

International
Symposium
At NTNU



One Out of Many Environmental Humanities for a Singular Pluriverse

Date: October 31, 2026 (Saturday), 9:50am–5:30pm

Venue:

台北市雲和街1號

Yun 201, Department of English

Yunhe Teaching Building, 2F 雲和教學大樓 英語系201

National Taiwan Normal University 國立臺灣師範大學

Organized by  **NSTC** 國家科學及技術委員會
National Science and Technology Council



文學院

Table of Contents

Schedule	01
Introduction	02
Keynote 1	04
Panel 1	06
Keynote 2	10
Panel 2	11
Panel 3	14



Schedule

01

Time	Description
9:30-9:50	Registration
9:50-10:00	Opening Ceremony
10:00-10:50	Keynote 1 / Moderator: Joan Chiung-huei Chang (National Taiwan Normal University) Eva Horn (University of Vienna) "Gaia and Ghosts: The Re-Enchantment of the World in the Anthropocene"
10:50-11:00	Coffee Break
11:00-12:30	Panel 1 / Moderator: William Ng (National Taiwan Normal University) Yih-Ren Lin and Pagung Tomi (Taipei National University of the Arts / National Cheng-chi University) "Millet Homing: A Multi-species Perspective of Tayal Peoples's Storied Residence" Kathryn Yalan Chang (National Taitung University) "Vegetal Epistemology and Institutional Abstraction: Naming, Labor, and Scale in Ling Fu and Li Bao-lian's Writing of Disturbed Landscapes" Mucahid Mustafa Bayrak (National Taiwan Normal University) "A Political Ecological Framework of Climate Change Adaptation and Climate Mobilities in the Vietnamese Mekong Delta (and Beyond)"
12:30-13:30	Lunch Break
13:30-14:20	Keynote 2 / Moderator: Hannes Bergthaller (National Taiwan Normal University) Greg Garrard (University of British Columbia) "A Secular Reading of Canadian Indigenous Fiction"
14:20-14:40	Tea Break
14:40-15:40	Panel 2 / Moderator: Julian Yang (National Taiwan Normal University) William Yau-nang Ng (National Taiwan Normal University) "One Compassion, Many Ways of Flourishing: Rethinking Animal Release in Contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism through the Capabilities Approach" Julian Chih-wei Yang (National Taiwan Normal University) "Toward Multispecies Entanglement: An Aesthetic Ethics of Care and Absorption in Wu Ming-Yi's Midie zhi (The Book of Lost Butterflies)"
15:40-16:40	Panel 3 / Moderator: Joan Chang (National Taiwan Normal University) Joan Chiung-huei Chang (National Taiwan Normal University) "One Out of Many: Poetic Worlding in Shirley Geok-lin Lim's 'This Land' Sequences" Hannes Bergthaller (National Taiwan Normal University) "One Planet and a Singular Modernity: Thinking World Society in the Anthropocene"
16:40-16:50	Break
16:50-17:30	Roundtable Discussion: NSTC Collaboration Project Moderator: Hannes Bergthaller (National Taiwan Normal University)

The principal challenge for the environmental humanities in the current moment is how to reconcile the obligatory universalism of ecological crisis with the irremediable pluralism of cultures.

Earth system science and related disciplines in the natural sciences depict a planet-wide crisis of habitability which threatens humanity in its entirety. Human actions are propelling the planet towards a “Hothouse Earth” scenario: an Earth that will be warmer than at any time during the past 1.2 million years (i.e. the Late Quaternary period during which our species evolved), more biologically impoverished, and much less hospitable to human life (Steffen et al. 2018). Avoiding such an outcome, they argue, will require the kind of unified, collective response which international organizations like the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have been trying to muster since the 1990s. The Utopian endpoint of such efforts would be the constitution of humanity as a single political subject capable of steering the Earth system.

Humanities scholars have generally reacted to these ideas with great skepticism. Some environmental historians view them as providing intellectual cover for a global power grab by technocratic elites (Bonneuil and Frescoz 2016, 89). Political ecologists have pointed out that programs for climate change mitigation have regularly facilitated the expropriation of subsistence farmers (Fairhead 2012). From the vantage point of decolonial thinkers, the new planetary politics looks like another chapter in the history of colonialism and capitalist globalization, which likewise relied on universalizing forms of knowing and acting on the world. They insist that only a radical break with globalized industrial modernity can halt the slide towards planetary catastrophe. The lifeways of indigenous and non-modern peoples, they argue, point the way towards a “transition from the hegemony of modernity’s one-world ontology to a pluriverse of socionatural configurations” (Escobar 2018, 4). This is as much a pragmatic as a political objection: solutions imposed by fiat from centers of global power not only tend to disenfranchise local populations but are also often insensitive to the complexities of conditions ‘on the ground’ and thus liable to produce perverse outcomes. As Julia Adeney Thomas writes, “megascala projects gone wrong are much harder to correct than smaller-scale, more locally controlled schemes” (Thomas 2022, 73).

Dipesh Chakrabarty encapsulates the dilemma in a pithy phrase: *One Planet, Many Worlds* (2023). The impulse to place humanity within a single, planetary frame stands in open contradiction to concurrent efforts to rehabilitate ways of worlding that have been cast aside by industrial modernity. Both are equally necessary and legitimate – and yet both are also fraught with danger. The environmental humanities contain this contradiction already in their very name: the concept of “the environment” points towards a scientific, universally valid account of biophysical processes; the “humanities,” by contrast, take the plurality of human cultures in all their historical and geographical particularity as their necessary starting point. Borrowing a phrase from Tim Ingold, we find ourselves in a “singular pluriverse” (Ingold et al. 2024: 196), a world that is both one *and* many, and that can only be grasped through the continuous interplay of these countervailing tendencies.

How then are we to address this contradiction? Chakrabarty suggests that rather than aim for a general formula that would resolve it once and for all, we should attend to particular instances where the conflicting drives for universality and particularity are successfully reconciled. He singles out Robin Wall Kimmerer’s *Braiding Sweetgrass* (2013), in which she brings together her expertise as a scientifically trained botanist with her Anishinaabe heritage and demonstrates the “ongoing dialectic between concepts and stories” (Chakrabarty 2023, 100). Her work is thus an example of what Chakrabarty calls “kin-making across different knowledge-practices” (ibid., 101).

The title of our workshop points to this strategy of thinking by way of examples. “One out of many” translates the famous national motto of the United States: *e pluribus unum* has usually been taken to suggest the merger of particular identities into a singular, universal order. This comes with a temporal index: the direction of travel is from the many to the one, from particularity towards enlightened universality. This is the narrative logic of the story which Earth system scientists like to tell about our common future. In the English translation, however, a different meaning comes to the fore which both contains and supplements that of the original Latin phrase: “one” here stands not only for the necessary endpoint of a historical movement but also for a representative case, a “one” that may represent a larger tendency but nonetheless remains irreducibly particular, fractious, and heteroclit.

Keynote 1

“Gaia and Ghosts: The Re-Enchantment of the World in the Anthropocene”

Eva Horn (University of Vienna)

In light of the profound transformations of the Earth system in the Anthropocene, non-Western and Indigenous cosmologies and ontologies have increasingly been proposed as alternatives to the worldview of the Global North (Descola, Viveros de Castro). The lecture asks what this might mean in concrete terms. Can Gaia theory, which is central to the concept of the Anthropocene, be brought into dialogue with Indigenous conceptions of animate beings and spirits? What are spirits in Western and Indigenous worldviews, and how can they be addressed and represented? Is the animist conception of a ‘personal’ and relational nature suitable as the basis for a new understanding of the world in the Anthropocene? The talk will discuss some of these questions.





Panel 1-1

“Millet Homing: A Multi-species Perspective of Tayal Peoples’s Storied Residence”

Yih-Ren Lin (Taipei National University of the Arts) &
Pagung Tomi (National Cheng-chi University)

This article develops the concept of millet homing through a decade of collaborative, place-based action research at Hbun Pehwan, the confluence of the Pehwan Creek, today known as the Tbahu community, in the northern highlands of Taiwan. Working from the intertwined perspectives of a Tayal researcher-practitioner and an ecological-humanities scholar, it asks what returns when foxtail millet (trakis) is planted again after decades of agricultural and cultural displacement. We argue that what is restored is not simply a crop, a seed collection, or an archive of traditional knowledge. Millet homing reactivates a storied residence in which land, seeds, weather, plants, animals, ancestors, ritual, language, kinship, and collective labour are continuously made answerable to one another.

The article is grounded in sustained participation in field preparation, sowing, thinning, bird-scaring, harvesting, seed saving, ritual practice, oral-history work, ecological observation, and intergenerational teaching. It brings these experiences into conversation with the Tayal concept of guqi: a place previously used, inhabited, cultivated, and marked by the traces of those who lived there. Rather than denoting a bounded territory or an inherited property, guqi names a mobile homeland formed through ancestral migration, pauses, work, care, memory, and renewed dwelling. Hbun Pehwan is therefore approached not as a passive research site but as a living, storied residence whose meanings are continually generated through relations among human and other-than-human beings.



A multi-species perspective illuminates how millet revitalization depends on more than human intention. Differently named millet varieties respond unevenly to soil moisture, slope, wind, rainfall, insects, birds, and seasonal change. Weeds may become mulch or competitors; ants may carry seeds away; birds require deterrence without being rendered enemies; bamboo, stone walls, companion crops, and fallowed land participate in sustaining cultivation. Such relations are not merely background conditions for agricultural production. They are teachers of timing, restraint, reciprocity, and attentiveness. Through repeated success, failure, adjustment, and narration, farming knowledge grows as a situated capacity to perceive and respond rather than as a fixed body of rules transmitted intact from the past.

Millet homing thus reframes revitalization as a practice of reinhabitation. It does not seek to recover an untouched tradition or return to a single origin. Instead, it reconnects elders' memories, gaga, ritual obligations, Tayal language, family care, and collective work with contemporary ecological uncertainties and livelihood pressures. This process makes visible an ethics of care in which cultivation means helping multiple beings and relations continue to grow. In this sense, homing is a method of renewing obligations among species, places, and generations. The article concludes that safeguarding Tayal millet knowledge requires more than conserving seeds or documenting ceremonies: it requires sustaining the material, social, and ecological conditions through which a homeland can be lived, narrated, and remade across generations.

Panel 1-2

“Vegetal Epistemology and Institutional Abstraction: Naming, Labor, and Scale in Ling Fu and Li Bao-lian’s Writing of Disturbed Landscapes”

Kathryn Yalan Chang (National Taitung University)

My project examines how literary writing preserves forms of plant knowledge that standardized systems of classification and governance may not fully retain. It focuses on two Taiwanese writers, Ling Fu and Li Bao-lian, whose works describe disturbed landscapes such as roadsides, abandoned fields, garden margins, and high mountain orchards. Rather than treating literature as an alternative to science or administration, I ask what kinds of seasonal, sensory, embodied, relational, and locally specific knowledge become difficult to record when plants, land, and time are translated into standardized categories.

I describe this process as institutional abstraction. Year One focuses on Ling Fu’s writings on wild greens and everyday plants, reading her practices of recognition and naming alongside colonial plant catalogues, *Icones Plantarum Formosandarum*, herbarium labels, and contemporary taxonomy. Year Two turns to Li Bao-lian’s writing on orchard cultivation, examining grafting, pollination, fruit thinning, pest management, and land use decisions alongside phenological data, agricultural records, and slope land governance.

By comparing literary knowledge with institutional forms of abstraction, the project explores how environmental knowledge moves between general categories and particular places. It offers a concrete approach to the tension between the ‘one’ and the ‘many’ at the center of the workshop.



Panel 1–3

“A Political Ecological Framework of Climate Change Adaptation and Climate Mobilities in the Vietnamese Mekong Delta (and Beyond)”

Mucahid Mustafa Bayrak (National Taiwan Normal University)

The global climate crisis poses serious challenges for coastal and deltaic communities worldwide. Many of these vulnerable communities, already contending with multiple stressors, shocks, and long-standing social inequalities, must find ways to cope and adapt. In many mainstream academic and policy discourses, out-migration, particularly from rural to urban areas, is portrayed either as a failure to adapt or as an adaptation strategy in itself. Against this backdrop, this paper focuses on the Vietnamese Mekong Delta (VMD) and critically examines how climate change, adaptation, and human mobility intersect in the lives of smallholder farmers and migrants. As the drivers of environmental and social change in the VMD are multiple and not all directly linked to climate change, I argue that a meaningful way to understand the impacts of climate change on adaptation and mobility is not to seek simple causal relationships but to embrace complexity. This approach connects the lived experiences of rural and urban households with broader processes of change, including intensified drought, salinization, severe land subsidence, sea-level rise, erosion, rapid urbanization, the COVID-19 pandemic, and transboundary challenges such as upstream hydropower development, illegal mining, and the political economy of agricultural value chains. Dominant discourses on climate change adaptation further shape how Vietnamese smallholders navigate these intertwined challenges. This paper presents a conceptual framework, situated in the context of the Vietnamese Mekong Delta, for analyzing climate change impacts, adaptation, and mobility through a political ecology lens.



Keynote 2

“A Secular Reading of Canadian Indigenous Fiction”

Greg Garrard (University of British Columbia)

In *Ktunaxa Nation vs British Columbia* (2017), the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the province did not violate Ktunaxa’s right to freedom of religion under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms when it approved a proposed ski resort in the Jumbo Valley, known to the Ktunaxa as Qat’muk, in the Kootenays region. While the court recognized the spiritual significance of the mountain to the Ktunaxa, the majority asserted that the Charter protects expressions of religious belief, but not sacred objects. Just as the Ktunaxa invoked the supernatural agency of the Grizzly Bear Spirit in their lawsuit, many Canadian Indigenous fictions incorporate supernatural agency into their plots. How should non-Indigenous Canadians, citizens of a secular, multicultural society, interpret such agency? This initial response seeks to open a new, more questioning, strand of analysis of Canadian Indigenous fiction.



Panel 2-1

“One Compassion, Many Ways of Flourishing: Rethinking Animal Release in Contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism through the Capabilities Approach”

William Yau-nang Ng (National Taiwan Normal University)

This paper proposes to examine a problem at the intersection of Buddhist ethics and the environmental humanities: how can a universal commitment to compassion remain responsive to the irreducible differences among forms of life? The question speaks directly to the workshop’s concern with the tension between ecological universalism and the plurality of worlds, while extending that tension into a multispecies register.

The paper will focus on animal release (fangsheng) in contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism, especially within the context of Humanistic Buddhism and the life ethics of Shih Chao-hwei. Her work on sentience, dependent arising, protection of life, contextual judgment, and scientific knowledge offers an important Buddhist framework for thinking about moral concern beyond the human. Bringing this framework into dialogue with Martha Nussbaum’s Capabilities Approach and recent Taiwanese discussions of animal justice, I will explore whether equal moral concern should require differentiated forms of care according to species-specific, individual, and ecological conditions of flourishing. Animal release provides a revealing case because an act intended to save life may nevertheless become harmful when the needs of particular beings, limits of human knowledge, and wider ecological relations are insufficiently considered.

Rather than seeking a single formula for resolving these tensions, the paper will ask what kinds of normative considerations might help distinguish compassionate intention from ethically adequate care. More broadly, it will consider whether the workshop’s ‘singular pluriverse’ can be understood not only as many human worlds on one planet, but also as many ways of living and flourishing within a shared sphere of moral concern.



Panel 2-2

"Toward Multispecies Entanglement: An Aesthetic Ethics of Care and Absorption in Wu Ming-Yi's *Midie zhi* (*The Book of Lost Butterflies*)"

Julian Chih-wei Yang (National Taiwan Normal University)

In this essay, I examine how Taiwanese writer Wu Ming-Yi stages an aesthetic ethics of care and absorption in his collection of vignettes on butterflies, *Midie zhi* (*The Book of Lost Butterflies*, 2000). *Midie* is Wu's first nature writing work and nonfiction miscellany devoted to these nonhuman creatures. This book consists of his observations and descriptions of several species of butterflies living in Taiwan, specifically of their histories, habits, habitats, interactions, and symbiosis with other living beings, human or not. To this extent, the work anticipates what scholars later name 'multispecies entanglement,' a notion meant to stress the interconnection and interdependence of different species and thus to evoke attention to and responsibility for the species others. In *Midie*, Wu contributes to this ethics by focusing on care and absorption: depicting butterflies and their enmeshment with other entities, he plans to arouse human beings' care about and for their nonhuman counterpart, primarily by rendering the latter appealing and even absorbing. This goal is conveyed by his wordplay with the Chinese *mi* (迷) in the phrase *midie*. At a quick glance, the term designates simply 'lost butterflies,' specifically those that traveled to Taiwan and settled down there by chance, as if they came to the island only because they had lost their directions. However, it should be noted that the Chinese *mi* also suggests 'fascination' or 'obsession' and is a homonym of other words like 醺 and 謎, which denote 'intoxicated' or 'intoxicating' and 'mysterious,' respectively.



In this regard, the term *midie* marks how butterflies constitute both the agents and patients (rather than subjects and objects) of the activity of absorption: not only are these natural creatures lost in or captivated with what they are doing, such as mating or feeding, their engrossment and puzzling migration are in turn enthralling, leading human beings to be intoxicated as a result. For Wu, it is the beauty and mystery of these butterflies that call for caring about and for them; an ethics of care and absorption then points to the way he enriches the idea and possibility of multispecies entanglement. Put differently, *Midie* is Wu's attempt to outline and to awaken its readers' aesthetic ethical consciousness of being attached to and concerned with the nonhuman entities. To analyze how he comes to, as he puts it elsewhere, 'reenchant nature' and leads others to have the 'quasi-animistic' experience of being mesmerized by butterflies, I address his metaphorical, literal, photographic, and hand-drawn renditions of butterflies.



Panel 3-1

“One Out of Many: Poetic Worlding in Shirley Geok-lin Lim’s ‘This Land’ Sequences”

Joan Chiung-huei Chang (National Taiwan Normal University)

This paper examines Shirley Geok-lin Lim’s two recent poetry sequences, ‘Water and Ocean Shush: This Land’ (with 13 poems) and ‘Neighbors: This Land’ (with 17 poems), as poetic responses to the central dilemma Dipesh Chakrabarty identifies in *One Planet, Many Worlds*: how can we understand ecological crisis as a planetary condition that implicates humanity as a species while still recognizing the diverse cultural, historical, and local worlds in which people live? Drawing on Lawrence Buell’s notion of ‘planetary belonging’ in *The Future of Environmental Criticism* (2005), Chakrabarty’s *One Planet, Many Worlds* (2023), and Tim Ingold’s ‘singular pluriverse’ (2024), I argue that Lim responds to this dilemma by moving constantly between the planetary and the local, connecting large-scale ecological processes with particular places, communities, experiences, and forms of belonging. I describe this poetic practice as ‘situated planetary belonging’: a planetary consciousness that emerges through, rather than transcends, particular places, bodies, histories, and more-than-human relations.

In ‘Water and Ocean Shush: This Land,’ the local landscape of Santa Barbara opens outward onto planetary processes. Atmospheric rivers, drought, wildfire, changing seasons, ocean currents, and declining monarch populations situate the poet’s aging immigrant body within climatic and evolutionary time. Yet the planetary never becomes an abstract totality: it is encountered through butterflies, creeks, eucalyptus trees, ocean air, bodily vulnerability, and memories of migration across the Pacific.



In contrast, 'Neighbors: This Land' reverses and complements this movement by constructing ecological belonging through intimate encounters with babies, grieving parents, immigrants, plants, fire, ghosts, and Indigenous histories embedded in ordinary suburban spaces. 'This land' consequently emerges not as a unified territory but as overlapping histories, species, attachments, losses, and claims.

Lim's poetry offers a particularly suggestive instance of Ingold's 'singular pluriverse': the planetary 'one' becomes perceptible through encounters with irreducibly particular 'many.' Her poems thus embody the idea of 'one out of many': rather than subsuming differences into a universal whole, they illuminate particular acts of worlding through which a shared yet plural planetary existence can be imagined.



Panel 3-2

“One Planet and a Singular Modernity: Thinking World Society in the Anthropocene”

Hannes Bergthaller (National Taiwan Normal University)

The Anthropocene is a product of modernity. Most accounts of the new geological epoch that have emerged from the environmental humanities are aligned with this general claim, to the point where it appears to be trivially true. Yet when it comes to defining what this modernity consists in and explaining how it has acquired its geomorphic power, things tend to get blurry. Frequently, modernity is conflated with capitalist globalization or Western imperialism, or with the global spread of a particular anthropocentric world view whose roots are variously sought in early European modernity, Abrahamic monotheism or Platonist dualism. In these narratives, the Anthropocene generally figures as a moment of disillusionment when modernity is revealed to be a dead end which requires humanity to back up and take counsel from pre-modern or non-Western cultures so as to come to a new understanding of its place in the world.

In this talk, I want to sketch out a different account in which modernity is understood to be synonymous with world society, and in which the Anthropocene therefore does not so much spell the end of modernity but rather provides the general frame within which any efforts to come to terms with it have to situate themselves. While modernity co-emerged with the industrial mode of production, it is not reducible to the latter, but must be understood in terms of the globalization of information flows, such that regional societies can no longer be understood as distinct entities but are always compelled to compare themselves with possible alternatives. The



institutional structures that characterize modernity, such as the global system of knowledge production, the world economy, or formalized legal systems, are responses to this situation, imperfect ways of coping with the internal differences of world society. Rather than wishing this singular modernity away, we must understand it as a necessary condition for coping with the challenges of the Anthropocene.





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