The Hunter's Gift in Ecorealist Indigenous Fiction from Taiwan[1]

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Introduction

According to Karen Thornber in her monograph *Ecoambiguity*, the Taiwan indigenous writer Topas Tamapima's last hunter character indulges in "sport hunting."[2] The last hunter Biyari is reluctant to change his "lifestyle."[3] He "believes he should be able to use landscapes to fulfil his personal desires, even when this means hunting the forest's most endangered animals,"[4] Thornber writes, as if Biyari is a selfish consumer who chooses the most pleasurable lifestyle in wilful ignorance of the environmental cost. In this article I put indigenous hunters like Biyari into cultural context and appreciate what they have to offer to an environmental ethic. Where Thornber does not find "significantly different perceptions of ideal relationships with the nonhuman"[5] in Topas Tamapima's "The Last Hunter," I see in indigenous hunting stories survivals of a "gift culture" that speaks to issues of sustainability and community. I interpret "the hunter's gift" in three stories – Auvini Kadresengan's "Eternal Ka-balhivane" (Home to Return To), Topas Tamapima's "The Last Hunter," and Badai's "Ginger Road" – as a symbol of ecological and social integration, which can be understood in contrast to appropriation as well as alienation.

The sociologist Helmuth Berking argued that early man perceived appropriation from nature as a problem. The solution was to reconceive appropriation as "an exchange relation" – an exchange of gifts – in which hunters ritually returned the souls of animals to the lord of the hunt and shared the meat "among the mothers and children."[6] Ritual sharing consecrated the community and integrated it into nature.

[1] This article builds on research I published in *Studia Orientalia Slovaca*, as noted in the References. Thanks to Henning Klöter and Ann Heylen for inviting me to the International Symposium on Taiwan Literature Off the Mainstream at Ruhr University Bochum on 5–6 November, 2010, where the first version was presented, to four anonymous reviewers, and to many friends for comments. This research was supported by an ROC National Science Council grant (No. 101-2410-H-002-206-).

[2] Karen Laura Thornber, *Ecoambiguity: Environmental Crises and East Asian Literatures*, 133.

[3] Ibid., 134.

[4] Ibid., 135.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Helmuth Berking, *Sociology of Giving*, 57.

The consumption of meat bought in plastic wrapped styrofoam trays no longer carries such meanings. Though we appreciate the social value of a turkey dinner, we often eat alone, and tend to think of turkey in terms of price, pleasure or calories. In contemporary indigenous villages in Taiwan, however, hunting remains a ritual act performed in accordance with the traditional moral order, which encompasses nature and humanity. According to the anthropologist Scott Simon, oblations must be made, and taboos respected, when Truku hunters in Hualian County "go up the mountain." When they come down, hunting is "a sign of masculinity, a source of prestige, and proof of one's moral standing," which means it is about "sharing and community building."[7]

Yet, today indigenous hunters often break the law by selling wild game. They may deny that the state has any right to interfere, but in appropriating and selling the gift of nature they have accepted "alienation," the logic of capitalism. For modern indigenous writers, then, hunting is not just a symbol of integration; it is also a site at which to explore the effects of modernity. The three authors I discuss in this article dramatize conflicts between cultural, social, ecological or economic values in exchanges between hunters and their families, businessmen, policemen, and consumers, in order to work out their own mixed feelings about modernity. As each had a modern upbringing – Auvini Kadresengan became an accountant, Topas Tamapima a doctor, Badai a lieutenant colonel – none rejects modernity outright. Yet while they appreciate the convenience of the commodity and the need for a state authority, their stories inscribe a desire for self-sufficient social and ecological integration in a gift economy.

Gift Economy, Alienation, Ecorealism

With the goal of building an interpretive framework, I begin by contextualizing the anthropology of gift economy. I show how Marcel Mauss's notion of "the spirit of the gift" resists alienation by weaving people and things together into networks of relationships or webs of meaning. Then I consider "(magic) ecorealist fiction" as a genre of integration that sometimes literally speaks to contemporary ecological and social concerns.

Ever since Marcel Mauss's *The Gift*, published in French in 1923–24, problems of liberal capitalism have been in the background of the study of gift culture. In his great monograph, Mauss addresses the "crisis" in liberal theory if not in "liberal society."[8] Liberal philosophers had claimed a social role for *homo oeconomicus* – for rational, free, self-interested market agents exchanging commodities according to "icy, utilitarian calculation."[9] The invisible hand would make society richer and

[7] Simon Scott, "Animals, Ghosts, and Ancestors: Traditional Knowledge of Truku Hunters on Formosa," 90, 93.

[8] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*, 5, 84.

[9] Ibid., 98.

allow everyone to give more gifts in private life, thereby melting the ice of the market. In liberalism, gift giving was also supposed to be voluntary (even though we are obliged to reciprocate on specific occasions like birthdays and Christmas). Mauss wanted to toss the liberal fiction of the frosty free individual, along with the distinction between gift and commodity, "into the melting pot once more."[10] He suggested a return to a more social notion of man and to the archaic or primitive gift.

In the olden days, and in certain remote places, there was no distinction between gift and commodity. All exchange was gift exchange, and the gift was a kind of unwritten, involuntary, socially-enforced contract. Like a legal contract it carried obligations. According to Mauss, there were three obligations: one had to give, to receive, and, at the appropriate time, to return the gift in some other form. Gift obligations tied people together in numerous ways: "the object received as a gift, the received object in general, engages, links magically, religiously, morally, juridically, the giver and the receiver."[11] In the kind of community Mauss had in mind, there was no free market in which "[a] simple exchange of goods, wealth, and products in transactions concluded by individuals" could occur.[12] The only site of exchange was the "economy of the exchange-through-gift," and any exchange in this "gift economy" was meaningful in multiple ways.[13] Giver and receiver, as representatives of clans not individuals, were tied more and more tightly as they exchanged the roles of giver and receiver, passing wealth back and forth. Trade was not an end in itself. The point was the exchange of "politeness" and the "recognition" of social roles.[14] Unfortunately, in the potlatch in the late nineteenth century, superior and inferior roles were recognized: chiefs gave away vast amounts of wealth to put their peers to shame. The potlatch was a status economy. Yet, though gift culture was not entirely unproblematic, Mauss still preferred it to liberalism.

One of the attractions in gift culture for Mauss was the spiritual or religious dimension. In a gift culture a return gift has to be made because of the spirit of the giver remains in the gift. To give a gift is to give "a part" of one's living "spiritual essence."[15] In a culture in which all exchange is gift exchange, "[e]verything passes to and fro as if there were a constant exchange of a spiritual matter, including things and men…"[16] Like the whole, the parts are alive: they even have feelings and desires. They can roam around, but ultimately the spirit of the gift "wishes to return to its birthplace."[17] Thus, things are "personified," both in themselves and as

[10] Ibid., 93.
[11] Marcel Mauss, "Gift, Gift," 29.
[12] Idem, *The Gift: The form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*, 6.
[13] Ibid., 92.
[14] Ibid., 6, 52.
[15] Ibid., 16.
[16] Ibid., 18.
[17] Ibid., 15.

synecdoches, as parts of a larger whole. Personified things can talk, of course, or at least they could. "Everything speaks…" said one Trobriand islander.[18] We have very good reasons for making the distinction between things and persons, but we might try to hear things speak, at least in our imaginations, as a way of overcoming alienation.

From a Marxist perspective, alienation is one of the basic problems of liberalism, in which market agents buy and sell (i.e., alienate) commodities without forming or acknowledging social ties. According to the early Marx, the worker in a capitalist regime confronts the product of his labour as "an alien object exercising power over him."[19] He finds himself trapped in a world of objects to which he is in thrall. He is alienated from himself, so much so that he does not realize he is alienated. He is alienated from nature, too. "Man /lives/ on nature – means that nature is his /body/, with which he must remain in continuous interchange if he is not to die."[20] The only contact the industrial worker had with nature was the industrially processed food he ate, which had no obvious connection to plants in the ground or animals in the forest. Mauss did not use the term "alienation" in *The Gift*. Yet when he writes that, "[t]he economic prejudices of the people, the producers, arise from their firm determination to follow the thing they have produced, and from the strong feeling they have that their handiwork is resold without their having had any share of the profit," he seems to articulate a resistance to alienation, to social and ecological dis-integration.[21] People in a gift economy tend not to suffer social alienation as an effect of exchange, because the spirits of the gifts they exchange keep them tied together. Not making a strict distinction between "society" and "nature," people did not suffer ecological alienation, either. Mauss touched on the "thanksgiving rites" whereby premodern people discharged obligations to the gods.[22] Marshall Sahlins pointed out in 1974 that the text which gave Mauss the idea of the spirit of the gift, the famous discourse of the Maori sage Tamati Ranapiri, was about "a sacrificial repayment to the forest for the game birds taken by Maori fowlers."[23] Fowlers could take birds from the forest, but could not appropriate without return. For Maori fowlers, what alienation could there be, in theory?

Exchange on the ground is, of course, more complicated, but many who make use of gift theory have not done fieldwork and tend to contrast more than compare. For the literary critic Lewis Hyde, for instance, the principles of a gift economy are "flow" and "abundance," not the "accumulation" and "scarcity" of capitalism.[24]

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18 Ibid., 44.
19 Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, 75.
20 Ibid., 76.
21 Ibid., 85.
22 Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*, 19.
23 Marshall David Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, 156.
24 Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Creativity and the Artist in the Modern World*, 27.

But anyone who engages with gift theory has to remember that gift and commodity are "ideal types," as are "gift culture" and "commodity culture." Even in a liberal capitalist society, in which any number of gift cultures can thrive, there is at least little sociality in any purchase, a little self-interest in any gift, and a lot of sociality and self-interest in any bribe. Nor should one assume that the distinction between premodern and modern according to, for instance, the presence or absence of "markets," is self-evident. Marxists insist that the market is a modern invention of a state to defend the interests of a ruling class.[25] Liberals argue the market is a venerable grassroots form of efficient exchange which modern states can help regulate, arguing against a clear break between premodern and modern in terms of the form of exchange.

Regardless, we should not fail to acknowledge that for local people living in small communities without permanent power structures, the introduction of capitalism with state assistance can be an awful imposition. The Marxist anthropologist Michael Taussig has studied how local people respond to the encounter with capitalism. Discovering devil worship among miners and plantation workers in South America, he argued that, "the devil is a stunningly apt symbol of the alienation experienced by peasants as they enter the ranks of the proletariat."[26] In "the Andean version of the story of Faustus," a peasant sold (i.e., alienated) his soul to rationalize appropriation.[27] However, according to Taussig, devil belief might "stimulate the political action necessary to thwart or transcend the process of commodity formation," because proletarianized peasants might fight back.[28]

The literary scholar Mark Osteen has used the Ojibwe writer Louise Erdrich as an example in his own investigation of resistance to *consumer* alienation. Osteen argues that the "discourse of the gift" can stop modern consumers from "frantically calculating self-interest and exchanging commodities that do nothing more than confirm [their] alienation," because it "recovers some respect for these immaterial qualities – the spirituality and sociality – of subjects and objects."[29] In Erdrich's "The Red Convertible," a used automobile (whose origin the narrator does not reveal) is converted into an inalienable possession when two brothers take a trip in it. It becomes a symbol in the story of their brotherhood.

Taussig studied oral narratives at the production end, Osteen written ones at the consumption end, raising the issue of interpretive method: how could there be a "one size fits all" approach to the reading of stories about gifts from different kinds of societies? There is attention to oral narrative in anthropological writing about the gift. Mauss wrote that every gift has "its name, a personality, a history, and even

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[25] David Graeber, *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value: The False Coin of Our Own Dreams*, 10.
[26] Michael Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*, xi.
[27] Ibid., 208.
[28] Ibid., 17.
[29] Mark Osteen, "Gift or Commodity," 244.

a tale attached to it."[30] Annette Weiner's "inalienable possessions," which defined a clan's social distinctiveness, were inalienable partly by virtue of narrative: they were authenticated by "fictive or true genealogies, origin myths, sacred ancestors, and gods."[31] But premodern narratives are problematic for critique. They might be "fictive." Stories about artefacts might leave out the process of creation.[32] On the other hand, stories capitalists and consumers tell about the commodities they sell or purchase are problematic because they tend to leave out production.

I adopt "ecorealism" as an interpretative framework for the modern stories I discuss in this article. This term is currently used in and outside of literary studies to mean that ecological degradation is real, but to my knowledge it has not been used to designate a genre of fiction. In nineteenth-century literary realism, a third person omniscient narrator tells a putatively objective story about the integration of the individual into society, and in an ecorealist work there would be a further integration into nature. Realist fiction was originally a bourgeois art form, but can be put to other uses, or interpreted with other concerns in mind. Thus, according to Fredric Jameson, moments of "daydreaming" in realist narratives "tell us about the otherwise inconceivable link between wish-fulfilment and realism, between desire and history."[33] Reading allegorically, Jameson unearths utopian desire in a Balzac novel. In other words, realism is capacious, capacious enough I would argue to include social and ecological critique. An ecorealist narrator would place individual and collective human action in both social and ecological context, without neglecting the "social lives" of things.[34] No mere prop, each thing would have own role to play in an ecorealist story.

I see a special role for modern indigenous writers in the development of this critical and possibly utopian genre. Modern indigenous writers have often experienced proletarianization and have almost certainly encountered socialist and environmental discourses, which they may understand in terms of the modes of perception and the morality of the gift economy. To simplify greatly, if Juan Valdez's son became a writer, he would tend to tell a story about the production implicit in a cup of coffee. He or she might add a magic realist touch: the myriad presences in the coffee might begin to speak, drowning out the popular music and the traffic noise in the curbside café. Reading an ecorealist story about coffee, you would discover you are playing a role in a coffee drama. You have to interact with the other actors on the stage, from the good earth and the farmer to the distributor and the barista. You are obliged to all of these people, for they have given you a gift. If you view a coffee as a commodity, by contrast, you do not have to listen to any

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30 Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*, 30.
31 Annette Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving*, 33.
32 David Graeber, *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value: The False Coin of Our Own Dreams*, 185.
33 Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, 182.
34 Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: commodities and the politics of value," 3.

stories. You have paid for your coffee. You can decide, based on "marginal utility," if the pleasure of *another* cup is worth the price.

Rather than a cup of coffee, the metaphor I explore in this article is the hunter's gift, of meat or articles obtained in exchange for meat. The hunter's gift, which can be given, taken, stolen or sold in service of many different value agendas, seems to have many symbolic possibilities, but has received almost no scholarly attention. The anthropologist Christopher Hill argues that the hunter founder story about the hunter's gift of meat "serves in Mende oral histories as a symbolic statement validating contemporary authority patterns."[35] The three ecorealist stories I discuss are clearly not intended to naturalize hierarchy. Rather, they serve as reminders that the land and community are inalienable possessions, not sources of natural resources and labour power.

As a trilogy they tell a story that moves outward in space as it travels forward in time. It is a story in which a premodern hunter walks a hundred kilometres from home to alienate the gift of the ancestors, in which a modern hunter who has tried and failed to make it in the big city hopes to give the gift of the forest only to have it confiscated, and in which a contemporary hunter who can read the business news about billionaire investors in distant cities gives the gift of nature even when he has the chance to sell. It seems to be a story about accommodation to scarcity, alienation and control in the long Formosan indigenous encounter with modernity, but it is also a story about the critical potential of resistance and desire.

The Hunter's Gift and the Indigenous Encounter With Modernity

In 1624, the Dutch East India Company established a colony in southwest Taiwan. Chinese farmers worked the fields; and there was a lively trade between foreign guests and aboriginal hosts. Trade continued through the Zheng (Cheng) era and into the Qing (Ching) dynasty. In John R. Shepherd's account,

> Trade was necessary to acquire the shot and powder needed for aborigine hunting guns, as well as the textiles and ornaments that satisfied an expanding need for creature comforts. To acquire these goods and to meet the demands of the state and interpreters for revenue and squeeze, the plains aborigines overhunted the deer herds.[36]

This "deer economy" was exhausted by the first half of the eighteenth century. By the nineteenth century, the plains aborigines had mostly Sinified. Although the peoples who lived in the mountains were more isolated, they traded for the same commodities, by cash or barter. Meanwhile, gift economy must have persisted within the community as it does in the modern family. This is the historical geography in which I wish to discuss the first literary hunter's gift.

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[35] Matthew Hill, "Where to Begin? The Place of the Hunter Founder in Mende Histories," 654.
[36] John R. Shepherd, *Statecraft and Political Economy on the Taiwan Frontier, 1600–1800*, 365.

1. The Alienated Gift in Auvini Kadresengan's "Eternal Ka-balhivane (Home to Return To)"

Auvini Kadresengan was born in southwest Taiwan in the Rukai hamlet of Kochapongan, located a day's hike into the mountains from the nearest town on the plains. The author recalls gathering herbs, schlepping them down to town to sell, then using the money to take a bus to Ping-tung (Pingdong) City, just to see a motion picture. It is undeniable that he should be understood in a context of mechanized transport and mass entertainment, and I take up his modernity below. I discuss his story first because it appears to recreate a premodern village with minimal market contact and a mode of perception that recalls Mauss's spirit of the gift.

At the start of the story, the narrator conveys an animistic sense of beneficent vocal presences. Stones speak, the falling leaves speak, the steps the hunter takes speak – even the hunter's calluses speak – of the brevity of life. Everything speaks, or sings, and all speech, or song, is a gift: a bird sings of blessings, and when the horticulturalist hunter hero Esai asks the ancestors to bestow blessings upon him, the ancestors sing through the birdcalls, assuring him that his hunt will go well.

Esai seems innocent of the modern world, but he carries a gun, an industrial product and a market commodity. He did not use money to buy it, but obtained it through barter. Esai and a neighbour travel down from the hills to the plain in Tai-tung (Taidong) in south-eastern Taiwan to trade with a headman, who has in turn been trading with "people from elsewhere."[37] Most of the description concerns the rituals of hospitality surrounding the barter. The montagnards present the plainsman with mountain products. These things were given by the ancestors; now they are given away. The hospitable headman receives them with sweet rice wine. Then the barter itself takes place "amid excited smiles that would produce singing in a dream."[38] The young deer and set of antlers that Esai has brought, along with his "beloved Dutch rifle," are worth one shell shoulder belt, a roll of wire (for snares), and an American rifle.[39] Then Esai and his neighbour go into the hills and bring back a log for a new mortar for the headman (presumably to pound sweet rice to make more wine). In return, the headman gives them food for the road. The barter is embedded in a gift exchange, following norms of hospitality that modern consumers have mostly forgotten.

"Eternal Ka-balhivane" does not, however, describe a way of life that is predominately based on barter. It is about a largely self-sufficient community in which calculating self-interest apparently never figures. Community members live in a world not of commodities but of inalienable possessions. On the way home from Tai-tung, Esai dreams of an old woman who presents him with gifts. When later Esai brings down a young buck (perhaps to replace the deer he traded away),

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[37] Auvini Kadresengan, "Eternal Ka-balhivane (Home to Return To)," 101.
[38] Ibid., 102.
[39] Ibid., 101.

he thinks his dream has come true. Observing tradition, Esai and his companion show gratitude to the ancestors by conducting the fallen leaf ritual, which involves a sacrificial offering – a part of the prey that is returned to the original giver – and a liturgy: "We are still immature, but our hearts are pious, we offer this small heartfelt gift."[40] They go on to ask the ancestors for wisdom, love, calm spirits and grateful hearts. In this way, they return the gift in verbal and material form. When Esai arrives home, the proceeds of the barter, along with the young buck, are welcomed into the community. They are offered to the ancestors in a ritual in which they take on personalities: the gun, for instance, is given a life, a soul and a name. Meanwhile, Esai's wife admires the craftsmanship of the shoulder belt. In John Balcom's translation, "a lot of time had gone into making it."[41] Translating more literally: every detail "showed the time behind the life of this thing."[42] The origin of the life of the thing is not included in the story, though Esai's wife must have some idea of how much work went into it. She recites a blessing, thanking the ancestors for what the family has been given, thanking the gun, even thanking the steel wire, "like a dog curled in sleep."[43] Once these objects have gained membership in the community, they become inalienable possessions. The belt, for instance, is to be a betrothal gift for when Esai's young son gets married.

This belt gives us reason to question the romantic assumption that economic considerations did not apply in old Kochapongan. Esai reflects that the belt will suffice if his son marries an aristocrat's daughter, but if he marries a chief's daughter an ancestral ceramic vessel will have to be added. The belt has value in the local status economy. Even so, the gift will not be used to purchase the bride. The gift is not a "bride price." It will be given, as will the bride, along with gifts from the bride's family. Rukai marriage was a Maussian gift exchange. Yet it is also important that the betrothal gift is obtained through barter.

Indeed, the story seems to be as much about the influence of markets and technological modernity on social and ecological relations as about "tradition." (Though the author projects eternity upon the community or the landscape in the title of the story, all cultures and ecosystems are in a state of change.) Following Esai's return to the village, the narrator launches into a list of the prey animals Esai hunts and traps with rifle and wire snare: 120 deer, over 70 boar, and 3 bear. This hunting orgy gives Esai the right to count himself "among the glorious lily bearers," to participate in a public ceremony in which the chief confers a lily headdress upon him.[44] But Esai's hunting exploits are overkill. Only 6 boars were required to bear

[40] Ibid., 103.
[41] Ibid., 106.
[42] Auvini Kadresengan, "Yongyuan de guisu (Ka-balhivane)," 167.
[43] Idem, "Eternal Ka-balhivane (Home to Return To)," 106.
[44] Ibid., 108.
[45] Taiban Sasala, "The Lost Lily: State, Sociocultural Change and the Decline of Hunting Culture In Kaochapogan, Taiwan," 68.

the lilies.[45] Esai hunts for industrial goods and for status. The former he obtains by barter, the latter as recognition for contributions to the community. Whether or not the improvements in hunting technology had any impact on the norms of the status economy, they seem to have had an ecological effect: Esai laments a "decline in nature."[46] Though Esai respects taboos against the hunting of smaller animals as well as the clouded leopard (which accompanied the first hunter to Kochapongan), ecological equilibrium has been lost. But the hunters carry on hunting all the same. Over two decades later, Esai returns to the plain to trade, with the son of the headman, for salt and matches, needle and thread, hand-woven fabric (a betrothal gift for his daughter), and a new rifle. The rifle is the third in the story. The latest technology, it bears what sounds like a brand name. Esai has become a consumer, perhaps even a technophile. Unfortunately, he is unable to enjoy his new toy, or welcome it into the community: he goes missing on the way home.

The loss to the community goes uncompensated by any widening of perspective. Esai was granted a vision of ancestral battles and journeys on his first trip home through the realm of the ancestors, but he knows nothing of the provenance of the products he obtains through barter, nor does the narrator display any curiosity. They are merely bought objects of desire brought from far away. Yet the fact remains that Esai trades ancestral gifts for industrial products. Auvini Kadresengan explained that the soul of the deer might migrate into the gun, which would then bear the deer's biography. But what about the ultimate fate of the antlers? Even if stories attach to them, part of their biography will be lost, and a story about how the lives of different beings are interconnected will be incomplete. The narrator does not confront this issue. Esai died in a local world that modernity was only just beginning to change.

Given that the author was born sixteen years after the Japanese had established a police station in the village, this setting makes the story seem like partly imaginary nostalgia. The author misses old Kochapongan. Sasala Taiban's Ph. D. dissertation fills in some of the details about this way of life. Society was stratified, with chiefs, aristocrats and commoners. According to legend, the land was divinely given to the chiefs. The chiefs gave hunters temporary use of tracts of land, and in return received the first fruits of the forest, which they then redistributed, along with recognition for the hunters: "the cultural principle of sharing renders [sic] the accumulation of wealth unnecessary."[47] In this way, "[p]eople, spirits, and animals have formed [sic] an ecological system that is [sic] based on sharing."[48] Taiban's dissertation also seems nostalgic.

One of the first acts of the Japanese police when they arrived in 1929 was to confiscate rifles. Hunting and swidden farming were discouraged in favour of

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46 Auvini Kadresengan, "Eternal Ka-balhivane (Home to Return To)," 109.

47 Taiban Sasala, "The Lost Lily: State, Sociocultural Change and the Decline of Hunting Culture In Kaochapogan, Taiwan," 170.

48 Ibid., 117.

intensive cultivation for the market, which eventually left people dependent on the market. The commons were privatized. The culture of sharing declined. Wage labour was introduced. The chiefs lost power to the police. Local leaders were co-opted. Children were sent to school to turn them into loyal Japanese subjects and later patriotic Chinese citizens. The Kuomintang continued Japanese policies after 1945, the year Auvini Kadresengan was born. By 1965, indigenous communities witnessed "the replacement of artistically-enhanced daily use goods with cheap commodities purchased on the market."[49] There was a labour outflow from Kochapongan. In 1979, remaining community members moved to a site in a nearby river valley. After 1973, hunting was permitted only on reserve lands, not in traditional hunting grounds, many of which were turned into preserves or developments. By the 1980s younger hunters no longer aspired to bear the lilies. They were making money in the bushmeat trade.

In 1961, Auvini Kadresengan had left the old village at sixteen years of age to go to school. He worked as an accountant for Christian organizations on the plains until, in his mid-forties, in response to the "return to the land" and "cultural revitalization" movements in the late 1980s, he returned to write about the traditional Rukai world, as a kind of cultural salvage effort. The village was greatly changed. But the slate house he had grown up in was still standing, up in old Kochapongan. He installed solar panels and began writing on a laptop. Everything he wrote was about a world before computers, solar power, corner stores, police stations, buses, churches and schools.

The only psychological trace of the modern world in "Eternal Ka-balhivane" appears to be counting: the numbers of hunted animals seem too large and too precise for a premodern subsistence hunter. Esai was able to count into the hundreds, an ability necessary in a cash economy. There is no money in the story, but there is barter, and the current anthropological consensus is that barter emerges only if currency has: currency supplies an abstract standard for the calculation of value, and barter occurs in the event of a lack of liquidity.[50] Barter is therefore outside a gift economy, and requires a head for numbers, not just a sense of value. "Eternal Ka-balhivane" is in this respect about the creeping influence of accountancy. At the same time, it seems to preserve an older, animist consciousness. In the next two stories the magic is wearing off, though, as we shall see, it has not lost all its force.

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[49] Stevan Harrell and Yu-shih Lin, "Aesthetics and Politics in Taiwan's Aboriginal Contemporary Arts," 4.

[50] David Graeber, *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value: The False Coin of Our Own Dreams*, 222.

2. The Confiscated Gift in Topas Tamapima's "The Last Hunter"

Topas Tamapima was born in 1960 in the Bunun village of Loloko in Nan-tou (Nantou) County, near the geographical centre of Taiwan. By the time he was a child, daily life had been commoditized, technologized, and politicized. He was a twenty-six year old medical doctor when he wrote "The Last Hunter." Topas Tamapima shows how modernity diversifies the professional possibilities for indigenous people. In "The Last Hunter," though, he writes about a marginal figure and a disintegrating community.

The last hunter Biyari, like Auvini Kadresengan, has left the village and come back. But the sort of labour he did was less specialized; Biyari was proletarianized. After the war, more and more aboriginal youth left the village in search of work. Most of them found it in factories or mines or on construction sites or fishing boats. Wherever they went they encountered non-indigenous Taiwanese society. This was not exactly a liberal capitalist society: Taiwanese people had their own "petty capitalist" or family-based gift economies.[51] But members of Taiwanese society tended to be uninterested in gift relations with marginal aborigines like Biyari, who usually entered the wage labour market. If things do not go well in the city, young men return to the "little world" of the tribal community, "which retains both social and emotional salience despite its partial breakdown."[52] Marginal men tend to hunt when they go home.

Biyari has done temporary work packing goods for a shipping company in the city. Presumably he was packing commodities to be shipped and sold to middle class consumers. But he was fired after five days on the job because the boss wanted to save money, and he even left 800 dollars in pay behind. The boss fired him for the sake of an abstraction, a quantity of money, 160 dollars a day. The sensuous world of ritual, personality and morality of "Eternal Ka-balhivane" has been monopolized by a utilitarian mentality, by accountancy. To the boss, the amount of money he will save seems more real than a person. Esai's hunting yielded gifts, but Biyari's labour is an extractable commodity. In other words, the modern diversification of employment possibilities for indigenous peoples may simply jam them into slots in the capitalist division of labour. There was even a pressure to specialize before Biyari left. Whereas Esai saw no contradiction in being a horticulturalist hunter, Biyari's father always said you are either a hunter or a farmer: you have to choose. Biyari explored another option, and for five days he had a bit part in the drama of the modern economy. Now he has returned home to Loloko. Mostly he hunts. After all, he was born in the month of the Bunun rite of passage, the ear shooting ceremony; he feels he was born to be a hunter.

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[51] Hill Gates, *China's Motor: A Thousand Years of Petty Capitalism*, 204–42.

[52] Stevan Harrell and Yu-shih Lin, "Aesthetics and Politics in Taiwan's Aboriginal Contemporary Arts," 18.

However, the entire context in which the traditional hunter lived is gone: daily life has been commoditized. Village inhabitants now rely on the market for daily necessities. Whereas Esai had to travel a week to barter, Biyari can buy rice wine, betel, matches, and gas for his motorcycle at the local store. Shopping in this store is convenient but humiliating. The Hakka proprietor suggests expensive sorghum wine, saying, "I like it myself, the rice wine is too plain," like an actor in a television commercial.[53] Biyari replies,

> "The strong stuff is for those who are dying. Keep it and sell it to those sad people to wash away their suffering. I just want plain old rice wine. Here's thirty yuan." Biyari felt around in his pockets. Fortunately he had the thirty yuan.[54]

Biyari's relationship with the proprietor is not fleshed out by gift giving, either material or verbal. The proprietor's words are manipulative, intended to tempt Biyari to spend beyond his means; while Biyari's words are bluster, meant to uphold his wounded honour. All speech in "Eternal Ka-balhivane" was a ritual gift that conferred recognition and expressed respect; in Biyari's world, words are instrumental. The proprietor and Biyari recognize each other, but there is no enduring connection between them, because they deal with each other as buyer and seller, not as human beings. There may be drama here but it is hardly social.

Biyari, like Esai, has possessions, including a home, and at least one personal connection, which he tries to maintain by contributing to a connubial gift economy. His most prized possession is a jacket, which he first saw in a shop window. Having no idea of the production of the garment, he regarded it as an object of desire. He purchased it, forming no relationship with anyone. But unlike a typical consumer, whose daily life is surrounded by quantities of things that can be tossed out without a second thought, the jacket is one of the only possessions Biyari has got. It has worn through in places, but he cherishes it. As an inalienable possession, it has a biography – Biyari has hunting stories to tell about it – though the story only begins when he put down his money. His house is as in need of patching as his jacket. Unfortunately, the situation at home is precarious. His wife Pasula has suffered a miscarriage and has yet to recover her health. The first gift in the story is a chair Biyari had hoped to give to his unborn child. Probably he made the chair from scratch, accepting the gift of nature and creatively shaping it into an artefact. But, angry at Biyari for his inability to provide, Pasula throws the chair at him, almost breaking one of the legs. Biyari explicitly identifies the leg of the chair with the leg of their unborn child. This is an apparent literary personification and metaphor (the chair stands for the child), but to Biyari there is a magical connection. Pasula does not take magic seriously anymore, and the hunter's marginality is most immediately and painfully obvious in his relationship with his wife. All he has to offer is affection she will not accept.

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[53] Topas Tamapima, "The Last Hunter," 6.
[54] Ibid.

Pasula's verbal treatment of him shows how fraught the connubial gift economy has become. She is sarcastic, and even threatens to leave him unless he goes hunting, sells some meat to the Hakka proprietor, and fixes the leaky ceiling. However, she continues to give him material gifts, such as a sweet potato (which I like to think she has grown herself) for him to eat in the forest.

So, after receiving a message in a dream, Biyari sets out. Whereas Esai would have hunted in a hunting party, Biyari goes alone. Traditionally, the hunter took what the forest gave as a gift of the ancestors. But though they may communicate with Biyari in a dream, the ancestors have fled the forest. What remains? Only the Christian image of Eden, which is ironically projected upon the forest. Biyari and the narrator see people in terms of natural features, a literary suggestion that people come from nature. To Biyari, Pasula is "like maple leaves that turn red in autumn and lose all their charm in winter."[55] To the narrator, Biyari's face is like an alpine landscape; Biyari (also spelled Qobiaz) is a kind of plant. But the landscape itself is not explicitly personified. Whereas Auvini Kadresengan's landscape was alive, Topas Tamapima's is aestheticized, described as like "a painting."[56] When the narrator reaches at the poetic he grows vague: "the beauty of the forest is harmonious and green" in the Balcom translation.[57] More literally: "a green, harmonious integration," quite an abstract formulation compared with Auvini Kadresengan's vocal calluses.[58] However, this unity, which is also described as "all one green blur," suggests an organic holism that resists the capitalist will to chop up the forest and extract the resources.[59] The birds, who pay no heed to human territorial divisions, once told the hunter whether the hunt would succeed, but now, when the birds cry, it does not sound like a message from the ancestors, or even like a song: it sounds like "a truck horn."[60] Development is apparently killing the forest, for though it retains its "magic," the forest is no longer as fertile as it once was.[61] The hunter's failure to catch anything means that "the forest is shamed."[62] This is the only personification of the landscape in the story.

Biyari blames the forest's shame on the Chinese government officials who abstract and calculate nature, as the factory owner did Biyari. Biyari thinks they:

> should come and listen to the birds and beasts and the wind and falling leaves; they should go to the valley to see the magnificent cliffs; they should take off their shoes and put their feet in the water and watch the fish swimming in the unpolluted water, unafraid of people. They would unravel the enigma of the forest and, like sinners

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55 Ibid., 9.
56 Ibid., 5.
57 Ibid., 9.
58 Topas Tamapima, "Zuihou de lieren" [The Last Hunter], 17.
59 Idem, "The Last Hunter," 16.
60 Ibid., 12.
61 Ibid., 16.
62 Ibid., 12.

> condemned to hell, they would regret their previous lack of understanding in seeing the forest as nothing but a source of timber.[63]

"A source of timber" in the original Chinese is more literally "the thickness of the logs."[64] But the sense is similar: the officials have only the crudest utilitarian concept of the forest and are unable to appreciate it qualitatively, as Biyari does.

The Forestry Bureau misses the forest for the trees, but indigenous people may be contributing to the problem. The forestry officials may include some brown-skinned Bunun who now calculate the economic value of the forest. Other local people might be to blame for a forest fire a decade before. Hunters claim that forestry officials set the fire themselves after extracting all the valuable trees. It would be reassuring to think that the hunters burned the forest to forestall appropriation, but the fire might have been lit by an indigenous tree poacher or hunter, perhaps by accident. Biyari's illegal, extra-market use of wood in stoves and campfires might also contribute to deforestation. Karen Thornber discusses the complexities of ecological, social and economic value conflicts in the village in terms of ecoambiguity. I do not think that ecoambiguity is lost on Topas Tamapima, though it may be on Biyari. Putting aside for a moment the issue of whether or not Biyari shares Thornber's environmental concern, I would argue that Biyari's values are those of the old gift economy, and that these values have an ecological and social benefit.

Biyari claims that hunters "knew life in the forest accounted for half the life on earth, most of which was closely bound up with the hunters," indicating awareness of interdependency.[65] Unfortunately, in a time of environmental scarcity, the hunter's social obligations are hard to meet, because if nature does not give, how can a hunter? Biyari, walking down a slope, meets another hunter, walking up. This is a potential sharing situation, a moment that might restore a relationship. But the words Biyari and Luka exchange are ironic. "If it isn't the great hunter…" says Luka.[66] Biyari calls Luka the Forest Chief in return, and reminds him that, "the hunter walking downhill should share his meat with the hunter walking uphill," hoping to shame him into sharing when all Luka has is a squirrel, a gift for his son.[67] (To Luka, a son is given, and if Luka is a hunter, then obviously Biyari is not the last hunter.) Biyari even threatens to lay a curse upon Luka. Indeed, Biyari is the scion of a family of shamans. Shamanry, a remnant of the old magical world, is now just words. Once Biyari's grandmother's curse compelled five hunters to deliver meat to her door – a reminder that fear was as much an emotion of the gift economy as gratitude – but now Luka does not take the threat seriously. When Luka finally offers to share, Biyari humiliates him by refusing to accept.

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63 Ibid., 16.
64 Topas Tamapima, "Zuihou de lieren," 26.
65 Idem, "The Last Hunter," 9.
66 Ibid., 10.
67 Ibid.

Biyari immediately regrets his cruelty to Luka, but it is returned to him at the end of the story by a forest policeman, a decommissioned soldier from mainland China who appeals not to the hunter's code but to the law of the land to make Biyari cough up the prize of his catch, a muntjac he wants to give to Pasula. What was once communion has been reconceptualized as stealing. The policeman says, "The government takes care of you people so that you don't have a care," implying that welfare is a free gift and Biyari is unable to take care of himself.[68] Pathetically, Biyari appeals for sympathy, explaining, "I had a fight with my wife. She looks down on me and laughs because I can't find work."[69] But the policeman does not care, because he has no need for a relationship with Biyari. His position may not be entirely secure, as he feels the need to explain why he needs to take the animal – so he can report to his superiors. Emphasizing Biyari's agency, Liou Liang-ya reads the exchange as a "bribe."[70] Karen Thornber thinks the policeman "confiscates" the muntjac, locating Biyari's agency not in the exchange but in his determination to continue hunting (of which she disapproves).[71]

While Biyari is standing there, the policeman points at a purchased piece of pork hanging on a hook, as if the capitalist supply of meat is the most natural thing in the world. If Biyari has money for betel and wine, it is plausible to assume he has money for pork as well, but wanted to give Pasula something more potent, something wild – something from outside the commodity economy. Indeed, he hopes, by feeding her fresh muntjac meat, to "put some meat back on her bones."[72] To Karen Thornber, Biyari is hunting for personal reasons, but it seems to me that, like Luka, he is hunting both to uphold his dignity and for another's sake. For Biyari and Luka, cultural and personal values are inextricable. Pasula is more modern than her husband and would probably prefer to purchase industrially produced meat (though Biyari does recall how fond she is of wild goat intestines). Her ultimatum – that he must sell the prey or she will leave – is a demand for Biyari to turn the gift of nature into a commodity. In a traditional Maussian gift economy, economic and symbolic or social values were intertwined. In "The Last Hunter," in which there are state-regulated commodity and gift economies, there is a divisive and complex clash of values over the fate of a muntjac.

Hunting had been severely restricted before the 1980s, but it was not until around the time of "The Last Hunter" that it became a cause for indigenous intellectuals. The radical indigenous journal *Hunter Culture* (Lieren wenhua 獵人文化), published on the 27th of the month from 1990 to 1992 (to commemorate Mona Rudao's

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68 Ibid., 19.

69 Ibid.

70 Liou Liangya, "Autoethnographic Expression and Cultural Translation in Tian Yage [Topas Tamapima]'s Short Stories," 814.

71 Karen Laura Thornber, *Ecoambiguity: Environmental Crises and East Asian Literatures*, 134.

72 Topas Tamapima, "The Last Hunter," 17.

resistance against the Japanese in 1930) used the hunter as a symbol to express hostility to modernity. If indigenous people have been selling the fruits of the forest for over three hundred years, the claim that they have been resisting modernity is problematic. But resistance to modern life is not all or nothing; Biyari rides a motorcycle, even if he tries to evade state control of a traditional cultural practice. In the late 1980s, the return my land (*huanwo tudi* 還我土地) movement took to the streets, demanding sovereignty. Clearly, "The Last Hunter" raises the issue of indigenous use of traditional hunting grounds under the control of the Forestry Bureau. However, published in early 1987, this story does not seem to articulate a demand for sovereignty, though it appears to be a critique of development and governance (as well as a Bunun self-critique). The final story, Badai's "Ginger Road," addresses the opposite issue to state interference – state neglect – while greatly enlarging the economic context of indigenous lives.

3. The Returned Gift in Badai's "Ginger Road"

Badai was born in 1962 in the Puyuma village of Damalagaw, located west of Taitung City in south-eastern Taiwan, at the foot of the mountains. He served in the Special Forces for over two decades before putting down the gun and picking up the pen. Published in 1987, the year the Martial Law was lifted, "The Last Hunter" emphasized the state-society problem. Published in 2000, three years after the Asian Financial Crisis, Badai's "Ginger Road" places characters in a much larger economic context than they can possibly comprehend. As in "The Last Hunter," the characters in "Ginger Road" are challenged to balance the values of gift and commodity economy. But Badai's characters are not as marginal as Biyari. They have possessions and occupations. They have capital, an intact community that relates with dignity to Han Chinese outsiders, and enough cash to buy commodities to give as gifts.

An aging farmer named Luben, to whom Heaven has given a strong body, grows ginger in a preternaturally fertile field on the other side of the mountain. Whereas Biyari rode to his hunting ground along an industrial road, Luben can only access his field by the ginger road, a footpath that the community has to maintain itself. Luben owns land on this side of the mountain, but the fertile ginger patch belongs to his brother-in-law, who has given Luben cultivation rights in exchange for 30 days of service a year. This sounds like a premodern land tenure arrangement, but the parties to the exchange might see it as a gift exchange. Though that is all we learn about the brother-in-law, it seems unlikely that his relationship with Luben is a purely contractual relation. At any rate, it is clear that Luben is a capitalist, the ginger field his capital, and ginger his commodity. Biyari's moral right to his hunting ground was recognized only by fellow aborigines; Luben's contractual right to plough would receive legal protection. Biyari's hunting was a traditional practice, while Luben's ancestors would not have cultivated ginger for the market. Biyari wanted to prove himself to other men and to his wife by hunting, while Luben's head is full of abstractions that allow him to make the most of his capital. He has

quantified the land, just as the Chinese officials quantified the land in "The Last Hunter." Moreover, he accounts for the rates his boss says the factory (presumably a produce processing factory) will pay community members to harvest and haul the ginger the 3 kilometres from the field back along the ginger road.

However, this utilitarian mentality coexists with a warm-hearted, moral consciousness. The ginger road and patch are the objects of Luben's affections. Though Luben is feeling his age, he could not bear to part with the field. It has been so many years! He is very proud of what his eldest son, the most adventurous of his children – who is planning to go west to explore the professional possibilities for untrained indigenous men – described as the Puyuma Silk Road. As in "The Last Hunter," there is no longer any sense of living, personal presences in nature. Unlike Biyari, Luben is not even granted a sign in a dream. But Luben's meaningful, emotional attachment makes the land much more than capital. Badai suggests the experience of a trip along the ginger road poetically: the switchbacks make it look like a "beautiful hundred-pacer snake."[73] A hundred-pacer snake is also deadly, but the whole landscape is bursting with life. There has been no decline in nature in the hills above Damalagaw! Each rhizome growing in the ginger patch "looked like a giant's hand."[74] The ginger is no mere commodity, but like a limb of a living being who gives parts of Himself to the people. This is the only personification of the landscape in this story. Though Badai, like Topas Tamapima, aestheticizes the land by describing it as "a watercolour painting," through metaphors the painting comes to life, with people in it.[75] The narrator conveys not just a sense of the living landscape, but also a creaturely sense of community as couples make dirty jokes that go over the heads of the kids. The tone is distinctly informal, in contrast to the sacred speech in "Eternal Ka-balhivane" or the sarcasm of "The Last Hunter." But it is very social. The economic relations between these folks have not severed any communal connections.

The most interesting connection in the story is between Luben and Ni'en ('neck' in Puyuma), a local Han Chinese farmer who markets produce for aboriginal farmers like Luben. Within Chinese society, Neck is marginal. He has found his place in the national economic anatomy as a middleman connecting aborigines to the market. He has a mentality fine-tuned to a commodity economy:

> …some people in the village regarded him as a little stingy. He liked to shortchange people and would haggle over a few cents. But there was no winning because he was the only outsider to handle the sale of the village crops and offer them odd jobs.[76]

This description makes Neck seem like a stereotype, like the unnamed shopkeeper in "The Last Hunter." And it seems to Luben that Neck will always get the better

[73] Badai, "Ginger Road," 34.
[74] Ibid., 31.
[75] Ibid., 26.
[76] Ibid., 28.

of him by taking advantage of his monopoly position. But Badai's characterization of Neck is not so simplistic. The relationship between Luben and Neck is not just functional: gift exchange fleshes out a friendship, producing an economic hybrid reminiscent of Mauss's gift economy. Neck uses Luben's language, Puyuma, to greet him, and offers to buy him lunch. Neck asks, "Will you let me take your ginger off your hands this year?" – making Luben a request, not a business offer.[77] And he offers to pay for lunch for the whole crew the following day. There is an added, psychological interest in the scene, because Neck's generosity causes Luben discomfort. Assuming that Luben might want more money, one of Neck's wives (yes, Neck has two wives, suggesting the greed of the Han Chinese middleman) offers a bit extra, only to meet with Luben's "insulted and peeved" refusal.[78] Literally, the "old big (man)" (*laoda* 老大) in Luben's heart is unhappy.[79] For Luben, as for his hunter ancestors, giving others the sense of one's endless abundance is the substance of a man's honour. With his capitalist's scarcity consciousness, Neck has no qualms about haggling; Luben feels haggling is beneath him but is in fact just as much a penny pincher as his patron.

However, the story would remain a charming, keenly observed work of ecorealist fiction with a rural palate of local colour, if it were not for the wild goat capture, in which the most compelling of all the Formosan literary hunter's gifts is given. The episode lifts both Neck and Luben out of the sphere of petty self-interested calculation in a market or honour economy. For though he is semi-specialized (as a cultivator who does odd jobs off-season), Luben is not exclusively a ginger farmer or handyman. He still goes hunting "with his fellow villagers."[80] Part of the profit from the ginger crop is for bullets for Luben's gun. One afternoon at the ginger patch, during a moment of daydreaming, Luben recalls trapping a wild goat live, though his experience out in his hunting ground is a gap in the text, either because hunting is now illegal or because it is now such a small part of his life. Luben also remembers how thrilled Neck was to hear about the capture, because fresh wild goat blood might be the solution to his problem. For Neck is a middle-aged man with two wives and a belief in the vital power of blood. There is thus a remnant of magical thinking in this story, as in "The Last Hunter." At the moment of slaughter, Neck

> …came to ask Luben to sell him a bowl of the blood. Luben, of course, knew why he wanted it but said nothing. He mixed the blood with onion flowers, medicinal herbs, and wine and gave it to [Neck] free of charge. But the following day his two wives came up the mountain and, when they came to Luben's door, they blushed and presented him with some fruit.[81]

[77] Ibid., 26.
[78] Ibid., 27.
[79] Badai, "Jianglu" [Ginger Road], 102.
[80] Idem, "Ginger Road," 27.
[81] Ibid., 36.

In the original, Luben does not give it to Neck "free of charge," which would merely reject Neck's interpretation of the exchange as a commodity transaction. He literally "cuts away what he loves" (*geai* 割愛), a common verb-object compound in Mandarin that conceals an older meaning in which generosity hurts, in which you cut away part of yourself when you give.[82] The pain of giving a part of oneself recalls another flashback in which Luben remembers getting very sick and going to the hospital and having his blood taken.[83] Seeing that Biyari identified the leg of the chair he made for his son with his son's leg, we might identify the blood Luben gave at the hospital with the blood the goat gives to Luben and which Luben in turn gives to Neck. If we see goat and Luben as separate creatures, the identification is merely metaphorical: the goat's blood is simply similar to Luben's blood. If, however, we see goat and man as parts of a larger being, for which each is a synecdoche, the identification is literal, and Luben really gives a part of himself, which is also a part of the goat and the giant who lives in the hills above Damalagaw, to Neck. There is "a constant exchange of a spiritual matter, including things and men," without alienation.[84] Of course, the episode is also a joke at Neck's expense, because if Neck wants the blood to restore his sexual vigour his manliness is therefore in doubt. But the tone of the scene is serious. The gift probably does not follow from the dictates of the hunter's code, in that Luben is not obligated to share with Neck specifically. It is discretionary sharing. But his memory's emotional force, intimate and terrifying, derives from a primitive hunting rite.

Then there is the return gift of fruit. Fruit is a typical Taiwanese gift. In Tai-tung fruit boxes are sold at roadside stands. But this gift of fruit is not purchased. Nor is it picked wild from nature. It is picked from a cultivated fruit tree in Neck's own orchard. Neck farms fruit to sell as a commodity, but in this case his wives make a gift of it. The wives must feel embarrassed in several ways, at being obliged to Luben and at their domestic relations being publicized. But there is a bloom of sincerity on this fruit. The poignancy of the gift stems from the fact that Luben's teenage son had stolen fruit from Neck's orchard in an act of resistance against someone who exploits his father. The gift of fruit seems to forgive this childish transgression against private property. It also returns the gift of the generative spiritual substance of nature in a different form – fruit for blood – allowing it to flow and somehow atoning for appropriation.

However, to the extent the relationship between two minor operators in a local gift economy is humanized and ecologized, the larger system is not. The narrator sets the drama of the ginger patch in a small corner of the stage of global finance. Near the end of the story Luben's teenage son flips through the financial news by the side of the Ginger Road:

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82 Badai, "Jianglu," 116.
83 Idem, "Ginger Road," 36.
84 Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*, 18.

> …trading on the stock market was hot. At mid-session the market was at 11 thousand and by the close of trading it was up another 235 points. 1.5 million shares were traded, delighting investors."
>
> He didn't understand a word. Bored, he flipped to the back page and read:
>
> "…in high tech, *Forbes* listed four new tycoons with an average age of 36 … with respective fortunes of $25 billion, $22 billion…"
>
> "With so much money, how many bikes could they buy?" he asked himself, puzzled.
>
> … How could he, living in a mountainous [sic] village where they slaved planting ginger and carrying baskets for a year's income far from the modern world, understand that a rise of a couple of points in the stock market meant pockets of cash? He didn't understand. His father didn't understand. The men and women workers who were planning on drinking, chatting and singing that night didn't understand either.
>
> A bird returning to its roost flew over his head. A blot of droppings fell, punctuating the end of the section of newspaper.[85]

The bird seems to have a comment to make about the orgy of capitalist accumulation. There is also a suggestion of commodity fetishism in this passage, reminiscent of Taussig's analysis of The New York Times.[86] Especially in the original Chinese: Balcom's "the market was at 11 thousand" is more literally that the stock market index on which the article is reporting "intraday (trading) at one point stood above 11 thousand points" (*panzhong yidu zhanshang yiwan yiqian dian* 盤中一度站上一萬一千點), as if the stock market index is a mountain climber; Balcom's "in high tech" is literally "show gratitude for the bounty of the technology industry" (*bai keji chanye zhi ci* 拜科技產業之賜), as if the investors are vassals, the technology industry a feudal lord.[87] Commodity fetishism invests mere commodities, or abstractions calculated based on commodities, with agency while concealing producers like Luben. In the depersonalizing logic of the system of global finance, economic and moral economies are completely separated. The narrator understands the larger system's logic, and cares about the characters. Luben probably does not understand, but he also shows concern for distant strangers, in that he wonders whether the long journeys of the ancient silk road traders were anything like his treks along the Puyuma silk road. To the investors, by contrast, it is all about the numbers.

As I have shown, as an economically marginal farmer, Luben also worries about the numbers. He also has to pinch his pennies as a father and husband. He has to give gifts, tokens of affection (but also status symbols), to his family members, and these gifts cost quite a lot of money. The ginger is sold by unit weight, and rather than return the yield to the field, Luben uses his profits to buy manufactured

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[85] Badai, "Ginger Roud," 40.
[86] Michael Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America,* 30–31.
[87] Badai, "Jianglu," 123.

commodities, the production of which he knows nothing, to give as gifts. His teenage son wants a 2,000 NTD bike, almost a tenth of the annual income from the ginger plot. His wife wants a sewing machine. Somehow in the end Luben finds a way to satisfy both of them. Though the bike and certainly the sewing machine might serve as capital, these investments turn out to be too risky. For this may be Luben's last season growing ginger, and not because he is getting old. The Ginger Road, which opened opportunities for Luben's community but also opened it up to the alienating global economy, gets washed out the following July. If Neck will not help him repair the road, the local gift economy will collapse, and Luben may have to go to work in a factory.

Conclusion

In her article on Syman Rapongan, another prominent Taiwan indigenous writer, Chiu Kuei-fen writes, "[a]s an active affirmation and critical selection, inheritance is an attempt to avoid a foreclosure of the possibility of future – in this case, the domination of certain prescribed narratives in envisaging the future of Taiwan."[88] Thus, modern aborigines can critically select from tradition to question prescribed narratives and propose their own visions. Chiu studied the narrative of indigeneity, in which Taiwanese people identify with aborigines to distinguish themselves from the Chinese. The three authors I have discussed address another narrative: Taiwan's transformation under an authoritarian state from third world pauper to high tech powerhouse. By ending their stories in lamentation, grim determination and irony, in a social or ecological loss – Esai loses his life, Biyari a muntjac, Badai the ginger road – they show us that the Taiwan economic "miracle" is a mystification, and that beneath the story of postwar Progress is a subtext of scarcity, control and alienation.

But although in ending their stories tragically, they take something away from the reader, they offer something in return: the hunter's gift, which, I have argued, "personifie[s] an abstraction."[89] This abstraction could be described as social and ecological integration. I began by claiming that these three authors dramatize value conflicts in exchanges to work out mixed feelings about modernity. My discussion suggests that they also redirect their misgivings into a productive critique of modernity. They reveal in what respects the state is falling short. They also allow us to see – and hear – the factory workers, farmers, hunters, animals, and even forests in the commodities we consume. In doing so, they turn objects of desire in the shop window or the supermarket back into Maussian gifts and thereby help us overcome consumer alienation, at least in our imaginations. In this way, their tragic tales partake of "a 'comic' archetype or a 'romance paradigm'" about an alternative

[88] Chiu Kuei-fen, "The Production of Indigeneity: Contemporary Indigenous Literature in Taiwan and Trans-cultural Inheritance," 1085.

[89] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*, 55.

narrative of Progress.[90] Fredric Jameson claimed that only Marxism could, "like Tiresias drinking the blood," personify the mystery of the cultural past and awaken utopian desire.[91] Perhaps in sipping from Luben's bowl of wild goat blood, we can try to digest a different cultural tradition, in order to make liberal capitalism more social and sustainable, for the benefit both of people and of things.

Afterword: The Sustainability of the Bushmeat Trade

In his monograph on the history of the representation of hunting, Matt Cartmill claims that, "[t]he importance of hunting lies in its symbolism, not its economics."[92] In this article I have followed Cartmill and explored the symbolism of hunting. But for many indigenous hunters in Taiwan, hunting is an economic endeavor. Unfortunately, they sometimes end up "hunting the forest's most endangered animals."[93] Today, the black bear is endangered, the sambar deer threatened.[94] The muntjac is "highly exploited" according to the IUCN Red List.[95] Mining, tourism, and Buddhist bird releases also have an impact on animal populations.[96] But the sustainability of hunting remains an issue.

In addressing this issue, we cannot assume that the hunter is a rational, self-interested, individual subject who maximizes utility. Hunting, even for the market, remains a cultural practice with symbolic and social values. Scott Simon has clarified by e-mail how "gift and commodity logics co-exist," in that gizzards may be publically given to certain members of the community, and the rest of the meat sold. This coexistence of logics shows how capitalism is socialized in actual indigenous communities.

We should also realize that indigenous cultural practices are self-regulatory. In a study of the Rukai, the conservation ecologist Kurtis Pei argues that traditional cultural restrictions help make hunting, even for the bushmeat trade, sustainable. Hunters harvest animals that reproduce rapidly, in the colder months, and in hunting grounds close to human civilization. Pei also notes customs like bird and dream divination. This is not, of course, to say that traditional practice is an adequate response to environmental issues. Culture has to respond to current concerns, and hunters must confer with experts, including conservation ecologists. Biyari cannot assume that ecologists do not understand the forest just because they number crunch it. An aversion to numbers, coupled with a cornucopian attitude toward

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90 Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, 103.
91 Ibid., 19.
92 Matt Cartmill, *A View to a Death in the Morning: Hunting and Nature through History*, 28.
93 Karen Laura Thornber, *Ecoambiguity: Environmental Crises and East Asian Literatures*, 135.
94 Kurtis Pei, "Hunting System of the Rukai Tribe in Taiwan, Republic of China," 2.
95 H. Leasor et al., *Muntiacus reevesi*.
96 Karen Laura Thornber, *Ecoambiguity: Environmental Crises and East Asian Literatures*, 140–45.

nature that led indigenous buffalo hunters to indulge in "a riotous orgy of killing," is dangerous.[97]

Indigenous hunters should also confer with legal experts. The legal scholar Carol Rose argues that Native American traditions can inform environmental management practices for hunting specifically and the environment in general. The Rule of Capture in common law gives a hunter ownership over an animal, while Rose takes seriously the Native American notion that a resource like animals in the forest can be conceived of as a gift, as long as this reconception is not used as an excuse for abuse. We parcel up the land into alienable parts, while Rose suggests traditional Native American temporary land sharing arrangements can reinvent the concept of property. She disputes the notion of an inevitable tragedy of the commons, and points out the problems that the ideology of exclusive ownership has caused.

Rose also suggests a role for indigenous writers to play. For Rose, poetry matters to practice, in the sense of having material effects. She implies that capitalist appropriation depends on metaphors "of the garden and the zoo."[98] These are settings for a "tame and placid property" that turns out not to be so tame, because "a real tree will talk back, even in a garden."[99] She calls for an acknowledgement of the wild streak in property by using (rather Tarzanesque) metaphors like "the untrammelled, leaping mountain lion," noting that to the hunters, who did not assert property rights, the wilderness was tame.[100]

The three indigenous writers I have discussed offer the metaphor of the hunter's gift, which they invest with a symbolism of integration and set in ecorealist stories that contextualize apparently alienable things. In this way, they contribute to an ethic of "eco-nomy" – literally, 'home management' – that honours nature as our largest home and the greatest giver of gifts.

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97 Carol Rose, "Given-ness and Gift: Property and the Quest for Environmental Ethics," 4.
98 Ibid., 30.
99 Ibid., 4, 30.
100 Ibid., 30.

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