

***When the Whale Talks Back:
An Interspecies “Cultural” Dialogue in Zakes Mda’s The Whale Caller***

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Change the tactics. If you accommodate his obsession with the whales, you might beat Sharisha at her own game.

Mr. Yodd, *The Whale Caller*

This above cited statement may be read as the beginning of the tragedy in Zakes Mda’s environmental novel, *The Whale Caller* (2005). It is an advice provided by an unseen spirited man known as Mr. Yodd to Saluni, “the village drunk” (Mda 2005: 23). This provocative idea together with her own jealousy of the Whale Caller’s affection and obsession toward Sharisha, a female southern right whale, stimulates Saluni to declare an interspecies cold war against Sharisha. This might be a one-sided conflict. Saluni might be too blinded by her own jealousy and her lack of being “a love child” (Mda 2005: 35) to see that there might be no love triangle between the Whale Caller, Sharisha and herself, because whales are silent and interspecies love affairs are unlikely if not impossible.

In *The Whale Caller*, whales are liminal and seem to be relegated into a passive position, while Saluni and the Whale Caller, as humans, are taking active roles in this whole relationship. This is because the whales in the novel never speak human words, by consideration of the fact that wording-ability is the privilege exclusively for human beings. As Zakes Mda tends to strictly follow this fact in *The Whale Caller*, it is possible to think that the Whale Caller may always live in a self-imagined, one-sided love relationship with Sharisha. Consequently, he may be the one who provokes Saluni’s jealousy, and eventually, leads her to her own death.

However, there is still another possibility in this interspecies encounter, which leads to the crucial conflict between Saluni and Sharisha. In contrast to Ralph Goodman’s argument that Sharisha is a product of Mda’s magical realism that serves to highlight the relative deprivation of the human actors in this text (2008: 112), I

argue, she is rather portrayed through Mda's "strategic exoticism"¹ and has her own agentic capacity, which is equal to those of humans in the text. As seen throughout the story, Sharisha does respond to Saluni's insulting words and action with her own nonverbal narrative. Thus, their conversations are not circulated within the anthropocentric circle of active-passive relationship, but rather within the "intra-relationship" in which they mutually exchange their dialogues in the form of active-active performances. As a result, their encounter becomes an interspecies "cultural" dialogue that defamiliarizes, decenters and destabilizes common environmental narratives, which often favor human attentions beyond anything. This dialogue could undo the oppressive mental maps and replace such maps with less subjective worldviews in which the world-responding is not ignored.

Aiming to highlight this notion, this article explores this interspecies cultural dialogue in *The Whale Caller* by focusing upon an "intra-action" between Saluni, the human, and Sharisha, the whale. It investigates how their narratives are negotiated and become a dialogue between human culture and whale culture, which points to ecological conflicts that might change fundamental organization of human-nonhuman boundaries.

To consider the intra-action between Sharisha and Saluni as an interspecies "cultural" dialogue, Sharisha's action is seen as a part of the southern right whale "culture", not the whale "nature"². However, to use the term, "culture" and its adjective "cultural" in Sharisha's case, the general definitions of culture need to be redefined. Challenging the common definitions of culture, as I broadly sum up, as the full range of socially learned "human" behavior patterns, culture is meant here to also include the behaviors of other earthen beings through the process of their socialization. In other words, culture here is defined in the simplest way as the learned

¹ As Huggan states, "strategic exoticism" is where postcolonial writers/thinkers, working from within exoticist codes of representation, either manage to subvert those codes [...] or succeed in redeploying them for the purposes of uncovering differential relations of power." (2001: 32)

² The term "nature" have many different meanings. The majority of them refer to the physically driving forces of absoluteness such as a basic constitution of a person or a thing, or the physical drives of an organism, or the generally controlled qualities of an organism, or the external world in its entirety. In other words, if it is "nature", it is likely unchallengeable and remains unpredictable. However, in *The Whale Caller*, whale behaviors, especially those of Sharisha, seem to be individually unique. Portrayed in this novel, whales do not need to migrant back to the southern seas and come back to the Western Cape every year. They can stay around the Cape all year around. Taking the example of Sharisha, she chooses to visit Hermanus every year and even stays there with other whale mothers and their calves for the whole year without leaving for the southern seas. This shows that their behaviors do not only come from the physical forces, but also depend upon their own minds and communities. Therefore, the behaviors of whales in *The Whale Caller* are neither "natural" nor "unnatural", but "cultural".

and shared behaviors of a community of intra-acting earthen beings. Based upon this new definition, “culture” is no longer the exclusive term within human possession, but a more general term for all kinds of beings on Earth. Culture in this sense, thus, will always be either interspecies or multispecies. In *The Whale Caller*, the intra-action between Sharisha and Saluni mainly comes from their driving-mind force, which is the desire for the Whale Caller’s affection. This force encourages their aggressive conversations in their own cultural ways: through human insulting behaviors from Saluni and through whale bellowing and massive breaching from Sharisha. This intra-action also weakens the invisible species line, which separates and uplifts human species from other species, by the fact that civilization in form of culture does not only exist and belong to human communities. Rather, it is also possessed by other diverse species communities. Humans then are no longer able to ground themselves as being superior by means of the ability to culturally learn and to culturally adapt, as other species can do so as well, even if they might not do it in the same way as human beings or, in some cases, as well as humans due to the different physical capacity. In this way, therefore, culture is always a part of nature. Nature and culture are one.

What does it mean by an “intra-action”? The term was firstly introduced by Karen Barad in her article, “Meeting the Universe Halfway” (1996), in an attempt to theorize her Agential Realism, a framework that foregrounds a new ontology in which everything is intertwined in an intra-activity of knowing, valuing and becoming. In contrast to “interaction”, which, “assumes that there are separate individual agencies that precede their interaction” (Serpil Oppermann 2012: 45), “intra-action” involves the mutual constitution of entangled agencies. It signifies a phenomenon⁴ of inseparability of matter and discourse, objects and subjects, and texts and contexts. Therefore, intra-acting agency is neither (human) intentionality nor (human) capacity of acting independently⁵. It is not restricted to human action, human subjectivity, nor

⁴ This kind of phenomena, as Barad proposes, emerges from a dynamic topology whereby no priority is given to either materiality or discursivity, neither one stands outside the other.

⁵ Agency with relation to humans and nonhuman others has always been a problematic issue, because nonhuman others are often seen as dependent actors to human agency. Similar to agency of people of color, as Spivak says, they may speak, but their speech is often pre-positioned so as not to be heard by those in power. (1988: 271-331), “to speak of ‘non-human agency’, ... immediately invites the allegation of anthropomorphism, potentially imputing to non-humans a capacity for choices, decision-making and conscious planning often considered by human beings to be unique to themselves.” (Huggan and Tiffin, 2010: 191) In this way, nonhumans would not be seen as themselves, but “as being given a human significance” (Huggan and Tiffin 2010: 139), “a whole repertoire of metaphoric

it is something humans grant to nonhuman beings. Rather, as Barad puts it, agency of an “intra-action” is determined by the ability to response of humans, nonhuman beings and material matter. Accordingly, the agencies of intra-action always consist in response-ability and a substantial reciprocity existed within and belonged to all kinds of species and matter. In this case, thus, intra-activities are considered in narratives by equal investigation into humans, nonhumans and material matter, whose presence is often relegated as irrelevant and insignificant.

Drawing from these notions, the intra-action between Saluni and Sharisha is a matter of responding and mutual dependency. This leads to the shifting and destabilizing boundaries of the nature-culture and subject-object dualisms. In *The Whale Caller*, the stimulation of Saluni’s “misdeeds” is influenced not only by her own past, her “civilized” community, her lover, but definitely also by Sharisha, whose reaction defies her common whale culture in many ways; such as her annually visits to Hermanus—instead of once-in-three-year visiting like other female southern right whales—and her occasionally annual stays in the Western Cape without migrating back to the southern seas. Competing for the Whale Caller’s affection, Saluni is destabilized, if not threatened, by Sharisha, as she is afraid of losing the Whale Caller’s affection toward her that, in turn, implies her losing of the hierarchically species privilege as a human to a cetacean. This is why Saluni furiously shouts to the Whale Caller after his dance with Sharisha that “[y]ou have shamed yourself...and me!” (Mda 2005: 66). As for Sharisha, with her nonverbal reaction to Saluni, she obviously has the mutual feelings. “[Saluni] tries to shoo Sharisha away, but the whale holds its own. It bellows deeply. It sounds more like a groan, [...] furiously blowing and sending tremors under the water that reach the rocks of the peninsula.” (Mda 2005; 182) This whole engagement is an “intra-action” and in order to read it, I employ an environmental material-discursive approach called “postcolonial-material” ecocriticism.

Postcolonial-material ecocriticism is a combination between postcolonial ecocriticism and material ecocriticism. As I broadly define, it is the study of the

associations.” (Mitchell 1998: 67). However, anthropomorphism also provides that narratives intended to stress the agentic power of matter and the horizontality of its elements. If conceived in a critical perspective, anthropomorphizing representations can reveal similarities and symmetries between humans and nonhumans. In this way, anthropomorphism works against anthropocentrism, instead of stressing categorical divides, as Jane Bennett states. (2010: 120)

representations of the material environments and their agential inhabitants in dialogue with postcolonialism. It approaches literary texts with an intention of looking into aesthetic functions with relation to ethical advocacy against the excessive colonial exploitation towards both human and nonhuman beings. At the same time, it also explores the intertwining narratives of all earthen beings and material matter in literary texts and investigates the ways in which nonhuman agentic capacities and their “narrative power of creating configurations of meanings and substances” (Iovino and Oppermann 2012: 79) are described and represented in those texts. This union, hence, is able to offer an approach to intra-action in postcolonial multispecies narratives by consideration of the fact that to acknowledge the intra-action, we have to be aware of postcolonial-environmental narrative rhythms, comprised of the colonial past, its inflicted practices and nonhuman agentic capacities, and how those rhythms create intra-relationships between all kinds of organisms and the material world. Moreover, the approach explores how physical characteristics and ecological narratives and histories of all beings and material matter have been influencing ecological meanings, which, in turn, shape discourse, matter and beings themselves through complex interplays within material-discursive dynamics. In such framework, therefore, the world is seen transparently as a multiplicity of complex interchanges between innumerable postcolonial agentic forces.

By using postcolonial-material ecocriticism as a mode of reading, the intra-acting encounters between Saluni and Sharisha is considered as an attempt to destabilize the hierarchically categorical divides and defamiliarize speciesism⁷ along with its naturalization by challenging human hierarchical structures that determine meanings and values of all earthen beings from within its own conceptual loop. As widely known, the human notion of species hierarchy originates the concepts of speciesism and its naturalization, which often bring forth the problematic binary

⁷ Speciesism involves the absolute prioritization of one’s own species’ interests over those of the silenced majority and considers it as being “only natural”. In *The Whale Caller*, speciesism is not only attached to human/nonhuman dualism. It is also extended to the distinction between marine mammals—whales—and fish. This distinction is portrayed through the characters’ consideration such as the Whale Caller’s different concepts of “whale” and “fish”. The Whale Caller gives the absolute priority to the well-being of whales while rendering fish as food resource, merchandized commodity, which is simply “fish”. This is why he keeps defending whales that “[w]hales are not fish!” (Mda 2005: 79) and displays the deepest feeling of guilt when Sharisha passes away. Fish, on the other hand, “is just a fish after all.” (Mda 2005: 220) One of the reasons of this hierarchical divide might be because he considers Sharisha as his best friend and almost real lover. Another reason might be the “fact” that scientific discourses acknowledge whales as cetaceans, a mammal family that closer to that of humans than fish according to body structures and behaviors.

oppositions as well as the colonial oppression and ecological displacement through the knowledge production and its practices. As seen in *The Whale Caller*, the loop of speciesism starts spinning when Saluni succeeds in catching the Whale Caller's attention. The Whale Caller then approaches her for the first time and asks,

“Do you want to look at the whales? Let's go and see the whales.”

“What for?”

“I thought you liked whales. I see you every day when I am blowing my horn. Before you had the rash, I mean.”

“I don't come here to watch the whales. I come here to watch you.”[...]

“What's your fascination with whales, anyway? They look stupid.” [...]

“They are beautiful,” he says

“Beautiful? They have all those ugly warts on their ugly heads!”

“They are not warts...they are callosities...and they are beautiful ...and...and those southern rights are graceful...and they are big.”

“Not big enough. The blue whale, yes...if they were the blue whale, then I would respect them.”

“How would you know about the blue whale? I am sure you have never seen one. They don't come close to shore.”

“It is the biggest mammal on earth...that I know for sure. But these whale of yours, they are like toys...they don't tickle my fancy...they are too small for me.”[...]

“If you were a whale you would be the blue whale,” she calls after him, laughing.” (Mda 2005: 52-53)

The notion of speciesism plays a crucial role in this dialogue. Saluni tries to turn the Whale Caller's attention to her by pointing out the differences and species hierarchy between humans and southern right whales in order to separate them in general and the Whale Caller and Sharisha in particular. Here, Mda depicts the connection between modernity and speciesism. Saluni, who expresses her lament over her modern coat, thrown away to the sea by the Whale Caller, directly revalues the whales as lifeless objects, “toys”, by comparing them to blue whales, and indirectly to humans.

Within this conversation, Mda points out an implication of the western species knowledge. Saluni, representing a modern woman, has certainly never seen any blue whales before, yet she confidently claims that she “know[s] for sure” that “it is the biggest mammal on earth”. Being influenced by the “civilized”, modern life style, Saluni totally relies her judgment on western scientific discourse, all textually mentioning the blues whales being the largest animals on Earth. Saluni believes in this scientific discourse without questioning how truthful it can be, because, on one hand, her jealousy has blinded her own judgment and she is desperate to separate the

Whale Caller from whales. On the other hand, she is shaped by colonial discourse, encouraging the hierarchical divides, and sees the southern rights as “fish”.

In the colonial context, nonhuman presences are rendered according to hierarchically categorical divides. Their referring names become metaphors, often used in insulting manners. As represented through Saluni’s speech, “fish” is an insulting word, that she uses to refer to the southern rights in general and Sharisha in particular, and emits the colonial sense of oppression and species discrimination. Even if Saluni knows that whales are marine mammals, as the Whale Caller keeps telling her, she still stubbornly refers to them as “fish”, because by doing so, she is able to remind herself and the Whale Caller that the whales are not in the same league as humans. For her, the whales are “fish”.

Nonetheless, if Sharisha, the whale, is really an inferior, insignificant, mere “fish”, why does Saluni compete with her and even feel afraid of losing in this competition? In *The Whale Caller*, the presence of Sharisha and her role challenge the species hierarchical structures, since she is evidently able to counter back Saluni. Sharisha’s power to attract the Whale Caller’s affections also threatens Saluni’s mental security a great deal. This makes Sharisha another main character and her role is very crucial that influences the (re)action of both the Whale Caller and Saluni. This can be seen through the fact that Saluni greatly feels anxious every time when whales, even nameless ones, are around, because they remind her of the return of Sharisha.

Then she sees it. Something that brings shivers to her body. Not shivers of fear. Shivers of anger. There is the head of a whale at some distance sticking out of the surface of the blue depths. [...] From the callosities on the snout, the so-called bonnet, Saluni can tell that it is a southern right. So they are back! ...They will have her to contend with. Especially those that have wicked designs on her man. Who knows? It might be Sharisha herself who is crudely spyhopping out there. Saluni is prepared for a battle. She wanted some anguish in her life, but this is an overdose of it. She has always known that this day would come, but realizes now that she has not prepared herself for it. (Mda 2005: 122)

Drawing from this passage, instead of having an upper hand as being a human, Saluni’s position is destabilized by Sharisha the whale. This passage implies that Saluni actually recognizes Sharisha as a genuine rival for her lover’s affection and perhaps even more than a rival, although she keeps calling her as a “fish”. This claim is evidenced especially when Sharisha’s death upsets Saluni as much as, if not more than, her arrival in Hermanus. As in the last chapter, Saluni blames herself for

Sharisha's death, even though she is not the one who blows her up. "She is filled with remorse. She believes that somehow she has brought about Sharisha's death. She does not know how it is her fault, but it has to be. She wished it. She willed it. She did it. Now she regrets it." (Mda 2005: 224)

Though Saluni's jealousy, anger, great anxiety and guilty, Mda depicts Sharisha as having her own agentic power of narrativity. This opposes the colonial notion of nonhumans as being mindless machines that are controlled by humans. As an example,

"I will tell you once and for all, stupid fish," she shrieks at Sharisha, "just leave him alone! You no longer have any stake in him!" Then she opens the buttons of the coat and flashes Sharisha. [...] Sharisha only stares at her. A better idea strikes Saluni. She [...] moons the whales. Sharisha lazily turns. [...] She sails away. (Mda 2005: 136)

This passage shows how Sharisha responds to Saluni in the way that indicates her superiority over Saluni. The maturity of Sharisha is one thing that is incomparable to that of Saluni. As the narrative perspective relates, she simply stares, lazily turns through which she might indirectly tell Saluni that she has a wound as severe as hers. Eventually, Sharisha slowly sails away, leaving Saluni in her own world in which she thinks she wins. Their encounter here is similar to those of an adult and a child. Sharisha is definitely much older than Saluni not only in terms of age, but also in terms of action, which is much more mature than Saluni, who insults her with much childish behaviors. Thus, rather than being superior, enacting with Sharisha makes Saluni become inferior.

However, this does not mean that Sharisha does not feel threatened by Saluni with respect to the Whale Caller's affection. Yet, instead of showing through human-like action, those mutual feelings of Sharisha appear through whale myths.

"I say leave him alone, you foolish fish," [Saluni] shouts. "He is mine!" [...] She moons Sharisha, slapping her bottom and screaming: "Take that, you lousy fish!" And then she [...] walks away, leaving the poor whale looking scandalized [...] Sharisha looks at Saluni [...] and then she leaps out of the water in one massive breach [...] (Mda 2005: 155)

Mda creates a myth here. Because the reasons why marine mammals breach are still unknown, the reader is left to wonder whether Sharisha understands Saluni's words and feels offended. Then she releases her anger in the form of massive breaching. Or Sharisha does not understand Saluni at all and simply massively breach for

entertainments and for cleaning her lice. This is never clarified in the novel. However, according to a scientific hypothesis with respect to whale breaching habits, published online on “UC Santa Barbara ScienceLine”, breaching allows whales to communicate with each other. Sharisha may say something to Saluni through her whale culture of massive breaching, yet, due to the fact that Saluni comes from a different culture and lacks this kind of communication ability, she does not understand it. The novel then leaves it that way for the reader to wonder whether Sharisha talks to Saluni. If so, what she conveys.

This mentioned myth confirms the fact that in order to understand the environmental connections and its rhythms, wording alone is insufficient. Body gestures should also be observed and paid attention, because not all earthen beings communicate in wording gestures like humans and show emotion patterns in the same ways as humans do. Rather, they have their own communication systems within their communities that humans do not verbally understand, yet have to be put in the center of discussion if humans want to talk about the environmental stability and how to sustain it. Otherwise, humans would risk creating an imagined reality in which everything on earth is following behind humans. This would result in the maintenance of oppressing nature-culture dualism and human-nonhuman boundaries in the same way as in the enlightenment and colonization period.

This danger, however, is commonly found in literary analyses and needs to be criticized. As an example, in Marita Wenzel’s article, entitled “Zakes Mda’s Representation of South African Reality”, with respect to the relationship between the Whale Caller and Sharisha, Wenzel writes,

Awareness of nature and natural life rhythms is necessary for living in harmony with nature, but it does not replace or act as a substitute for shared human emotions and experience. Thus, sound and movement are natural, but to be human entails intelligence [...] To Mda, equating nature with human nature designates a danger zone where the natural is transgressed to become unnatural. (2009: 142)

Here, Wenzel assesses nonhumans by mean of human “intelligence”, regarding nonhuman others as being inferior, yet pristine, to humans in the species hierarchy. As a result, nonhuman behaviors are simply counted as “nature” which is completely separated from “human nature”. Wenzel’s analysis overlooks the intra-action between Sharisha and the Whale Caller and subsumes Sharisha the whale under passive category of what she call “natural”. For Wenzel, Sharisha seems to be a mindless

being that will appear and act according to the Whale Caller's wills. Thus, the more their relationship are closer, the more "unnatural" it would be. This is what Wenzel calls a danger zone.

Wenzel's anthropocentric perspectives here point to the concept of naturalization and its implication: the natural and the unnatural. What should be counted as natural or unnatural? The answers to the question depend upon our willing to decenter our egotism and reconsider the roles of "others" and our enactment with them. Let's say, what will happen if there are neither the natural nor the unnatural? In the structure of intra-action, the natural and the unnatural never exist, because intra-action, relying on the concepts of posthumanism, rejects human separation from the rest of the world and questions human power of controlling actantiality⁹. In intra-action, everything has their own active roles in a huge complex and endless network even though, sometimes, human beings are still beneficial in terms of focalization. Therefore, in this case, the hierarchical words such as "intelligence", "primitive", "natural", "unnatural", which are used to oppress others into liminal-passive roles, become vague and meaningless.

In *The Whale Caller*, Sharisha is an actant, who plays an active role in the conflict between herself and Saluni. Sharisha makes Saluni see and counters her insulting action through non-wording gestures at every possible turn.

[Saluni] tries to shoo Sharisha away, but the whale holds its own. It bellows deeply. It sounds more like a groan. This worries the Whale Caller. He has never seen Sharisha like this; furiously blowing and sending tremors under the water that reach the rocks of the peninsula. She seems to be gearing for a fight [...] [Saluni] intends to flash Sharisha to death [...] But Sharisha [...] does not budge. She stares Saluni straight in the eye. She does not look scandalized as she usually does when Saluni moons or fleshes her. She looks defiant [...] Saluni tries again [...] "You take that, stupid fish!" [...] Still Sharisha does not move. Her defiant stare is unflinching. It is clearly a standoff that Saluni cannot win [...] Sharisha continues with her deep bellowing [...] (Mda 2005:182-183)

After Saluni's declaration of her upholding the Whale Caller's heart, Sharisha tries to claim back her position besides the Whale Caller. However, her capacity of doing so is limited by the fact that she is incapable of communicating in human words and can only live and act in seas. To depict Sharisha's actantial power, Mda portrays this

⁹ According to Bruno Latour, actantiality is not what an actor does, but what provides "actants", often referred to nonhumans who are capable of modifying other entities, with their action, with their subjectivity, with their intentionality and with their morality. See Bruno Latour's *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (2005)

encounter through the perspectives of the Whale Caller, a supposed less subjective observer. Yet, as an observer on land and from different culture, the Whale Caller is only able to see and feel Sharisha's emotions, displayed through Sharisha's movement above the sea surface. Having no capacity of observing Sharisha's other action beneath the sea surface, the Whale Caller has a limit focalization toward Sharisha. Hence, when he perceives Sharisha, he can only say that Sharisha does not "look" scandalized and "looks" defiant. So understanding Sharisha in "her own terms" is not possible. Yet, the Whale Caller's comprehension does not completely emerge from his imagination, rather Sharisha has influenced it. Sharisha acts through her body movements from which the Whale Caller observes and tries to interpret the meanings behind her non-wording gestures. Thus, Sharisha is not a mere foil in the oscillating pattern of the relationship between the Whale Caller and Saluni, as Goodman claims (2008: 110). Sharisha is not a fantasy of desire, but another character, who has an agentic capacity of responding and enacting in her own way.

By investigating the intra-action between Sharisha and Saluni, we can also see that, regardless of belonging to different species communities, both of them share many things in common. They both love the Whale Caller and this intense love eventually leads to their similar tragic ends. As for Sharisha, she is lured to the shallow sea area and breaches herself on the beach. She then is killed by dynamite in the hands of scientists and emergency workers who claim themselves to be experts and "truly" understand the whale "nature". Triggering by Sharisha's death, Saluni runs to the Bored Twins and is killed by them in the similar way of kindness. Drawing from these situations, Saluni the human and Sharisha the whale are neither different nor privileged in terms of consequence. Their narratives destabilize the so-called human-nonhuman boundaries and together create an interspecies cultural dialogue in which they both are mutually influenced by each other.

As a conclusion, the interspecies intra-action is complex and complicated, because human behaviors often dominate the textual representations and the narratives. The species other than humans would often be underestimated as anthropomorphism¹⁰ or would be looked into with relation to human focalization and narration. Moreover, when we talk about media representations, we cannot

¹⁰ According to Jane Bennett, anthropomorphism is not instrumental to a human-centered and hierarchical vision, but it is a heuristic strategy, functioning against anthropocentrism. Instead of highlighting the categorical divides; it reveals similarities and symmetries between humans and nonhumans. (2010: xvi)

completely escape anthropocentrism. This is why this article does not intend to deny anthropocentrism. Rather, it intends to subvert anthropocentrism by highlighting the “response-ability”, redefining “agency” in the process of intra-action. The paper also extends the notions of agents to include nonhuman beings and matter while introducing to the reader posthumanist thinking in which the hierarchical species boundaries¹¹ between humans and nonhumans do not exist. It, furthermore, looks beyond the anthropocentric circle, in which human activities determine the earthen life—either to shorten it or to prolong it—, by paying more attention to the roles of “others”, who also perform their own action in the world. If we could think beyond ourselves, we might be able to see the world differently. If we decenter our general interests, this world might not be considered as being in the apocalyptic age, but perhaps in the era of unpredictable, yet dependent changes. This world never involves only one-sided performances, but always consists of intra-activities from all earthen actants. Once an activity begins, the activity will always trigger other activities and will overlap activities of many others that react back and eventually might reflect back to it. Nobody can escape this endless loop, so we should be considerate to our action, as we will never know about its reflection, which could be both productive and destructive. Moreover, we should be noted that the action will be enlarged, when it intersects with those of others, and becomes multispecies action in which other species also have influences on it as much as us.

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¹¹ The species boundary refers to “the discursive construction of a strict dividing line between ‘human’ and ‘animal’ in terms of possession (or lack thereof) of traits such as speech, consciousness, self-consciousness, tool use and so on. (Huggan and Tiffin 2010: 139)

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