *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* by Mary Louise Pratt (2007), who begins her account of the imperial gaze with Linnaeus, who sent out "apostles" to all corners of

the earth to be his eyes in absentia. Apparently, "imperial eyes" saw a single species and imposed a single name, willfully ignoring the diversity of folk phytonymy.

Linnaeus is being scapegoated. Would Carolus Linnaeus have wanted us all to speak the same language when he went by Carl von Linné in his native Sweden? And in Mandarin he is Lín-nèi.[5] To Linnaeus, the scientific name was just a reference to an objective biological reality that all languages could refer to in their own ways. In the wake of biologists like Charles Darwin and E. O. Wilson, we do not have to understand the objective reality of a species in the same way as Linnaeus did. Without forfeiting objectivity, we can recognize that any species can be in flux, its boundary fuzzy, just as Linnaeus could surely recognize and accept that some designations for flora and fauna denote cultural categories not biological realities. Verbena is a case in point. The Latin *verbena* guided Linnaeus when he named the species in his *Species Plantarum*, published in 1753. To *Verbena* Linnaeus added *officinalis*, a term used for medicinal herbs, to form the binomial species name, hence *Verbena officinalis* L., where L. stands for Linnaeus.[6]

This particular binomial name conveys the cultural significance of this kind of plant, but like any binomial name it positions a particular species in the family tree of life. From general to specific, *Verbena officinalis* L. is a eukaryote, a plant, an angiosperm, a eudicot, and an asterid; it belongs to the order Lamiales, which is to say that technically speaking it is not a grass; it is not a member of the order Poales, which is why I translated the *ts'ao* in *ma-pien ts'ao* as herb and not grass.[7] It also belongs to the family Verbenaceae. The resemblance between the family name Verbenaceae and the genus name *Verbena* is a clue that the genus is the type genus, meaning representative genus, of the family. Furthermore, it turns out that *Verbena officinalis* L. is the type species of the genus *Verbena*. And just as *Verbena* is the type genus of Verbenaceae and *Verbena officinalis* L. of *Verbena*, there is a specific specimen that is the type specimen of the species. It can be viewed online.[8]

A type specimen is a node in the family tree of life, a hook, so to speak, from which to hang the species. A species is a category of individual organisms that might, in theory, freely mate with the type specimen and produce fertile offspring. This definition leaves the boundaries of the species blurry, because one can imagine an individual *B* close enough to the type specimen *A* to reproduce with it and another individual *C* close enough to *B* but too far from *A*. Still, the boundary of a species is not so

blurry that we must throw up our hands and give up on the idea. The idea of a species is still a firm enough foundation for ecotranslation.

Not everyone sees it this way, however. To some, Tomei likely included, *Verbena officinalis* L. is simply one perspective on the diversity of life, one motivated by globalist pretensions but which is no more true than the various folk phytonyms. Corresponding folk phytonyms might include more or less of life than *Verbena officinalis* L., and different nomenclatures might divide life up differently. If so, nomenclatures, whether scientific or folk, would strictly speaking be incommensurable, which is to say untranslatable.

It is for the sake of translatability that I would grant the scientific name a special status. A scientific name facilitates what Anthony Pym calls natural equivalence (Pym 2010: 6–23), where natural means pre-existing in nature, equi-valence equal value. Assuming that a scientific name refers to a pre-existent category of nature allows the translator to hypothesize that folk phytonyms from around the world are semantic equivalents. Horse-whip herb and verbena would then be synonyms, different names for the same thing: a fuzzy-boundaried flux. This fuzzy-boundaried flux may seem to possess an essence without the depth of perspective of evolutionary time. With their own quotidian, practical perspective, indigenous peoples may assume that each kind possesses its own essence. On this issue the biologists and the indigenous people would disagree. However, they agree to an impressive degree on classification. Ethnobotanists, who study different peoples' understandings of botany, have found an impressive correspondence between folk nomenclature and scientific consensus at the levels of species and genus (Kaesuk-Yoon 2009: 119–142). It is because this correspondence is so impressive that I venture to propose that the bionyms in different languages can be treated as natural equivalents, in other words as synonyms. Of course the correspondence is not complete. But when folk nomenclature differs it tends to be because the term is functional, denoting a class of types with a similar purpose, not a class of individuals that are related without regard to utility. Verbena and vervain, after all, are used to mean plants used in religious ceremonies, but everyone could recognize that plants used in religious ceremonies might well be classified differently if considered according to their own qualities.

Above I defended Linnaeus against those who would blame him for imperiling local plant names the world over and argued that recognizing the special status of the scientific name does not mean we have to ditch

all the wonderful names by which a kind of life has been called. However, while Linnaeus himself was not a bionym imperialist, in the sense of wanting to replace local names with scientific names, his imperial gaze does imply the imperial enterprise. I would not adopt the extreme position that any influence, imperial or otherwise, is automatically wrong, but I am of course well aware that the imperial enterprise poses a threat to local flora and fauna. Introduced foreign species may eventually become invasive, outcompeting local species. The introduction of foreign species was studied most famously in *The Columbian Exchange* (2003) by Alfred Crosby, who paired import with export to claim that there was botanical give and take in the encounter between Columbian Europe and Aztec America. However, Crosby also noted significant casualties of exchange: many species suffered extinction as a result of the visits of Columbus and others.

Crosby's study can be generalized: people move around and bring species with them, species that may displace endemic species in the places they visit. According to the "out-of-Taiwan hypothesis" of Austronesian cultural dispersal, for instance, the indigenous peoples of Taiwan took the pig and the paper mulberry everywhere from Madagascar to Easter Island (Bellwood 1979; Chang et al. 2015). It might seem strange to say so, but the Austronesian introduction of the pig and the paper mulberry to islands big and small from Madagascar to Easter Island seems somehow imperialistic. Even so, it has nothing to do with capitalism; more contemporary examples, by contrast, have everything to do with capitalism. There is, for instance, a "collusion between public and private" (*kuan-shang kou-chieh*) behind the planting of community parks in Taiwan with trendy imported plants—like *Plumeria alba*, named Plumeria after Charles Plumier, who "discovered" it in the 1690s, and frangipani, after a mythical Columbian botanist invented by a late nineteenth-century perfumist (Kettler 2015)—in order to line the pockets of bureaucrats and horticulturalists.[9] While these plants may originally have been extracted by imperialists, they are now exploited by capitalists. Botanical imperialists and capitalists in East Asia are also well studied, people like George Thomas Staunton (Fan 2004) and Ernest Henry Wilson (Spongberg 1990). Such people spread attractive plants around the world, so that everywhere you go you see the same ornamental plants in the local landscaping, just as you tend to see the same weeds in the local landscape. Horse-whip herb is a case in point. It and the other three plants that Huang Chun-ming mentions are weeds.

6.3 Sustaining Bionym Diversity Through Translation

While as translators we can hardly directly address the threat to ecological diversity posed by imperialism and capitalism (or by inadvertent introductions like the zebra mussel into the Great Lakes), we can at least strive to uphold the value of bionymic diversity, which might offer us indirect assistance as we try to solve or mitigate environmental problems. This is in fact my thesis in this chapter, that translators *should* do their part to maintain terminological diversity by balancing the local and the global, the common and the scientific in translations of bionyms. More specifically, the translator should consider translating the local name literally, either as a loanword or as a calque, where a loanword captures the sound, a calque the meaning, of the original. In other words, there are two kinds of literal translation, sonic and semantic. In translation studies, literal translation, whether sonic or semantic, is termed foreignization and regarded as a way of drawing the reader closer to the original. The opposite of foreignization is domestication, which substitutes a term in the target language with which the reader is familiar. If the reader is not familiar with the common bionym, domestication is not an option, but in that case supplying the reader with what was once a common, familiar bionym gives him or her an opportunity to familiarize himself or herself with the lifeform and its nomenclature.

The lifeform is the scientific side of the issue, its nomenclature the cultural side. In the translation studies literature, the translation of bionyms is often regarded mainly as a cultural challenge. The translator is supposed to consider the cultural significance of a plant in the original and the target languages and adapt accordingly (Rydén 1983). It should go without saying that the translator should be sensitive to cultural context, and part of my purpose in this chapter is to argue that the sound and sense of the bionym itself is part of its cultural significance: perhaps vervain was actually used as a makeshift horsewhip back in the day. But I am also arguing that the meaning of a plant in a work of modern literature depends on what exactly it is scientifically. As a kind of specialized translator, the modern ecotranslator therefore has a professional responsibility to know the scientific side of the issue, to appreciate, for instance, that the cherries in Anton Chekhov's cherry orchard were *Prunus cerasus*. It was, in other words, a "sour cherry orchard" (Osimo 2013), a translation that, it just so happens, better fits the tragicomedy

of the play. It often happens that a scientific perspective makes a literary translation more effective. Ecotranslators' principles like representing nature as possessing agency if the original work does and trying to hear "the voice of nature" (Badanes and Coisson 2015: 356 *et passim*) have their place in the literary translator's toolkit, but they are no substitute for knowledge of nature, without which any claim to love nature sounds rather hollow.

I should also distinguish my approach to ecotranslation from the school of translation studies calling itself eco-translatology. This school, which developed in China, attempts to apply concepts from biology, not just ecology but also evolution, to explain how terms and translations are selected in competitive markets (Hu 2011). In other words, it is a descriptive theory with a pseudo-scientific vocabulary. Michael Cronin's approach, by contrast, is prescriptive in his recent monograph *Eco-Translation* (2017), in which he exhorts translators to work out of an awareness of the ecological challenges our planet faces today. To Cronin's exhortation, I would like to add my own imperative to anyone who is translating bionyms: pause to do a bit of research and sample the diversity of nomenclature, including scientific name(s) and common names, then translate the diversity. The translation of this diversity by a translator who loves it might encourage readers to treasure it more.

6.4 Translating the Name of a Fig with Wu Ming-Yi

My imperative to translate the diversity may seem overly demanding for a writer like Huang Chun-ming, but with a nature writer like Wu Ming-yi, it is not demanding at all. Huang, I think, was reacting inchoately to the problematic I have been exploring in this chapter: technologies, including the bicycle and the scooter, have separated people from nature, have excluded wilderness from daily life, such that many modern people, including many who profess to love nature, have little familiarity with it or knowledge of it. But since Huang does not really pay that much attention to nature or its nomenclature, the translator who wants to take the opportunity to educate the reader has to supplement. With Wu Ming-yi, by contrast, the educational objective is in the text; Wu often explains the ecology of a species and its nomenclature in several different languages, so that a polyglot ecotranslator can just follow along.

In his early essays, which he published in the early 2000s, Wu tries to educate the audience, for instance by placing a tourist destination in historical ecological perspective. In "The Compass of the Soul," his essay on Mei-nung (Wu 2018b), the hometown of the late nativist writer Chung Li-ho, Wu explains why a single species of butterfly, the lemon migrant (*Catopsilia pomona*), thrives there. Because of the groves of iron-sword trees (*Senna siamea*) that were planted by the Japanese to yield wood for gunstocks.[10] Why iron-sword trees? Because they are fast-growing and produce a hard wood with enough flexibility to contain recoil. That they attracted lemon migrant butterflies was an ironic bonus, ironic because it was unexpected. What shall we do about such ecological ironies? While Huang Chun-ming seems to resist modernity and to wish to restore the good old days, Wu Ming-yi asserts that "any kind of restoration is change." The way is thus forward, toward a better environment for life, both human and non-human. Such an environment would be diverse, for Wu declares a preference for mixed stands of trees that would be home to a wide variety of butterflies.

In educating the reader about environmental variation, Wu can seem a bit demanding, because he gets technical. He considers the status of three varieties of lemon migrant—lemon-yellow, silver-dot, and ochre-dot—with reference to E. O. Wilson's 1953 co-authored academic attack on the notion of subspecies, "The Subspecies Concept and Its Taxonomic Application" (Wilson and Brown 1953). According to this article, any species has a clear definition, the free-interbreeding criterion—that members of a species interbreed freely—but any subdivision based on observed features is arbitrary, because it depends on what features one chooses to or is able to observe (Wilson and Brown 1953: 99). As Wu notes, Wilson later reconsidered his attack and came to accept the utility of the concept of subspecies as a way of referring to distinct populations of a species whose genetic status was in doubt (see Lott 2015, citing Wilson 1992 and 1995). Wu's reflection on Wilson's attack and its reconsideration achieves several aims. It informs the reader that scientific understanding is in flux, not fixed, because the objects of knowledge are constantly changing, and, even at any given point in time, the members of a species display variation that scientists can categorize in different ways. Wu's main thesis in the essay can be expressed in terms of variation: it would be better to see more variation in the surroundings, in both senses of the term "see." In other words, Wu thinks it would be better for the environment to be more diverse and for us to discriminate more diversity.

Wu's predilection for diversity also applies to nomenclature, to all the terms we use to discriminate diversity. Take *Catopsilia pomona*, for instance. To Wu, the common name in English, lemon migrant, "sounds as if a certain color has gone wandering." Wu also notes that the genus name *Catopsilia* (which means smooth underside, because the butterfly has relatively few scales on its wings) is in the PRC termed "mobile scales." He mentions these things because he finds them evocative and educational, and hopes the reader does, too, in addition to appreciating the understated Mandarin bionym "pale-yellow." The only kind of bionym Wu seems not to like is more about personal or imperial glorification than about the description of a plant or an elicitation of its cultural significance. In another essay, "Koxinga" (Wu 2018a), Wu reflects on a subspecies of butterfly named by German insect trader Hans Fruhstorfer after Koxinga (Kok-sìng-iâ in Taiwanese, Kuo-hsing-yeh in Mandarin), the conqueror of Taiwan. He named the subspecies after Koxinga, because Kuo-hsing Township is where the type specimen was taken. The full name is *Euploea tulliolus koxinga* Fruhstorfer. The common term in Chinese is little purplespot, and in English it is called the dwarf crow. Though naming the creature at all is in some sense imperialistic (for what name would the butterflies themselves use?), Wu's perspective is nevertheless anti-imperial. Why should Fruhstorfer, who never set foot in Taiwan, be allowed to name it after the conqueror Koxinga, who never visited the township named after him?

Wu's anti-imperial perspective does not, however, entail an extreme nativism. Wu is only rejecting a certain approach to the naming of lifeforms, not rejecting the lifeforms themselves. Though he may have a special place in his heart for vulnerable endemic species, he is welcoming toward newcomers, whether short-term visitors or naturalized residents.[11] His accommodating attitude is most evident in his novel *The Man with the Compound Eyes* (Wu 2013), in which I counted fifty-six kinds of life, not including human beings. Wu's novel is populated by species that represent Taiwan, like the Taiwan long-armed scarab (*Cheirotonus formosanus* Ohaus) that Toto sees right before he dies (Wu 2013: 286). But these species share the island with numerous naturalized species that can be found all over Asia or all around the world, like the common scarab Alice finds on the dash of her car (Wu 2013: 21).

Wu's attitude to people is similarly welcoming. The character who knows the island flora and fauna best is Atile'i, an aborigine from another island, which is to say a foreigner, one who can recognize all the birds in

the vicinity at a glance (Wu 2013: 214). The local indigenous woman Hafay knows the wild food plants almost as well as Atile'i, but their practical indigenous knowledge is complemented by the scientific understanding of Sara, a Norwegian ocean biologist who has come to the island to study the impact of the trash piled on the beach on marine ecology. Indeed, part of the point of the novel is to introduce aspects of Taiwan ecology. Alice asks her friend Ming—the author Wu Ming-yi's avatar in the novel—for advice about what to plant outside her seaside house to attract butterflies (2013: 53). She is asking at once about plant-environment and plant-insect interactions, in other words about the kinds of interaction that create the network of connections that is any ecosystem.

Wu also tries to educate readers about bionyms in his novels, as in the naming of a kind of tree that is symbolic of ecosystemic connection: fig trees. In *The Man with the Compound Eyes*, the *pai-jung* is symbolic of ecological interconnection, because a single tree can, by means of prop roots, form a grove that is actually a single individual. At first I translated *pai-jung* as albino banyan. I could also have rendered it as white fig, because a banyan is a kind of fig, a species in the genus *Ficus*. I chose albino banyan simply because the rarity of albino made it sound more poetic to my ear and because I thought *jung* was banyan. In other words, I did not know at the time that a banyan is a kind of fig. (Actually, any fig that starts out as an epiphyte, a plant that grows on another plant, can be called a banyan.)

Now how should white fig or albino banyan be categorized in terms of the translation strategies mentioned above, sonic and semantic, literal and free, foreignizing and domesticating? Both ignore the sound of *pai-jung*, and are therefore semantic. White and albino are both literal translations of the sense of the descriptive part of the bionym and are foreignizing. Fig and banyan are arguably literal translations of the sense of the purely biological part of the bionym, but they are familiar. The only way to foreignize in this case is to treat *jung* as a loanword and translate the sound.

In the translation of this bionym, I educated myself about the cultural and scientific background, and considered various literal options, to try to live up to my manifesto. But ultimately, my manifesto is more a flexible guideline than an iron rule, and in this case I did not foreignize, because it did not make the most literary sense. I looked up the scientific name, *Ficus benjamina* L. According to the *Flora of North America*, Linnaeus was thinking about its economic use: "The name probably refers to the supposed relation of the plant to the source of a resin or benzoin procured from the Orient in antiquity."[12] *Benjamina* is the feminine form of

Benjamin (to agree with the gender of *Ficus*). This is not to say this Benjamin is a girl. It is not the name of a person at all, but rather the name of a resin. Benjamin is actually a domestication of the Arabic for the substance, *lubān jāwī*, meaning frankincense from Java. This etymology, though fascinating, did not turn out to be important to my translation: I went with the most common name in English, weeping fig. It is so called because its aerial roots dangle to such an extent it appears to weep. That its aerial roots dangle is why the species is called "hanging fig" (*seoi*^{4}*-jung*^{4}) in Hong Kong. I opted for weeping fig for several reasons. First, because the weeping fig is a reasonably common house and hedge plant, so that English readers might have some chance of knowing it by that name. Secondly, because weeping associates much more readily with death than the color white (which is in the Mandarin bionym "white fig" because it is the color of the wood). This tree is associated with death because one of its branches fell on the character Anu's son Lien's head, killing him instantly. And Lien's death is associated with the theme of interconnectedness by the notion that in some sense, Lien (whose name I should have spelled Vilian, the official Bunun spelling) lives on in the whole of which he was a distinct part when he was alive.

Out of a commitment to nomenclatural diversity, Wu names the tree again. The tree is named once more in the novel because it grows in a Bunun indigenous community, the village of which Anu is the chief. This tree has a Bunun name, Vavakalun, a single word that, as explained in the novel, means a tree that can walk.[13] As the narrative explains, the Bunun people once took them as territorial markers, but then they noticed that the markers had a tendency to move. Out of my own commitment to diversity, and out of sheer curiosity, I wondered how Vavakalun was translated into other languages in other translations of the novel. In Gwennaël Gaffric's French, it was "*les arbres marchant*" (the trees that walk) and "*figuiers pleureurs*" (crying figs). In other words, Gaffric did as I did. In Pavlína Krámská's Czech, it is "*strom, který dokáže chodit*" (the tree that is able to walk) and "*bílá fíkovník drobnolistý*," where *bílá* means white, *fíkovník* fig, and *drobnolistý* tiny. In other words, Krámská added the white in the common name in Mandarin to the common name for *Ficus benjamina* in Czech, adding a foreignizing touch.

In two cases in *The Stolen Bicycle* (Wu 2017), Wu merely refers to "giant *jung* trees," a genus-level designation which I translated as banyan. The first case is at a temple, the Hall of Holy Mother Matsu, where the narrator's father takes a rest. This, Wu reports to me by email, is an

"upright banyan," an Indian laurel fig. The second is the massive banyan tree that served as a fortress for Li K'e and his men against a Japanese onslaught in northern Burma. It is obviously reminiscent of the Vavakalun, a figure for the interconnected natural world, for the tree is home not just to humans but also to a multiplicity of flora and fauna on which the humans depend. According to Wu Ming-yi (again, by email), this tree in northern Burma may well be a Vavakalun, a white weeping fig that can walk. It is apparently a real tree, the setting for a real battle in northern Burma in 1945. One wonders why Wu did not name these two trees more specifically than *jung*. Probably because the characters only knew it on that level. At any rate, since Wu generalized, I decided to generalize in my translation, too.

In the naming of another species of fig tree in *The Stolen Bicycle*, however, Wu insists on specificity. The first time this tree appears it is called the birdcrap banyan in Taiwanese (Wu 2017: 18). Starting from the age of eight, the narrator grew just like a birdcrap banyan. In a bracketed in-text note, Wu informs us that the birdcrap banyan is called the sparrow banyan in Mandarin. It is a tree whose figs attract sparrows, with an obvious connection to crap. The scientific name is *Ficus superba*, *superba* because it is a keystone species, a species that is an ecosystem unto itself. In English, it is commonly called a "deciduous fig," because it sheds its leaves in the spring. Here, in the first chapter, I translated it as "birdcrap banyan," with "sparrow banyan" in brackets, reserving "deciduous fig" (Wu 2017: 376) for my translator's note at the end of the novel. In the fifth chapter, however, the deciduous fig makes another appearance, as the *yono* (Wu 2017: 141), which in Wu's Chinese text is treated as a loanword and glossed as a sacred tree of the Tsou people. An online Tsou dictionary identifies the *yono* as a sparrow banyan. It may seem ironic that the birdcrap banyan of the Taiwanese is the sacred tree of the Tsou, but as Julia Kristeva argued, shit has something in common with the sacred. Perhaps the banyan is a key to the interpretation of Wu's novels, in which he is trying to probe "the border of [his] condition as a living being" (Kristeva 1982: 3), to get readers to think beyond themselves.

6.5 Conclusion

At the beginning of the first chapter of *The Stolen Bicycle*, Wu's narrator declares a passion for bicycles and their nomenclature. After listing the word for bicycle in half a dozen of the world's languages, he states that

when it comes to bicycles he is a "polyglot" (Wu 2017: 8). In this chapter I have tried to show that when it comes to bionyms Wu tends to be trilingual, and I have argued that the ecotranslator of bionyms should be polyglot. With my translator's note to *The Stolen Bicycle* there are four translations of *Ficus superba*, and with the French and Czech translations of *The Man with the Compound Eyes*, there are five translations of *Ficus benjamina*. Three or four is already an impressive number, when editors and readers usually prefer one. Wu and his translators challenge us to learn various different bionyms. One purpose behind their challenge is to maintain terminological diversity. Diversity in ecology is insurance against cataclysms that might wipe out all the individuals in a species if they are too genetically similar, which might in turn disturb an ecosystem. Having titled my chapter ecotranslation and argued that Wu Ming-yi educates the reader about ecosystems, I wonder now if there is a bionymic ecology analogous to natural ecology, wherein it would behoove us to maintain nomenclatural diversity, just as diversity in nature is the source of the resilience of nature.

The analogy should not be pressed too far, because words are not alive in the same way as organisms are, and they do not depend on one another the way that organisms depend on one another. But like organisms in an ecosystem, words are related to each other systematically by virtue of language. Just as there are different ecosystems in nature, each language is a different ecosystem, where the words relate to each other in different ways and to the world in different ways. Each literary work, too, is like an ecosystem that might let us see new connections in the world, including the world of nature, in potentially enlightening ways. In Arnhem Land in Australia, the word for a white apple tree is *bokorn*, as is the name of the fish that eats its fruits when they fall into billabongs. "Once we go over to calling the *bokorn* fish a 'spangled grunter,'" comments Richard Evans, "and the *bokorn* tree a 'white apple,' our words no longer deliver the ecological link between them" (2009: 22). It is these kinds of links that form any living system, links we might not perceive if we do not have the right words. It is these same kinds of links that a literary work is composed of, or that any attempt to make meaning of the world is composed of. It is impoverishing to translate in a way that fails to deliver these links, which educate us about nature in its complexities and the complexities of our relationships to it. And if translation delivers these links it is enriching, because it adds spangled grunter, which tells us something new about the *bokung*, as does white apple, as do *Ficus superba*, birdcrap banyan, sparrow banyan, deciduous fig, and *yono* about the tree they collectively name.

Indigenous peoples of Arnhem Land, Taiwan, and all over the world have something else to teach us about nature and how we can relate to it in their practices of naming. In the scientific worldview, plants and animals and minerals are objects of knowledge for a scientist to describe objectively, not in terms of his or her relation to them. But like it or not, the scientist has some relationship to what he or she studies, and the scientist's relation to nature often plays into a culturally specific attitude in which plants, animals, and minerals are mere objects, resources to be exploited. As Wu Ming-yi, along with anthropologists of human-nature relations like Philippe Descola (2013), remind us, indigenous peoples relate to the natural world in other ways. Descola is aware that to speak of "the indigenous worldview" is an oversimplification; his four-term typology of naturalism, animism, analogism, and totemism (2013: 233) is a reminder of the diversity of attitudes to nature in indigenous cultures. Yet we naturalists, who tend to treat everything non-human as an object (2013: 392), can recognize that the animists, the analogists and the totemists have something in common: they treat animals and plants and even non-living things as persons.

I therefore call on modern ecotranslators to test the personal approach by using bionyms in new ways. Scientists use bionyms to refer to species, as in "This is a weeping fig." Of course, indigenous people can do the same, as in "This is a Vavakalun." But we know from our everyday social experience that there is another way to use a name: to address someone in various ways, by way of greeting, praising, commanding, disparaging, and so forth. In social interaction, we use someone's proper name. We sometimes assign proper names to non-human creatures, like the General Sherman tree, but we might do so more widely. Alternatively, we might use categorical names to address individual members of a category, as in "Hello, weeping fig." To do so is to ascribe something like personhood to the organism in question. To ascribe something like personhood to a non-human organism transcends the naturalist worldview in which we humans are subjects in an object world that we can understand the better to manipulate it. Trying to imagine the human-plant or human-animal encounter interpersonally will at least make us more sensitive translators. Ecotranslators who try this perspective will be more likely to notice when their authors adopt it.

It stands to reason that nature writers are more likely to adopt it. Huang Chun-ming never treats the flower whose name he waits for as a person, but Wu Ming-yi's narrative does occasionally ascribe personhood to ani-

mals, plants, and non-living things, referring to "the tricks the wind and the trees play" (Wu 2017: 147). And Anu in *The Man with the Compound Eyes* addresses the spirit of the mountain to show his respect (2013: 259). In his essays, Wu Ming-yi at least once addresses a butterfly, "tiger butterfly of mine" (Wu 2015: 17). When we are prepared to address plants as people, we might well start to hear what Badanes and Coisson (2015) call the voice of nature.

Meanwhile, we are *still* waiting for another name besides riffraff flower for the wild, blooming beauty Huang Chun-ming waited by.

Notes

1. Etymologically, nativism suggests birth, and was first used in 1845 of an anti-immigrant, American-by-birth movement in the United States. In literary studies, it refers to literary movements that have reacted in various ways against modernity. One such movement is the nativist movement of Taiwan, where nativist translates into *hsiang-t'u*, literally "rural (or homeland) soil." For Taiwan's nativism and its links to German *heimat* or homeland literature, see Lupke 2016.

   A note on Romanization: with a view to preserving diversity in the spelling of Chinese languages, I have adopted a modified Wade-Giles Romanization for Mandarin. For Taiwanese I follow the recommended Romanization of Taiwan's Ministry of Education.
2. http://tai2.ntu.edu.tw/PlantInfo/species-name.php?code=521%20014%2001%200
3. This gazette is the 164th text in the *T'ai-wan wen-hsien ts'ung-k'an* (1961), searchable at Academia Sinica at http://hanji.sinica.edu.tw/index.html
4. For an anthropological perspective on personal connections to plants and animals, with examples of common names from the indigenous language Taroko (also known as Truku), see Simon 2017, Accessed 2018.
5. See Cook 2010 for a defense of Linnaeus against the charge of linguistic imperialism.
6. *Verbena officinalis* L. only has one scientific name, but others go by many names, because there may be superseded terms that remain in use as synonyms. There are, for instance, twelve synonyms for *Senna siamea.*
7. I have referred to https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Verbena_officinalis, which lists the sources for this representation of the place of this species in the tree of life.
8. The type specimen, technically the lectotype (so called because it was not chosen by Linnaeus, the namer of the species, himself), is located in the

George Clifford Herbarium, now in the Natural History Museum in London. The database can be searched by inputting the genus and species names: http://www.nhm.ac.uk/research-curation/scientific-resources/collections/botanical-collections/clifford-herbarium/database/index.dsml

9. For the use of the term collusion, and for the specific examples, I am indebted to Jerome Su, the Chairman of Bookman Books and my mentor in all things botanical.
10. Note that I supply no common English name, because none exist, unless cassod or kassod seem common to enough people. This is another common issue of ecotranslation, that the places where the species is common are not English-speaking.
11. For a history of American bionativism, in which foreign species become symbolic of foreign peoples, see Coates 2006. For a critique of the bionativism in Taiwan, see the documentary *Exotic Exoticism* (Liu Chi-hsiung 2007).
12. http://www.efloras.org/florataxon.aspx?flora_id=1&taxon_id=200006350
13. The morphology of the word Vavakalun seems to be *va-vakal-un*, where *va-* is probably "habitual reduplication" (Rik De Busser, private communication), *vakal* the leg of an animal, and *-un* a passive focus marker, probably indicating that the noun is derived from a verb.

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