# Crossing the Borders: An Eco-cinecritical Analysis of *Plant Wars* and *Bird Without Borders*

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## A Global Sense of Place

Senses of place connect to concrete "locales" or "locations" and to abstract "senses of place," both of which are mutually constructed. The accumulation of the definitions of a place can be intensified by real life experiences. Also, the knowledge of geography, ethnicity, politics, economy, culture, and religion all have an impact upon the interpretation of a place. Literature further functions as stimulation to people's sense of place. With the participation of literary sensibility, imagination, and interpretation, both a more inclusive and extensive definition of place can be developed. For those who have developed their own sense of place, as the ecologist Kent Ryden points out in *Mapping the Invisible Landscape: Folklore, Writing, and the Sense of Place*, the invisible memory, feeling, emotion, as well as the imaginary landscape should be juxtaposed with the two-dimensional map to fashion a place (40). An expanded sense of place thus requires mobilization, since the development of transportation provides contemporary people with more efficiency and motivation to travel to different places. A place is no longer a stabilized idea, but a notion that is continuously fashioned. "Place" has been endowed with the identity of a "verb" of action, rather than a "noun" of stillness.[1] It is a mobile idea or ideal, instead of an immobile locale or location. It is a changing process, not a fixed point. A place is set on a historical and geographic axis where a more inclusive interpretation is to be developed if seen from a macro perspective. Due to the fluid, movable, adaptable, and changeable identities of a place, it is problematic to define a place with a single and essential identity, an argument which has also been affirmed by Doreen Massey in "A Global Sense of Place." In terms of Massey, a sense of place is anticipated to be "progressive, not self-enclosing and defensive, but outward-looking" (149). A place is "not some long internalized history but […] constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus" (155). In other words, places are culture-

[1] The verb "place" means staying put, or settling down, and such is its meaning as a noun. But Lawrence Buell tries to reverse such a "still" definition of place. In his third dimension of the concentric zone he indicates that "places themselves are not stable, free-standing entities but continually shaped and reshaped by forces both inside and outside. Places haves histories; place is not just a noun but also a verb. A verb of action; and this action is always happening around us, because of us, despite us" (*Writing* 67).



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constructed conceptions, which can be endowed with changing identities across time along with different human experiences and social relations. But such a concept does not deny the uniqueness of a certain place; such uniqueness is continually reproduced by people who actually dwell in that place. That is, such reproduction is not a static product of history. Furthermore, a place must be understood in the context of other places. True to the concept of interconnectedness, no place is completely isolated. The continuous process of drawing, defining, and blurring the borders between places in modern days has inevitably endowed a place with an "increasingly phantasmagoric" (Buell, *Writing* 57) identity; in other words, a place is continuously defined, shaped and influenced by social relationships distant from it. While more awareness of belonging to a place causes more developed senses of place, such a place-sense connects to concrete "locales," "locations" and to abstract "senses of place," both being mutually influenced and constructed.

Senses of place have become the subject of discourses and a place an active entity per se. However, the impact of power cannot be ignored in the pursuit of a changing "place" for its inclusive identities. Those with power tend to be more capable of determining senses of places. Hosts of international activities, for example, are those endowed with certain power to define a place. They initiate movement around different places, crossing national borders, and further encourage other participants to move. Through such moving processes, those with power accumulate more experiences, methods, and memories when it comes to the definition of a place. Another example of power relationship upon the recognition of senses of place is evident in the case that those with power may control over the ruled people's movement. Thus, there are people around the world who are forced to move but not in charge of their own movement. Such forced movement is exemplified in the case of displaced refugees, who have no choice to stay put, but have to keep moving.

The following essay will explore the concept of unfixed senses of place given above and the implications of a deterritorialized environmental vision in the reading of *Plant Wars* and *Bird Without Borders*, two Taiwanese nature-oriented films. It is also an investigation of eco-cinecritical concern to approach how the interplay between the local and the global shapes both films.

**Border-Crossing — *Plant Wars***

The fluid, flowing, flexible, and on-going changeable identities of "place" resist any singular or essential identity. This leads to the characteristic of unfixed, unstable, and on-going changing borders between nature and culture. Such an understanding of "region" can be related to Doreen Massey's assertion of "A Global Sense of Place," namely that a sense of place is expected to be "progressive, not self-enclosing and





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defensive, but outward-looking" (149). As Lawrence Buell asserts in *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, challenging assumptions about borders is where environmental writing and criticism mediate powerfully within or against standardized conceptions of spatial arrangement (77), such assertion is also reminiscent of Buell's argument for the significance of a sense of place via literary imagination. But, Buell also warns that there are "never completely free agents with unlimited options, place must also be thought of more extrinsically, as an artifact socially produced by the channeling effects of social position as well as by canonical mappings of space" (*Future* 74). The problem remains that it is still not easy to define a "region" and its "border." That is why the distribution of plants may not be identical to a watershed or the migration route of animals.

The conception of changing and blurring borders have been theorized by Donna Haraway in her landmark article "A Cyborg Manifesto," in which the "cyborg writing" implicates a breaching of the border between humans and animals, humanity and animality, animal-human/organism and machine/non-organism. This breach leads to the possibility of breaking down dualisms, especially the separation between nature and culture. Since Jane Goodall's and Dian Fossey's study with primates, the strict boundaries between humans and animals can no longer be sustained, as Donna Haraway points out, "the boundary between human and animal is thoroughly breached. The last beachheads of uniqueness have been polluted if not turned into amusement parks – language, tool use, social behavior, mental events. Nothing really convincingly settles the separation of human and animal" (151-52). Border crossings of all kinds have also been approached and investigated in reading nature-oriented films. Thus Jennifer K. Ladino's "For the Love of Nature: Documenting Life, Death, and Animality in *Grizzly Man* and *March of the Penguins* asserts that *March* represents the penguins "as themselves capable of love – a capability that blurs the human-animal binary and encourages spectator empathy" (56-57). Even though the director Herzog tends to "rectify nature's otherness and equates grizzlies with wilderness" (57) in *Grizzly Man,* he also "imagines possibilities for a trans-species love characterized by respectful relations between autonomous animal species, including Homo sapiens" (57). Representing animals as filmed subjects asserts the possibility that to some extent the animals become "our own technological creations" – technologically recreated animal cyborgs instead of "real" animals (Heise, "From Extinction to Electronics" 77). Based upon the epistemology of the cyborg identities of animals, our view of nature thus can be mediated by film per se as a realm of play "among many actors, not all of them human, not all of them organic, not all of them technological," but a play of "co-construction among humans and non-humans (Haraway, "The Promises of Monsters" 297). As Daniel R. White asserts in "From the Ecological Wasteland to the Cybernetic City,"



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> Nature may become a role, moreover, in which case it is traditionally played by a woman, and culture by a man, as in patriarchy. But in the realm of play, ground and figure, feminine and masculine, and any other series of oppositions are contrivances for the game; setting is made up of props and roles are created by masks and costumes: all is tentative, shifting, subject to reformation. (233)

The play White celebrates is more like a strategy or a device to tear down the border between oppositions, dichotomies, and dualisms by way of recognizing their opposite poles' equal right to play. Such "tentative, shifting, subject to reformation" plays also have been exemplified by Scott MacDonald's study of "avant-garde film," "independent film," and "experimental film" (xx) in *The Garden in the Machine: A Field Guide to Independent Films about Place.* Other nature-oriented films also aim to express the play of nature through experimental filming and editing methods. But these visualized productions of nature, even with their experimental, reformative, and innovative filming and editing techniques, still need to be seen as profoundly based upon different cultural backgrounds.

The "tentative, shifting, subject to reformation" play is shown in *Plant Wars*, which questions the boundary between native plants and exotic plants. Even further, it explores the relationship between plants and humans. To prove the instability and transformation of the boundary, the strategy *Plant Wars* uses is to introduce fourteen Taiwanese "native" plants and to trace their stories of migration. It argues that some of the current "native" plants originally came from foreign countries, and some of them remain in-between identities if seen from different scientific definitions of categorization, so as to blur the artificial boundary.[2] It questions how "native and exotic varieties are categorized" (00:52:20). For example, the plant Yam, frequently used as a symbol of Taiwan due to its Taiwan-like shape was, however, imported into this island during the age of European exploration hundreds of years ago and domesticated gradually. The history of the yam indicates that the categorization and demarcation between native and exotic is culture-constructed. The question concerning its nativeness is reminiscent of Shepard's warning of the danger of "the idealism of domestication" in "Romancing the Potato," which "is like other ideologies that have arisen in history" (IIX). The warning implies that the definition of identity is supposed to be dialectical and not to be determined by any dominant way of demarcation. In another respect, this issue to some extent urges humans to reflect upon the fairness and legitimacy of the discipline of scientific categorization, which most of the time is executed from an anthropocentric viewpoint.

[2] *Plant Wars* is put into fourteen sections of native plants as the main characters. The structure of the documentary is: 01.The Creeping Vine. 02. Somebody needs me. 03. Ode to Flowers and Trees. 04. Cockroach Snouts. 05. I come from abroad. 06. Formosa. 07. Orphan of Asia. 08. The Clinging Flower. 09. Accidental Travelling. 10. The Handiest Flower. 11. The Most Delicious Flower. 12. The enemy of my enemy. 13. Red Flowers. 14. Where is Home?



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In terms of biology, human beings may consciously or unconsciously bring various beings into their circle of life or take them out, and those beings they bring in are defined as exotic species. However, the biological categorization is insufficient to explain the changes of plants' identities and their relationship to human beings. The functional description of a plant, or its edibility value, may provide certain basic knowledge features of the plant, but it simultaneously ignores other facets relevant to the connection between the plant as an autonomous agent that has the power to grow itself and humans as a beholder to participate, experience, memorize, and imagine the growing of the plant. A functional description of a plant may provide a catalogue-like introduction, but the selection and correctness in the catalogue is always questionable due to the potential ideology behind any man-made catalogue. Also, as Hayles reminds us in "Searching for Common Ground," scientific methodology is limited in its attempt to "see reality-in-itself" (53). For Hayles, "the art of scientific experimentation consists largely of arranging situations so the relevant constraints operate in this fashion. No doubt there are other representations, unknown and perhaps for us unimaginable, that are also consistent with reality" (53). Cultural representation of nature may reveal one or several facets of nature, but there are more facets beyond humans' imagination, which follow the law of nature.

To supplement the insufficiency of scientific description, *Plant Wars* adds elements of storytelling, interviewing, news reporting from different perspectives of aboriginal oral literature, Taiwanese literary works, farmers' and beekeepers' talk, and some hand-drawn images of plants. The accumulation and mixture of scientific descriptions, aboriginal stories, interviews and paintings is a process of cultural construction that recognizes the formulation of plant identity is determined by the co-construction of multiple disciplines. Plants do not have language, in the human sense. Even though viewers can hear the laughing or murmuring of plants in some nature films, they know that these voices and sound effects are artificial, not the real voices of plants. But plants articulate themselves which, according to Haraway, means that they "signify" (Haraway, "The Promises of Monsters" 324). Humans formulate methods of mediation, storytelling in films for instance, to listen to and represent the articulation of plants. Plants still play the main characters; for without them, there would not be the film production such as the kind of *Plant Wars*. In this film, plants are the agents because of their active ability to grow, they are not just passive existences.

An environmental imagination also matters in constructing the relationship between plants and humans in *Plant Wars*, which makes use of the traditionally aboriginal oral literature and odes to illustrate the plant-human affinity. One Pastaay Ode is "Song of Invocation," singing "we have to move. Come with us. We'll lead the way. After arriving we built a temporary bamboo hut where we held the first Pastaay, and we slowly settled down here" (00:13:00-00:13:30). This ode indicates that bamboo



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provided the shelter for the first arriving people. Another ode sung by the Shitan Saisayat aboriginals is to tell the dwarf spirits: "hallowed friends have some millet ground into food. Join us and listen to the songs" (00:14:03-00:14:26). This song points out that the significance of millet is to provide the aboriginal people with food.

In addition, many lyrics and melodies of Pastaay Ode of Saisayat aboriginals rhyme with the names of plants. The Pastaay Ode is like an ode of the forest. It is a memory of the distant woodland. But many of the plants the elders speak of "carry many meanings that are now hard to discern" (00:15:07-00:15:30). Thus the respect toward plants is expressed in the ode that draws a parallel between human beings and plants in hope of humans being "like plants and gentle to all" (00:14:27). The plants in the Saisayat oral tradition are treated as autonomous beings that are capable of releasing meanings mysterious to human beings, whereas some of which carry political impolications. For instance, another ode mentions that the now distinct Saisiyat and Atayal at the present day came "from the same root and are inseparable" (00:14:34-00:15:06). Formosan Sugar Palm in Pastaay Ode, for instance, was once "a full leaf but when the dwarf spirits left, they tore it so now its leaves are cloven" (00:15:39-00:15:55). According to this Saisayat saying, the cloven leaves serve as a reminder of the human conflicts. The Pastaay Odes do not deny the imaginary connection between the Saisayat people and the world of plants, but prove an accumulation of plant imagination through oral tradition. Another literary depiction of *Plant* is represented in the works of the Taiwanese writer Wu Chuo Liou, a Hakka born in the Japanese period of Taiwan.[3] His book *Orphan of Asia* illustrates a scene in which the buds of the Creeping Sky Flower are pruned away but grow back, this capacity is metaphorically associated with people "who were beaten down but always climbed to their feet" (00:31:41). Such a plant example is frequently used to describe a lot of Taiwanese of Wu's time, which is reminiscent of its political implication, but Wu's various observation of the growing of plants, also shown in his other books, go beyond politics by asking for the intrinsic value of the existence of each being.

Through questioning the domination implied in the process of naming, categorization and representation of the identities of plants, *Plant Wars* contributes to an alternative construction of plant identity. The categorization of certain species is often applied by scientists, though it is also an important step to approach nature 'out there.' The question concerning the border in *Plants* is to indicates that there is always a

[3] Wu Chuo Liou (吳濁流) (1900-1976), a significant Taiwanese writer during the Japanese period, whose novels *Orphan of Asia*, *A Fig*, and *Creeping Sky Flower* create and use many plant metaphors. *Orphan of Asia* describes how a Taiwanese intellectual of the Japanese Period was bullied and oppressed by the Japanese colonizers. But he was also taunted by a Taiwanese family when he finished his study in Japan and came back, and was discriminated against by Chinese when he visited China due to his non-Chinese identity. This novel ends in the tragic madness of the man.



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nature of complexity beyond the simplified and generalized categorization. Donna Haraway has aptly indicated in "Situated Knowledges" of *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* that "no particular doctrine of representation or decoding or discovery guarantees anything" (199) when people attempt to recognize the nonhuman as agent. Rather, Haraway prefers the mythic figure of the Coyote or the Trickster to describe people's understanding of nature, for it "suggests our situation when we give up mastery but keep searching for fidelity, knowing all the while we will be hoodwinked" (199).

### *Bird Without Borders*[4]

*Plant Wars* questions the biological categorization of the native plants and the exotic plants; in comparison, *Bird Without Borders* illustrates how the crew physically follows the route of the birds' flight which crosses the national borders to provide a vision of remapping the natural territory through challenging the idea of a fixed "place." In *Bird Without Borders*, a dream is proposed by Professor Chong Jong Ryol, who has worked on the incubation and conservation of endangered black-faced spoonbills for more than 20 years, and whose effort has increased the number of the spoonbills from under 300 and close to extinction back to more than 2,000 in the year 2009.[5]

> I have a dream, to rent a ship, a ship especially for international conservation groups carrying researchers from each different country. Starting from Taiwan, we'll trace the migration route of the black-faced spoonbills. Every researcher can follow the same path, following the black-faced spoonbills, I carry this dream as I continue my research, in the hope that one day it will come true. (00:28:48-00:29:25)

Black-faced spoonbills may reterritorialize human conceptions of national borders by formulating their "migration route," but this route can also be deterritorialized because

[4] *Bird Without Borders* is produced by PTS of Taiwan, an international production through HD filming techniques. The crew spent one year to film, overcoming the technical difficulties of the geographic environment, weather, birds' situation, tide, and wind; technologically speaking, it connects the Taiwanese ecological documentaries to the international scope. This documentary has been shown in the international film festivals in 2009 Bulgaria environmental film festival and Green Screen of Germany. Through the mediation of films, the native landscape, various species and the biodiversity can be shown to the world. So it can be seen as a connection between the local and the global, a practice making the local issue known to the global.

[5] *Bird Without Borders* traces the flying route of the black-faced spoonbills by way of portraying the international cooperation between scientists, photographers, cameramen and nature fieldworkers from Taiwan, Japan, North Korea, and China. It is also the first time to record the process of the breeding and feeding of black-faced spoonbills in the laboratory. The incubation and conservation project has led to an increase in the quantity of black-faced spoonbills from near extinction to "more than 2,000" (00:21:39-00:21:46) now.



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of natural or human interference in one circumstance.[6] This is the reason why Thomashow proposes that "place-based transience" (180-82) might be a better term for the mobility of migration which characterizes many species' relation to their habitats. Furthermore, the black-faced spoonbills are deterritorialized as a result of the fact that their images are represented in photos, books, postal stamps, postcards and throughout the media (*Bird* 00:06:11-00:06:35), thus becoming a part in the human economic and cultural system. But black-faced spoonbills may further reterritorialize human beings through a route of flight leading "international conservation groups carrying researchers from each different country" (*Bird* 00:28:48-00:29:25). The migration of birds and the movement of human beings thus can become more interconnected during the process of reterritorialization, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization once more. In the process of remapping the territory, human beings may "follow" birds, as Professor Chong dreams of, and bird images may appear more frequently in human representations. But these territorial remappings will be true on the level that equality exists between humans and birds. That is, birds are as much autonomous entities as humans are. Simultaneously, something else may be achieved: human beings are not just "following" the other, but "a veritable becoming" (Deleuze and Guattari, "Introduction: Rhizome" 10) is happening here — a human being becoming a black-faced spoonbill and a black-faced spoonbill becoming a human being. Such a kinship of becoming between different beings is expressed by Professor Chong's paralleling his living situation with that of the birds, "I am a Korean living in Japan. That's why I feel a special kinship with black-faced spoonbills, which live in both Japan and Korea, and other parts of Asia" (00:21:26-00:21:34). In addition, during the 20-year process of conservation, Professor Chong has guided the spoonbill chicks to walk, fly, and eat fish, playing a mother-like role that is similar to Konrad Lorenz to the graylag geese.[7]

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[6] Deterritorialization in literary and cultural criticism means the reconceptualization of bodily, geographic, and social structures within which the boundaries, demarcations, classifications, and categories that are imposed on them are reflected upon, which that was originally suggested by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus:Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Within the theoretical framework, the environmentalists call for a reconnection with the local through "reterritorialization," an attempt of the reconsideration of the relationship between place and culture. These two concepts are also applied in anthropology and sociology in an exploration of how experiences of place or sense of place undergo change under the influence of modernization or globalization. In *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet*, Ursula K. Heise clarifies the definitions and development of the term deterritorialization and the consequence of "the detachment of social and cultural practices from their ties to place" (53), an experience which has become part of everybody's daily routine. Deterritorialization implies that in the age of globalization the people's average lives have been shaped by products, structures, and processes that derive from somewhere else. Deterritorialization, thus resulting in the rupture of the affinity between culture and place, designates "the conceptual impasses of environmental considerations of the local, as well as to a different understanding of inhabitation" (21). The connection between deterritorialization and reterritorialization will be approached in reading *Bird Without Borders*.

[7] Some cute interactions are recorded in the process in which Professor Chong takes care of the black-faced spoonbill, like kissing a new born chick (00:13:40-00:13:47; 00:20:20).



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Professor Chong's dream is a way to enter the nonhuman realm by following the migration route of birds, due to which the migrating route is no longer an irrelevant other place. It can also provide contact with the birds. Such a contact on a deterritorialization level is only possible if the bird is considered active, autonomous, conscious and equal to human beings, if it has a kind of agency with the ability to dream and thus to establish contact with humans. It is more like the leading role of Sosie, the fox of the documentary *On the Trail of the Fox,* who not only guides the filming crew to the habitat, but also even looks back to see whether or not the cameramen follow. Such autonomous roles are supported by Haraway, who believes that "in a sociological account of science all sorts of things are actors, and that you have to include, as sociological actors, all kinds of heterogeneous entities…this imperative helps to break down the notion that only language-bearing actors have a kind of agency" (Penley 5). Such a deterritorialization level makes possible contact between two heterogeneous species. This migration dream of Professor Chong can also be seen as an imaginative strategy that can generate a commitment of a group of people to form a community of consensus and then lead to practical action. As Ursula K. Heise observes in *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet,* the "imaginative strategies and devices" accumulated from literary and cultural critics as well as historians, philosophers, anthropologists, and scientists "allow individuals and communities to form attachments to these different types of spaces and to maintain them over time as an integral part of their identities, and have explored what overarching cultural and ideological purposes such commitments have been made to serve in different communities" (5).

In nature-oriented films, borders are endowed with different values according to different perspectives and interpretations.[8] Borders can be crossed physically or psychologically, since they are supposed to be as unfixed as the regions that borders demarcate. Such acclamation is narrated in *Bird Without Borders*, like the saying that "black-faced spoonbills have chosen to breed in the most heavily defended border in the world. A de-military zone between North and South Korea" (00:22:40-00:22:48) and

[8] Take two 2009 German nature documentaries *Wildes Russland* 1 to 6 (*Wild Russia*) for example. *Wildes Russland – Der Ural* overlooks the border area on the Asian and European continent and narrates that a visible border can be clearly demarcated due to the landscapes of different plant species in two regions. In comparison, *Wildes Russland – Siberia* films a herd of gazelles jumping through the fences separating them from Mongolia which demonstrates that "nature knows no political boundaries" (00:13:57). These two different narratives imply that borders are determined culturally or politically, and "we" – human beings or non-human beings – may develop our own sense of borders. Also, in 2009, the BBC production *Iron Curtain – Ribbon of Life* recorded a project of Green Belt that gives the cultural border between East and West Europe an ecological meaning. Based upon the Green Belt project, the former border area from Finland to Bulgaria was turned into a cultural heritage as well as an ecological conservation area. To give the border area new value through an ecological project is encouraging, but the assertion that "it's a good idea that can unite former enemies" (00:24:08) and the belief in the possibility of turning the Green Belt into "ecological symbols" to "bring countries together" (00:47:50) needs more profound scrutiny.



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"this unique bird has forced the rare bond between these two countries" (00:24:17).[9] Through the black-faced spoonbill, "an endangered species whose survival has become a symbol of hope in the part of the world the geopolitical tensions run high," (00:00:11-00:00:20), *Bird* proposes not only a dream of crossing-borders between birds and human beings, but also a recognition in which "borders" need to be understood in the realistic domain of national boundaries. The physical movement across nations is firstly evident in the way Professor Chong Jong-Ryol of North Korea gave the first pair of incubated spoonbills to Tokyo's Tama Zoo, and initiated his cooperation with Sukita of the zoo in 1987. At that time, "political tensions between these two countries were high. Chong and Sukita put politics aside to care for this critically endangered pair of birds" (00:16:08 - 00:16:21). Professor Chong also entered Tok-do, the border area between North and South Korea, to do an 82-day research in 1995 and provided research data to Dr. Li of South Korea in hope of expanding academic cooperation between these political opponents. Dr. Li himself also went to the de-militarized zone (DMZ) of Gyo Don Island, the border area civilians can go nearest, to do research for 5 years, but "the political climate detects just how close Li can get" (00:31:40). Furthermore, the international cooperation among nature fieldworkers, scientists, photographers, and cameramen from Taiwan, Japan, North Korea, and China also requires movement between national borders to produce this film. These examples of *Bird* visualize the aspect of physical border-crossing, which simultaneously builds bridges through the connection to different places rather than through confrontational positions. It embraces the "multilocal" (Rodman 640-56; Buell, *Future* 92) more than the traditional regionalist imagination, "something like a global sense of place" is coming into existence" (Buell, *Future* 92). Such a multilocal sense, reminiscent of a "sense of planet" asserted by Heise in *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet*, may benefit from the insight of current discourses of globalization.

The notion of crossing the political borders is encouraging in the way it is "challenging assumptions about borders" (77), as Lawrence Buell indicates in *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, "national borders by no means regularly correspond with 'natural' borders or physiographic units" (82). *Bird Without Borders* to some extent did suggest an act of "reconstructive place imagination on a global scale, both grounded and expansive" (Buell, *Future* 96); however, an incongruity between the new imagined biological territories and environmental materiality remains existent. A documentary such as *Bird Without Borders*, which invests a great deal of narrative into the crossing, blurring, and disappearing of borders in different respects, cannot really

[9] Similar narrations of the borders area include that black-faced spoonbills choose to inhabit in "the most deadly part of the Korea Peninsula" (00:30:35), especially in DMZ (de-militarized zone) between North Korea and South Korea, "a delicate cease fire with the potential for nuclear conflict" (00:30:35-00:30-41), and people "on both sides have become accustomed to living along this dangerous border" (00:33:37).



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answer to the question of remapping the national borders. Neither would it be fair to anticipate a documentary work to provide practical solutions to such complex social, cultural, and political problems. By reworking an ecological practice of transnational and trans-regional cooperation into a documentary of ecological deterritorialization, however, *Bird Without Borders* does hold out to us the challenge to reimagine our affinity with an environment whose "nature" may be international rather than national, may be global rather than local. As Murphy's "Toward Transnational Ecocritical Theory" in *Ecocritical Explorations in Literary and Cultural Studies* asserts, "the envisioning of all of national formations – alternatives to the nation-state – in imaginative literature provides an important arena for debating and conceptualizing green alternatives to the modern corporate state" (76). *Bird Without Borders* as an ecological practice fulfills the action that the Korean professor Hwa Yol Jung calls for,[10] as he states that "the reclamation of truth must come by way of planetary (or cosmopolitan) thinking which is no longer Eurocentric but the result of *correlating laterally* the multiple sociocultural life-worlds as the decentered sites of truth" (76). Furthermore, raising the consciousness toward the border area triggers a necessity of listening to its struggle of "multilocal" identities, and shows that "place…is as complex as voice" (Rodman 641). The "multilocal" identity is also reminiscent of the feminist geographer Doreen Massey's conclusive argument in "A Global Sense of Place" that "places do not have to have boundaries in the sense of divisions which frame simple enclosures. 'Boundaries' may of course be necessary, for the purposes of certain types of studies for instance, but they are not necessary for the conceptualization of a place itself. Definition in this sense does not have to be through simple counterposition to the outsider; it can come, in part, precisely through the particularity of linkage *to* that 'outside' which is therefore itself part of what constitutes the place" (155). Such a recognition of "multilocal" identity is explored in *Plant Wars* and *Bird Without Borders*. Both are seeking for ways to trespass the man-made borders: *Plant* via environmental imagination; *Bird* via physical movements of various kinds. While the title of *Plant Wars* seemingly expresses its position more strongly through "wars," *Bird Without Borders* explicitly asserts a dream of no borders.



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[10] Hwa Yol Jung, a Korean émigré teaching at an American college, founded a distinct religious sect. He is also a phenomenologist specialized in Eastern philosophy teaching in a political science department. (Murphy, *Ecocritical Explorations* 64).



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