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Beyond Loving Nature: Affective Conservation and Human-pig Violence in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary social theory has forcefully argued for a ‘loving’ postenvironmentalism based on intimate care and making kin with the non-human world. These arguments are a central part of an influential and cross-disciplinary scholarly discourse, increasingly adopted by environmental anthropologists, that envisions a universal moral ecology of ‘care, love and kinship’ as the solution to the near-apocalyptic social and environmental conditions of the Anthropocene. Drawing on ethnographic work in the Philippines, I explore how this narrowed affective repertoire maps awkwardly onto indigenous Pala’wan explanations of their relationship with the non-human world where reciprocity and respect are held in tension with fear, violence and death. I focus, in particular, on the Palawan bearded pig (*Sus ahoenobarbus*), an endemic species that has become an emblematic conservation species while also being extensively hunted by indigenous peoples across the Island.

KEYWORDS Conservation; affect; posthumanism; indigeneity; Southeast Asia

Introduction

In an interview in the *Earth Island Journal* in 2015, the late Philippine environmental activist and media-mogul Gina Lopez articulated the specific emotional power needed to regenerate the archipelago’s depleted marine and terrestrial environments:

Because I believe love is the foundation of economic growth ... It’s like love as a force, as a force of caring for others, a force of empathy. I think that’s really powerful. What I want to do is build the country from the bottom up ... so I’m riding on a crest and I’m maneuvering all the support into building green models on the ground.

Lopez’s vision of green growth, an expansive endeavour involving projects across the archipelago that remain ongoing despite her recent passing, can be critiqued as an aspirational and ethical ‘green’ lifestyle advocacy that offers middle-class Filipinos the potential to save nature through comfortable and fashionable forms of consumption (Webb & Pertierra 2019). What has garnered less critical attention is the affective

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language that underlies this vision of green development but is increasingly prominent in Philippine environmental discourse and practice.¹ In this paper, I am interested in critically exploring the ramifications for indigenous peoples of conservation practice and modes of ‘sustainable development’ that are increasingly articulated in exclusively positive affective terms.

A strongly emotional investment in ‘nature’ has been central feature of Western environmentalism and antecedents (Milton 2002), but the specific language that combines ‘love’, ‘care’ and, frequently, varied configurations of ‘kinship’ has recently experienced a renewal as part of an expansive ‘postenvironmentalist’ movement composed of academics, activists, artists and conservation practitioners (Singh 2018). Though informed by diverse intellectual lineages, postenvironmentalist approaches broadly draw insights from Science and Technology Studies and indigenous scholar-activists to eschew strict ontological divisions between humans and nonhumans in the search for a pan-species environmental justice and ecological well-being (e.g. Haraway 2011; Rose 2011; Todd 2017). Instead, close, intimate and respectful relations between beings of moral and social equivalence are seen to provide the basis of environmental salvation. In concrete terms, one manifestation of these ideas is the Compassionate Conservation movement, a controversial research and policy agenda that promotes the ‘treatment of all wildlife with respect, justice, and compassion’ and aims to achieve conservation goals without killing invasive species and a laborious focus on the care of individual animals rather than populations (Ramp & Bekoff 2015). Similarly, the nascent ‘rights of nature movement’, whose successes include the ascription of legal personhood to the Whanganui River in Aotearoa New Zealand and the incorporation of Amerindian cosmology into the constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia, frequently draws on a language that connects notions of caring kinship to effective environmental stewardship (Boyd 2017). These, and other projects, represent the slow advance of a specific kind of posthumanist discourse in viable conservation strategies and, therefore, means that these underlying ideas warrant closer interrogation and scrutiny.

This paper is not a critique that aims to lead us back ‘down the anthropocentric garden path’ (Bennett 2010: 120). Elevating dirt or other nonhumans ‘into something worthy of proper care and feeding’ may indeed offer a solution to environmental degradation (Alaimo 2008). Rather, this paper is concerned with the erasures and disciplinary work of what is emerging as a universalising moral ecology of ‘care, love and kinship’, to quote Métis scholar Zoe Todd’s (2017) pithy summation. I argue that this emotional assemblage, what I term here love-and-care futurisms, is a powerful environmental discourse that forecloses on alternative conversations by offering a narrowed affective repertoire for ethical practice and works to excise the emotional complexity that different societies might hold with the nonhuman world from the scholarly record. A global conservation vision grounded in these narrow terms has tangible implications for peoples who do not, or cannot, articulate their relationship with the environment through this specific moral ecology – particularly for peoples identifying or are identified as ‘indigenous’ who have been, and continue to be, the subject to

globally circulating simplifications in environmental discourse (Brosius 1997; Nadasdy 2005).

A focus on hunting offers a useful entry point to provide a more nuanced account of more-than-human relations in which negative emotions are often held alongside positive, and can help evade reduction ‘either-or’ formulations of interspecies sociality. While the anthropology of hunting has long emphasised the transactional nature of hunter–prey relations in which the provision of game is dependent on respectful behaviour, more recent work has also increasingly focused on the affective tensions embodied hunting practices (Fausto 2007; Knight 2012). Taking my cue from the literature that speaks to the ambivalence of hunting encounters, this paper draws on ethnographic work with indigenous Pala’wan households across several *barangays* (local government areas) on the southeast coast of Palawan Island, the Philippines. I focus on the Pala’wan explanations of their relationships with the Palawan bearded pig – a recently established species of wild boar that has become one of the iconic and threatened emblems of the ecological frontier of Palawan Island. By exploring the ways in human-pig relationships are described in everyday livelihood practices and the wild boar’s (*biyek talun*) role within Pala’wan cosmology, I point to a gulf between how human-pig relations are articulated and contemporary postenvironmentalist discourse that valorises love, intimate care and making kin as the solution to environmental decline. In doing so, I am not arguing that Pala’wan people do not love or care for the non-human world or that they are environmental destroyers, but their descriptions of life with non-humans hold ideals of respectful relations with the non-human world in tension with routine forms of violence. As such, they do not offer an accessible resource for contemporary environmental activism both within and beyond academia. I conclude that an overriding focus on ‘care, love and kinship’ in converging social theory and conservation discourse threatens to reinforce longstanding biases in which indigenous Filipinos have historically been positioned as wasteful ‘users’ rather than caring ‘managers’ of their environment.

The More-than-human Turn and Speculative Love-and-care Futurism

A variety of social science disciplines have readily taken up the more-than-human turn, an analytical framing and political project that broadly argues the need to reconfigure human relations with non-humans as the solution to the near-apocalyptic social and environmental conditions of the Anthropocene. We must, as Tsing has recently rephrased this imperative, stop ‘stomping on all the others’ in live successfully on this planet (Tsing 2015: vi). Within this expansive and cross-disciplinary project, the nature-culture binary of Western enlightenment thinking and modernity is the ultimate source of an instrumental view of nonhumans that has led to wasted landscapes, widespread extinction and human suffering. The solution to these problems is not a return to the rigid protectionism of fortress conservation but doubling down on trajectories of critical environmental scholarship that argue against notions of pristine and untouched nature in what can be considered a form of ‘postenvironmentalism’. As Latour (2011: 24), articulates this distinction:

Environmentalists say: 'From now on we should limit ourselves.' Postenvironmentalists exclaim: 'From now on, we should stop flagellating ourselves and take up explicitly and seriously what we have been doing all along at an ever-increasing scale, namely, intervening, acting, wanting, caring'.

In practical terms, contemporary postenvironmentalism seeks to envision ways that humans can be placed in even physically closer, and more emotionally intimate, relationship with their non-human partners.

A core feature of this ambition is the effort to create, encourage or recognise positive affective relationships with the nonhuman world as models for future practice. This speculative drive and its affective language was neatly summarised by Plumwood (2002) in her still-influential book *Environmental Cultures: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*: 'If our species does not survive the ecological crisis, it will probably be due to our failure ... to work out new ways to live with the earth, to rework ourselves ... We will go onwards in a different mode of humanity, or not at all'. The answer, she continues, is 'ultimately, a durable relationship between we humans and our planetary partners must be built on the kinds of perceptual, epistemic and emotional sensitivities which are best founded on respect, care and love'. Since this book's publication in the early 2000s, there has been explosion of posthumanist scholarship informed by a diverse lineages in critical feminism, Deleuzian philosophy, and Science and Technology Studies seeking to answer this call for detailing and revealing liveable 'other worlds' that are largely rooted in a language of love and care. The sources of these other worlds are varied, often emanating from creative engagement with routine domesticity, novel environmental practice or reinterpretation of industrially produced ecological catastrophe (Haraway 2007; Tsing 2011; Braidotti 2017). Like Plumwood, others have also found inspiration for vitalist futures in the non-dualist ontologies of some indigenous peoples and the work of indigenous scholar-activism from North America (and to a lesser extent other settler-colonial nations such as Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand) (e.g. Haraway 2011; Rose 2011). As Povinelli (2017: 59) has suggested, the 'rediscovery' of animism within speculative thought has served to leverage the 'contemporary idea that we should all be stewards of the earth' and helped produce lively exchange between concerns for a more-than-human justice and selected elements of some indigenous ontologies (TallBear 2016; Todd 2016).

Despite the open-ended quality of posthumanist perspectives and diverse cosmologies of indigenous peoples throughout the world that might serve as inspiration for future-building, these hopeful 'other worlds' are largely bound by narrow language to describe desirable futures. The result of these entangled intellectual lineages is a broad academic discourse, what I refer to as love-and-care futurisms, characterised by: (1) an almost exclusively positive affective relationship with the non-human world (typically love but also friendliness, conviviality, trust and other cognates) that can foster forms of multi-species 'nourishment', 'justice', 'thriving' or 'flourishing', and (2) an actively custodial language of care or kinship, entailing close and intimate contact, through which these positive emotional states are routinely mobilised and sustained. These terms have come to represent a diffuse set of related ideas drawn on in

shifting and varied configurations to articulate a normative agenda for ethical environmental practice.

This effusive and speculative cross-disciplinary analytical and political project remains curiously distanced from more critical work that cautions ‘against the conflation of care with affection, happiness, attachment, and positive feeling’² (Murphy 2015: 719, see also Ureta 2016; de la Bellacasa 2017). The anthropological literature surrounding hunting has rarely been brought into conversation with postenvironmentalist thought, yet I suggest it offers a way to think beyond simplistic either-or formulations of more-than-human sociality as either strictly positive or negative. A core insight from this work is that humans are not, and perhaps never have been, unrestrained predators of the non-human world. Instead, cross-cultural literature from hunting societies that endow non-humans with varying degrees of personhood has demonstrated how hunter–prey relations are intensely social. While sometimes hunter–prey relations are framed as part of a ‘cosmic economy of sharing’ that is often grounded in conflict-free trust (Bird-David 1990; see also Ingold 2000), anthropologists have also increasingly cautioned against simplistic representations of more-than-human reciprocity as purely convivial (Fausto 2007; Knight 2012). Brightman’s (1993) examination of Cree hunting practices, for example, has emphasised that cultivating the archetypical ‘grateful prey’ of many North American first nations peoples is often adversarial, and involves the routine social work of domination and trickery. More recent and geographically diverse ethnographic work with hunting peoples has also demonstrated how care is bound up with violent risk to human bodies (Willerslev 2007; Brandišauskas 2016), reciprocity inseparably fused to coercion (Nadasdy 2007), and respect tempered with seeming hostility and denigration (Kohn 2013). None of this is to suggest that human relations with the non-human world need purely be negative, only that, like relations among humans, this sociality is complex, ambivalent and in practice rarely meets cultural ideals.

The Place of Pigs in Conservation Practice

Palawan Island, located in the southwest of the Philippine archipelago, is often framed in scholarly and popular accounts as possessing a unique colonial history and biogeography that connects it more closely to Borneo than the rest of the Philippines. Like much of the southern Philippines, Palawan was only fully ‘pacified’ under American colonial control in the early twentieth century. Prior to the American administration of the islands, the Spanish empire had a fairly tenuous territorial control over much of the province that was under the influence of the Sultanate of Sulu to varying degrees. As a result, Palawan experienced sustained widespread migration from land-scarce areas of the archipelago mostly only in the post-War period, often from the far more densely populated regions in the Visayas and Luzon.³ In the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, this reputation as a limitless land and resource frontier was overlain with a growing perception of the island as the last and dwindling ‘ecological frontier’ of the Philippines (Arquiza 1996). Part of this reputation stemmed from the expansive (though visibly declining) forest cover relative the rest of the country.

However, as part of the global biodiversity boom of the 1990s, the island's unique non-human inhabitants have become central to tourism promotion, conservation practice and the province's political and economic identity (Webb 2019).

Though the language of biodiversity is a relatively recent discourse for understanding and accounting for biological difference across nonhuman world, early colonial descriptions of the island also strongly emphasised Palawan's distinct flora and fauna which marked it as a unique part of the Philippine archipelago in the late nineteenth century. Over a century ago, for example, the travel writer Frederic Sawyer (1900: 309) emphasised the distinctiveness of the island: 'the fauna [of Palawan] has been studied to some extent ... It comprises monkeys, pigs, civets, porcupines, flying squirrels, pheasants, and a small leopard, this latter not found in any other of the Philippines, and showing a connection with Borneo'. A raft of environmental policies and programmes enacted in the 1990s in reaction to growing concerns over the island's deteriorating ecosystems, such as the Strategic Environmental Plan for Palawan (1992) and the UNSECO declaration of the entire province as a biosphere reserve (1990), drew on similar language of species distinctiveness and endemism. In contemporary conservation practice, nongovernmental organisations draw on increasingly sophisticated scientific and media practices catalogue and visually disseminate the island's unique wildlife and threatened species living in its forests, oceans and mangroves. Chief amongst these are the alien and charismatic mouse deer (*Tragulus nigricans*), the Palawan pangolin (*Manis culionensis*) and the Palawan Peacock (*Polyplectron napoleonis*), the latter of which features on the seal of Palawan's capital city of Puerto Princesa.

In 2017, for example, a consortium of local government agencies, non-governmental organisations and foreign researchers succeeded in designating 41,350 ha of forests around the distinctive 'Cleopatra's Needle', one of Palawan Island's highest mountains, as a 'critical habitat'. Supporting the declaration of Cleopatra's Needle Critical Habitat⁴ was a collaborative project of ecological science between Filipino and foreign researchers and activists that catalogued the presence of emblematic wildlife. Alongside photographs of rare and threatened species, the project's online documentation also emphasises the value of the conservation territory, 'to the last 200–300 members of the indigenous Batak tribe' whose lives and livelihoods are supported by the forest and, because of their dependence on it, would 'try to protect it' (Global Wildlife Conservation 2020). Original project proposal documentation from 2015 suggested that 'this tribe of hunter-gatherers, who are the first inhabitants of the Philippines, still live in balance with the forest. They live in simple make-shift huts and travel around gathering resin, rattan and honey, while catching the occasional Palawan Bearded Pig' (Hoevenaars & van Beijnen 2015: 9).

Biodiversity, as an assemblage of discourses about species uniqueness and visual representations of nonhuman life, is a potent force on Palawan and elsewhere (Lowe 2004). This commonly used strategy links biodiversity protection to indigenous livelihoods in a language of harmony and elides potentially messy affective relations between humans and animals. The careful project language avoids identifying Batak people as engaging in any illegal or destructive activities (shifting agriculture, charcoal

making and hunting). This evasiveness is a strategic reaction to older, and in many cases still ongoing, environmental discourses that blamed indigenous peoples for various forms of environmental decline (Dressler 2009; Smith & Dressler 2020). Yet, these simplifications are similarly fraught in world where many indigenous peoples are undeniably deeply enmeshed in hunting and the illegal international trade of wildlife. To explore what is elided when project and planning documents obscure the emotional complexity of human relationships with the nonhuman world, I want to focus here on indigenous people's own articulations of the relationship with wild boars on the southeast coast of the Island and consider what is obscured by throwaway statements such as 'catching the occasional Palawan bearded pig'.

The Palawan bearded pig (*Sus ahenobarbus*) is one of a number of endemic species (such as the Palawan pangolin and Palawan monitor lizard) that were once considered part of more broadly distributed species in Southeast Asia but who, through the work of taxonomists, has recently been deemed distinct enough to warrant species classification. As early as the late nineteenth century, material collected on Palawan by the French naturalist Alfred Marche were used to identify the Palawan bearded as a distinct species (*Sus ahenobarbus*). Revaluations of the 'species' concept in biology in the 1940s led to major 'taxonomic lumping' that reduced the number of wild pig species in Southeast Asia from over 40 to three (Meijaard & Rawson 2015), and identified the Palawan bearded pig as a sub-species of the far more widely distributed bearded pig (*Sus Barbatus*). While the uniqueness of the Palawan bearded pig was occasionally hinted at over the course of the twentieth century, it was not until the early 2000s that new morphometric and DNA analyses restored the Palawan bearded pig to full species-hood. In tandem, this newly produced endemism means that *Sus ahenobarbus* has been identified by international and Philippine conservationists as 'in decline' (Meijaard & Widmann 2017). This has sparked concern from popular Philippine media about the fate of this unique species and, ultimately, renewed interest in the conservation of the bearded pig, an emblematic species frequently feature in lists of 'iconic' Palawan species and the frequent subject of an expansive handicraft market in Puerto Princesa.

Fear in the Forest: Human-pig Violence in Palawan's Uplands

The Pala'wan are one of several ethnolinguistic groups on Palawan Island that the postcolonial Philippine state now formally bureaucratises as 'Indigenous Peoples'. Palawan Island, along with Mindoro and some areas of Mindanao, are somewhat unique in the Philippines as they have intensive histories of internal settlement that have structured sometimes stark socio-spatial boundaries between recent migrants and what are seen to be culturally distinct 'tribal' groups. In the municipality of Bataraza especially, the spontaneous and state-sponsored histories of migration from more Hispanicised areas of the Philippines to Palawan since the nineteenth century have produced relatively sharp divisions between migrant populations and dispossessed 'tribal' peoples who stereotypically reside on the island's public forestlands. In the uplands of the southeast coast, Pala'wan livelihoods are typically heterogeneous and

varied. Prior to the arrival of homesteading wet rice farmers from the Visayas and Luzon in the 1950s, Pala'wan households relied primarily on polycropped swidden fields to yield rice, a range of root crops and vegetables for household subsistence, as well as the production of goods such as sugar and tobacco. Today, though a range of market-based activities in the lowlands has become central to indigenous household reproduction, 'forest-based' livelihoods such as swidden agriculture and non-timber forest products remain central features of everyday life for the vast majority of Pala'wan people.

In discussing forest-based livelihoods, Pala'wan people articulate perspectives regarding their forests and its inhabitants that could potentially serve as a resource for posthumanist 'worlding' and related conservation practice. Ethnographers working with Pala'wan people have come to provide a consistent description of the relations between humans and nonhumans: The nonhuman world is an intensely socialised, populated by both human and non-human agents. Rice, ancestral spirits, powerful deities among other nonhumans all qualify as social, moral and political '*taw*' (people) that must be negotiated in order to sustain both cosmo-environmental balance and daily concerns of subsistence and household life (Revel 1990; Macdonald 2007; Theriault 2017). Reproducing good environmental conditions or abundance of particular foods or animals is often predicated on Pala'wan people acting in socially appropriate ways to both humans and non-humans (Smith 2018). However, there is considerable disjuncture between ideal visions of an intimate loving nature and Pala'wan more-than-human relationships, in which close spatial proximity to forests is often tempered with fear and cautious distance. Though state officials and travel writers have overwhelming essentialised Palawan's indigenous peoples as 'timid' and 'peaceful', Pala'wan relationships with the nonhuman forest world in mythology and everyday livelihood practices are suffused with violence or the potential for violence. Neither are these relations necessarily enacted between equal partners. While non-humans are recognised as social agents embedded in highly moralised relationships, endowed with what Descola (2009) describes as the same 'interiority' as humans, their capacities, agency and value are unevenly distributed. Perhaps distinct from Amazonian ontologies, Sprenger (2016) describes a pan-Southeast Asian emphasis on 'graded personhood' that recognises non-human agency but does not treat nonhuman lives as equivalent in capability or moral worth to humans. Relations between various kinds of *taw* are metaphorically (and physically) stratified, sometimes non-reciprocal and highly ambivalent in practice.

For example, Pala'wan relationships with trees offer, at first glance, an accessible resource for constructing more palatable 'other' worlds. The mountains of Bataraza are a mosaic of forest succession produced through swidden cultivation and other livelihood practices. Amid this patchwork are stands of tree species or individual trees that have never been cut down in living memory because they are home to invisible spirit-beings. Anthropologists and environmental researchers working in other areas of Palawan Island have sometimes termed these areas 'sacred groves' or 'tabooed forests'. For more than 50 years, this practice has been periodically explored as an 'eco-symbolic regulator' (Fox 1954; Olofson 1995), and a resource management practice

that could readily fit within existing conservation language of the 1980s-90s that aimed to identify indigenous forms of biodiversity management in the Philippines (Apolinar *et al.* 1998). While state foresters in the Philippine have routinely balked at the prospect recognising that indigenous peoples might ‘really believe’ in the power of unseen spirits (Theriault 2017), the less than loving relationship that many Pala’wan have with large trees represents another barrier to the valorisation of ‘sacred groves’. Rather than being left alone because of aesthetic value or sense of respectful obligation to the non-human, large trees are potentially homes for nightmarish and invisible non-human ‘forest people’ (*seytan* or *lenggam*). If the large trees that serve as their homes are disturbed, the aggrieved *seytan* will visit the transgressor in their dreams, inflicting severe illness and death. Because of this much feared possibility, potential swidden sites with large trees are rigorously ritually tested for the presence forest people of before clearing. As such, these sections of forest home to malevolent spirits might be tempting sites for swidden cultivation and offer the potential for larger yields but are largely avoided primarily out fear for personal repercussions rather than explanations for larger environmental balance.

These kinds of ambivalent emotional and moral relations are replete the more-than-human forest worlds of the Bataraza uplands, but I will focus in more detail on Pala’wan relationships with *biek talun* or wild boars (as opposed to the domesticated *biek ipatan*, or ‘cared for pigs’, raised by some indigenous households in the uplands). Wild boars live within heavily forested areas, subsisting on wild fruits and tubers, and appearing periodically to raid the polycropped swidden fields of upland farmers that are rich sources of cultivated tubers and fruit trees and, therefore, also occupy the role of a kind of pest that afflicts swidden fields much like widespread macaques or various rice insects. However, like most iconic and endemic species of Palawan, such as the Palawan water monitor and the Philippine bear-cat, bearded pigs are frequently hunted by Pala’wan people in Bataraza to provide *ulam* (viand), the flavourful component of meals that accompany starchy staples such as rice or the wide variety of root crops (chiefly bland staples such as cassava, sweet potato and taro) produced in upland swidden fields. Above and beyond most other game, wild boar is valued as a particularly delicious part of indigenous people’s diets. On one of my first trips into the uplands of Bataraza, I immediately encountered a Pala’wan man travelling into the lowlands to vend pre-prepared portions of boar meat to migrant households (see Figure 1). When we later ate the boar, I was struck by its intense and delicious flavour compared to domestic pigs. Other wild game, such as bats and birds, often contain little meat relative to the effort of catching them, and are often far less palatable. In one instance, for example, I had to abort an interview because a family in the next village cluster, some distance away, were boiling a Palawan stink badger that rendered the air noxious and made even basic communication difficult.

The boars who roam the forests are killed for both subsistence and to protect crops in a variety of ways: sharp, tension-sprung bamboo traps (*baweg*) with trip-wires are placed on known pig trails in the mountains; they are hunted down with dogs and killed with spears or home-made rifles; or, more commonly, explosive pig bombs composed of gunpowder, glass and nails are planted around active swidden fields or within



Figure 1. Pala'wan man vending wild boar (*Sus ahenobarbus*) meat.

fallowed plots still containing productive fruit trees or cassava tubers. In cases where household need for *ulam* is satisfied, skilled Pala'wan hunters may sell boar meat to lowland migrants as a source of cash income. While the Philippine Wildlife Act (R.A. 9147) makes exceptions for the collecting and hunting of animals by indigenous peoples for subsistence or customary use, this special dispensation does not apply to 'threatened species' or allow for the commercial sale of hunted animals. Pala'wan people, therefore, understood boar hunting as illegal, and have been informed by successive forestry projects in the municipality that pig hunting is forbidden.

In addition to everyday concerns over the struggle for subsistence and political questions over the authority to utilise forest resources, *biek talun* are surrounded by a widely recounted mythological narrative that establishes a hierarchical relationship between pigs, humans and the deity responsible for pigs. Pala'wan elders and village headmen, *panglima*, are often keen to recount the story of the *Ampu't Biek* (Master of Pigs) in which two cousins (or sometimes brothers) injure a wild boar and, in following it into the spiritual underworld, instead find a wounded man. One older *panglima* recounted a version of this narrative to me:

There were two cousins living in that land. One is humble and the other is proud. Both of them made themselves a trap for the wild pigs, and they placed it near their swidden fields. Every day

they visited it and saw that it's broken, but no wild pigs are there. One day the humble one decided to follow the drops of blood of the wild pig that was hit by his *baweg*. While walking he noticed that the path was becoming muddy, and he could feel himself slowly sinking under the ground. At the same time he felt tired and hungry, so he decided to go home to rest and eat. But he left a mark there so he can go back to that place again.

So, after a while, when he gained his strength again, he decided to come back to that place. When he finally sank under the earth, he saw a house and he said to himself 'this is where the wild pigs go'. So, he entered a house and an old woman came out and said to him 'what brings you here?' and he answered 'I can't get home. I think I'm lost, that's why I came here'. But he never told her the truth: that he was following the wild pig that was wounded. The old woman invited him come up the stairs and asked him if he can help her husband who was sick and lying inside their room. He heard the moaning of that man, and he said to the old woman 'Minan [Auntie] I will look at him after sundown'. In the evening, the old woman asked him if he needed a light, 'no need' said the man 'I'm going to see him now'.

When he looked at the man, he saw that there was stab wound from a piece of bamboo. The humble man pulled it out and sucked on the wound to remove the dead blood. After a few hours, the man regained his strength and was able to get out of his bed and he said to the humble man 'I might be dead if not for you', and they talked through the night. The roof of the house was full of honeybees. And the flooring was full of snakes with red tails. And then the old woman invited him to eat but he refused. He was asked to cook some chicken eggs. He did what the old woman said, but was careful not to touch the snakes with the fire. The old woman said 'after you eat the egg don't throw the shell. Instead put it back in the nest'. After cooking the eggs, he put the shells back where he got it from. Then the old woman said 'just go home tomorrow morning' and he answered 'I have no choice but to stay here because it is already midnight, so I will just leave early morning'. There was a wild pig with seven heads inside a cage at the back of their house, and that wild pig would like to eat the humble man but the old woman said to the pig 'don't eat him, he is a good man'. The pig did not eat him.

When the morning came, the man decided to go home but before he left the old woman said to him 'bring this seven-headed pig with you and when you are near your house hit them on the head, one by one, with the handle of your machete'. So, he went home and did exactly as the old woman said to him, he hit the wild pig and brought it inside his house and that serve as their viand for a long time. His proud cousin was jealous and asked him 'why do you always have wild pig meat? Tomorrow I will follow that wild pig wherever it goes'. The humble man just smiled at his cousin.

The next day the proud cousin visited his *baweg* and he noticed that it was broken. So, he also followed the droplets of the blood of the wild pig that was hit by his trap and also came to the muddy area. He was also hungry and tired and he also decided to go home, and then he came back and also sank under the earth. He also saw the house and he said 'it is not the wild pigs that eat and destroy my *kamote* [cassava], but it is a human also. I will kill all of you'. The old woman asked for his help because her husband was hit by a sharp piece of bamboo yesterday while he was getting some *kamoting kahoy*. The arrogant man said 'get some light and I will see him'. He saw his own *baweg* that was protruding from the man's body and he said 'that is my *baweg*'. He did nothing and after a while the sick man died.

The old woman said 'Why you are like that? The first man came here is not like that!' and he answered 'I'm different from him!'. And he saw many pigs in the backyard and he killed almost all of them and he said 'I will eat as much meat as I can because it's been a year since I've had meat, only cassava' and the old woman just looked at him and said nothing. And when the morning came he decided to go home but the old woman invited him to eat some eggs first.

So, he fetched some eggs from the chickens' nest and then he cooked them on the fire near the snakes, and the snakes got hurt and left. He scattered the eggs shell everywhere and said 'I will go home now'. The old woman said 'bring this seven headed pig with you, and kill them when you're near your house'. When he was almost back at his house there was suddenly a strong wind, and then that man was eaten by the huge wild pig with seven heads. And the humble man said to his cousin's family, 'don't wait for him because he was already eaten by the huge wild pig'.

This story does some considerable thematic work in the context of Pala'wan forest worlds and offers an explanation of the mechanisms through which humans might 'pass covenant' with pigs (Descola 2009: 152), but two elements are worth emphasising in terms of the ability to serve as an environmental parable. Firstly, the story clearly works to valorise humbleness by demonstrating the bloody ramifications of excessive pride (*ambug*) in encounters with non-humans, and establishes access to pigs as dependent on appropriate relationships with their deity Master (in this case, the wounded man). Acting in socially inappropriate ways, being disobedient and disrespectful, to the non-human world risks not only not being able to access wild boars but also a violent death (i.e. being eaten alive by pigs). A second theme of this story, and many others, is that the wild boar is really a person (*taw*). The physical slippage between human and animal form is a common theme in Pala'wan cosmology and daily life (Macdonald 2007: 121–122). For some pig hunters operating in visually confusing forest and grasslands, this means there is always a risk that the wild boar will transform into a man at the moment they bring down the machete or pull the trigger on their rifles. After recounting the story, the panglima explained 'and that is why I'm afraid to use the *balatik* [pig trap]'.

However, despite this uncertainty surrounding the personhood of pigs and people and an idealised emphasis on reciprocal relations between humans and the powerful Masters of various nonhuman entities, descriptions of boar hunting as part of every livelihood struggles frame human-pig relations in terms of frustrated violence, and are positioned within a narrative of scarcity and government prohibition. Concisely, this narrative can be summarised as follows: wild pigs, years ago, were plentiful but are now scarce and can only be found deep in the mountains far from most Pala'wan settlements. Explanations for this decline are, of course, subject to variation between individuals. One prominent explanation, especially among older women and men, is that a large storm that hit the island in 1975, and had a significant impact on forest and their nonhuman inhabitants. One older Pala'wan man provided me a commonly recounted explanation:

There are no more *kiaw* [talking mynah] nor wild boar here anymore. Animals can be found anywhere here before, but now they all went away, including the *kiaw* and *agay* [Philippine cockatoo] ... Before there were many of them. If the really big trees didn't fall down there would still be many of them here. But the when the really big trees fell down during the big storm, you don't see any big birds here anymore. Before, they were all close, but now you can only find them far away. They're still there up in the mountains.

More commonly, however, many Pala'wan people suggest that the *biek talun* have been hunted into scarcity by ever expanding density of pig bombs and traps in the forests.

For even the few Pala'wan men who still actively hunt wild pigs, catches are reportedly extremely low – perhaps only three a year. However, in my interviews and informal discussions on unrelated topics, many Pala'wan frequently veered into gossip surrounding one Pala'wan man named Maloc Baldusa, who lived in the forested interior of Bataraza. One day, my research assistant and I travelled deep into the uplands to visit Maloc and examine his somewhat exaggerated 'mountain' of pig skulls that reflected his success hunting boars (Figure 2). After an arduous hike to a far-flung hamlet, I asked Maloc the secret to his success over a meal of cassava bread and dried fish, and he suggested that every night ten to twenty wild boars raid his swidden fields to eat his crops. If you travelled to his fields the intensity of their rooting around in the earth makes the earth looked 'ploughed'. He explained that the secret really is that his abundant fruit and root crops 'lure them, and I make pig traps and pig bombs. If they don't eat my crops, I get some shark's intestines and ferment them and put it there [on the trap]. Last year, I trapped maybe 200 pigs'. Even catching a fraction of this number would be a considerable amount. While initially denying his use of pig bombs, Maloc suggested the only limit on his use of explosive traps was the expense of gun powder, one box of which costing around 150 pesos can produce around 80 small pig bombs. In addition to questioning Maloc on a range of topics, part of my visit was motivated by a desire to actually buy some boar



Figure 2. Maloc's 'mountain' of wild boar jawbones.

meat. After my first encounter buying and eating *biek talun*, I was constantly looking out for Pala'wan vendors but had been completely unsuccessful amid explanations of the withdrawal of boars from much of the uplands. He had no boar meat to sell me, but suggested that if I could furnish him with a box of gunpowder he would supply me all the boar meat I could eat. For Maloc, the almost unlimited access to wild game presented its own dilemmas:

I have no problems with *ulam*, there are many birds and wild pigs here, but if you have them all the time a can of sardines is better. The name of the bird is *balud* [imperial pigeon], about the size of a chicken, they are small and abundant here. If you have a *bomba*, you'll have no problem getting *ulam* here.

Despite the expertise of hunters living in the more far-flung hamlets, pig hunting is not a risk-free process especially when pig bombs are too expensive or simply not effective. Maloc and his relatives had sustained multiple injuries during hunting as they were attacked by what they suggested were highly aggressive and territorial *biek talun*. In a recent incident, he recalled, his son deployed a defective pig bomb that injured, but did not kill, a wild boar. The boar, bloody and enraged, charged Maloc and his companions, whose spears broke while attempting to defend themselves. Maloc stumbled and was pushed him to the ground, and was gored '36 times' by the pig, leaving deep gashes over his thighs and back. Before leaving he warned us,

In fact, if you climb [into the mountains] in summer by yourself, you won't come back down ... If you see lots of pigs there and climb up a tree you'll be stuck. If you see a lot of them, just run straight don't climb up a tree.

In Pala'wan accounts, the scarcity produced by this kind of human-pig violence had produced an ever-increasing density of pig traps and pig bombs in forests and fields in an effort to capture increasingly scarce boars. As a result, most Pala'wan view the patchwork of thick, primary forests and former swidden fields in the uplands as too dangerous to wander aimlessly. I was repeatedly told poking around in old swidden plots risked walking into a long-forgotten but still active pig bomb or trap. I was warned by one *panglima* that 'many people are still making pig traps on the mountain [despite the ban], if someone goes there and isn't careful he will surely be killed'. In recent years, over five people had been reportedly killed by wandering into bamboo pig traps. These experiences are part of wider descriptions of everyday life in which fear is core emotional driver of 'environmental' behaviour in the form of a cautious distance from the forest and many of its inhabitants.

Discussion and Conclusion: The Politics of Not Loving Nature in the Philippines

The gulf between contemporary postenvironmentalism in conservation practice and scholarly debate and Pala'wan articulations of their more-than-human worlds are

significant in the context of existing histories of forest management targeting the archipelago's Indigenous Peoples. Intrusive and frequently punitive forest governance projects that have unfolded in Bataraza over the past several decades have consistently legitimated their activities in terms of indigenous environmental deficiency (Smith & Dressler 2019). The semantic goal posts for environmental responsibility are also constantly and rapidly shifting on Palawan Island. Philippine environmentalism has undergone a rapid transformation from what Broad and Cavanagh (1993) described in the 1980s as the 'environmentalism of the poor' – the concerns of rural and urban smallholders for the resources that sustain their livelihoods – to an emergent middle class whose aesthetic appreciation of nature is increasingly mediated by international discourses and imagery. While the adoption of posthumanist language or 'compassionate conservation' by the Philippine state is unlikely any time soon, civil society has readily taken up elements of contemporary global environmentalism as exemplified by Lopez' vision in which Filipino nature could be saved through loving (and lucrative) appreciation, such as constructing 'eco-educational' camp sites on Pala'wan lands within the Mount Mantalingahan range. The extent to which this specific kind of academic discourse has or can alter global conservation policy is up for debate, but scholar-practitioner alliances have historically pushed to varying degrees of success alternatives to strict 'fortress' protected area policies throughout the world. At the very least, is increasingly drawn into the scholarly work of envisioning new conservation practices (Singh 2018).

In examining the emotional and moral complexity of Pala'wan relationships with the non-human, neither solely comprised of negative or positive aspects but difficult configurations of both, my aim has not been to support any argument that indigenous people cannot manage their lands or should not have sovereignty over their ancestral territories. Instead, what these experiences reveal is that Pala'wan people in Bataraza possess limited set of rhetorical resources that, within ascendant scholarly and conservation discourse, can be picked out and held up as a good and moral practice within already rigid demands of eco-performativity. The question here is not whether we can somehow definitely assert that some indigenous peoples either do or do not love nature, but rather the difficulty in mapping a post-humanist theorisations into lives they ostensibly seek solidarity with over the ways in which more-than-human relations are described as part of everyday indigenous practices and cosmology. Can Pala'wan modes of engaging with boars be described as 'caring', and can that caring support a 'multi-species flourishing'? Can *seytan*, the invisible and malevolent creatures residing in trees, be productively interpreted as 'kin'? Can fear and cautious distance, rather than intimate love or compassionate conservation, serve as productive ways to prevent environmental apocalypse and heal the ravages of neo-colonial thinking?

These are questions that speak to much older debates over the simplification of the 'ecological noble savage' and the strategic essentialisms of international environmental advocacy (Brosius 1997; Nadasdy 2005). They are perhaps worth revisiting in the context of posthumanist enchantment that often excises troublesome, undesirable or contentious beliefs and practices from the scholarly record and reifies others

(Bessire & Bond 2014), in addition to the tremendous growth of the global indigenous rights movement since the 1990s. The expectations surrounding often simplified figures of ‘indigenous peoples’ are now, as Chandler and Reid (2018: 262) note, ‘powerful and dangerous insofar as [they] function to discipline the indigenous themselves into performing their own resilience’. Chandler and Reid argue that discourses of indigeneity that simplify and flatten complex realities operate as kind of diffuse governmentality of expectations to unintentionally produce disempowered subjects. Neale and Vincent (2017: 433) suggest that expectations of indigenous environmentalism mean that indigenous peoples who think like Western dualists, embracing mining and other forms of resource extraction, are expected to ‘take their cue from the animists and totemists’ like all the rest of us. For Pala’wan and other less declaratively loving or caring peoples this dynamic is even more granular; they must take their cues from other indigenous groups whose practices and rhetoric are sufficiently convivial. These wide ranging expectations highlight the dangers of concretely fusing ‘care, love and kinship’ to the national and international infrastructures that bureaucratised indigeneity which indigenous peoples on Palawan and beyond must already strategically navigate on uneven terms (Theriault 2019; Smith & Dressler 2020). Like other policy frameworks surrounding indigenous recognition, the systems of indigenous recognition in the Philippines hold the power to refuse many behaviours, pig bombs or swidden agriculture, as environmentally ‘repugnant’ (Povinelli 2002).

In reflecting on the well-recorded histories of conservation conflict, I suggest that these semantic shifts hold the potential to produce to new exclusions and patterns of discipline. Being seen to love nature is difficult work. The labour of translating and curating confronting environmental practices into intimate care takes considerable resources that are unevenly available to indigenous peoples, globally, in the Philippines and on Palawan. As the experiences of indigenous peoples with conservation projects on Palawan Island suggest, where communities are judged deficient in this endeavour they are opened up to finely grained interventions that teach them *how* to love nature appropriately. In this light, rather than work to translate indigenous lifeways into narrow terms of a loving postenvironmentalism, perhaps the aim of critical scholars should be to produce less restrictive and more emotionally expansive visions that provide greater space for indigenous peoples to strategically maneuver.

Notes

1. These affective dimensions of Philippine environmentalism have largely been ignored in favour of concurrent discourses that frame environmental protection subsistence and livelihood rights of the poor (Broad & Cavanagh 1993; Bryant 2009).
2. Even within the environmental humanities, a disciplinary champion of love-and-care futurisms, there is some multi-species scholarship that provides nuanced accounts of how love and care are often held, perhaps inevitably, in tension with death and violence in human-environmental interaction (Ginn *et al.* 2014; van Dooren 2015). However, as Bocci (2017: 443) notes, efforts to seriously ‘account for the contentious nature of multispecies assemblages’

have not coalesced into a persuasive program for future conservation programs or universalising academic slogans in the vein of calls for 'care, love and kinship' (Todd 2017).

3. The latest Philippine census indicates a population density of 72.7/km² on Palawan, compared to 490/km² on the island of Luzon, meaning it retains a reputation as a land and resource frontier draws migrants from heavily populated regions.
4. 'Critical Habitats' are a form of protected area focused on the conservation of specific wildlife species in the Philippines that do not require federal legislation to, and may be enacted quickly with only the approval of Local Government Units.

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