The Royal We and the Good Life: Alienation, addiction, and generational trauma

Courtney Work

Department of Ethnology, National Chengchi University, Taiwan
Correspondence: cwork@nccu.edu.tw
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4454-0247

Editorial review: This article has been subject to an editorial review process.

Abstract

This Critical Reflection problematizes the notion of a collective 'we' who cannot seem to achieve sustainability. The fiction of this notion creates a split in that we, between the simultaneous existence of a 'comfortable we' and an unmarked collective of that same 'we' which makes their comfort possible. It is the 'comfortable we' who seem unable to achieve sustainability. While it remains difficult to look at the unsustainable luxury of the 'comfortable we' and not desire it too, its costs are becoming increasingly visible. What my twenty years working at the resource frontier in Cambodia, where forest economies give way to the market, have shown me is that there seem to be no winners in this game. There are victims and there are perpetrators, each traumatized in different ways. I argue that the deep historical melancholy of 'civilization' is born of real trauma, the effects of which have been passed through generations of the privileged as well as the human labourers and the more-than-human world of mountains, rivers, and other species who make their privilege possible. The 'global we' certainly exists, but it includes far more actors than are currently acknowledged by the 'comfortable we', who are riddled with a deep and barely recognized anxiety.

Keywords: global development; sustainability culture; forest economy; resource management; generational trauma; Cambodia

Introduction

The call for papers for this special issue on Sustainability Culture asks the question, 'How is it possible that even though we already have all the knowledge and technology required to live and farm sustainably, we do not seem to be able to fully achieve this?' This paper asks, more pointedly, who is this *we*? Certainly, it is not the 'global we', which encompasses the subsistence farmers and fishers, factory labourers, and hotel maids whose lives are spent ensuring that they and their children have food, homes, and clothing. These lives have few options for acquiring the basics, let alone the luxuries necessary to tip the scales of biospheric balance. Including this massive swath of precarious humanity in a 'global we' incapable of using resources responsibly is a bit of a violence, but it is one justified by the undisputed fact that the majority of the struggling masses do, in fact, aspire to the life of privilege, a life that is unsustainable. By invoking 'the technology that gives us our comforts', the call for papers gestures toward an elusive good life, one which I address by attending to key elements tangled with this orientation toward comfort and privilege.

The first key element is what I refer to as the 'royal we', who cannot achieve sustainability. The invocation of 'we' ostensibly includes the disenfranchised as well as the enfranchised in a powerfully democratic move that acknowledges the sovereign agency of all *homo sapiens*. But that democratic inclusion is not what this 'we' is doing. The invocation of a totalizing 'we' that is responsible for the ongoing catastrophe of a profoundly broken political economy is part of the cultural grammar that obfuscates the simultaneous existence of a 'comfortable we' and an 'unmarked we', which makes that 'comfortable we' possible. This paper proceeds to discuss some important and forgotten aspects of this unjustly inclusive 'we' and attempts to put its emergence into historical context as part of what I argue is a founding trauma of 'civilization'.

I use scare quotes around the term 'civilization' to signal an alternate interpretation of a common term. 'Civilized' spaces are explicitly hierarchical social systems founded by tribute-taking kings, who transformed landscapes and livelihoods toward the increased production of tribute-friendly grains and the scaling and industrialization of existing technologies like metallurgy, stone craft, and weaving. This production only increased with modernity. It has long been suggested that the growth and industrialization of these technologies is pathological (**Carson, [1962] 2002; Rappaport, [1967] 1984**), a claim supported by the continuing degradation of conditions favourable for sustaining the current biosphere. Humans and their self-produced food account for nearly one quarter of all greenhouse gas emissions, and the contemporary food regime is intimately connected to the earliest land and economic transformations of

the earliest kings (**Marshman et al., 2019; McMichael, 2013**). These transformations are intimately connected to the creation of comfort for the few, while the exploitation of all others is politely naturalized. In the time of the early kings, this supposedly natural inequality was approved by immaterial gods that supported royal lineages, and also their usurpers through time. Ancient kings ruled as 'we', both the king and the god are implicated in the administration of social life, and the king's power and the effectiveness of his pursuits implies favour from god. In contemporary democracies, this lineage of privilege, supported by inherited wealth, is naturalized into a competitive economic model of winners and losers. The winners are simply smarter and better than the losers.

The frame of winners and losers is an important part of the way the 'comfortable we' engages with technology and the social organizations that deploy those technologies toward particular ends. The love affair with comfort and technology is entangled with a privileged social position and the addictive idea of being a winner. Even in secularized societies, winning implies being blessed in some way. For many, these are still blessings from the god(s). It is difficult to rationalize a good life that entails all food on demand, massive wardrobes, and luxury vacations when these are causing the conditions through which the entire biosphere will transform and end those privileged lives. And into this situation returns the god in the form of a 'we' that collectively fails to sustainably manage itself.

At the same time, agro-ecological 'solutions' to the problem of planetary biospheric transformations look suspiciously like the food-getting practices of swidden cultivators, backwards and unproductive relational economies long suppressed by kings and other aggrandizers in the name of progress and civilization. There is a perfect irony to the solution existing in the purposefully destroyed Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and other practices of those not privileged enough to live unsustainably. This will be addressed in the next section, followed by an unpacking of the link between the privilege of unsustainability and the invocation of a 'we' that is clearly not inclusively implicated in planetary transformations.

In the final section, I discuss addiction and alienation as twin effects of the creation of both the privilege, and the lack thereof, to behave unsustainably. I argue that the invocation of the 'royal we' by the privileged, who lack the desire or wherewithal to live sustainably, cannot be understood in isolation from the people who lack that privilege yet are still included by default in this global 'we'. My twenty years of research in the forests of Cambodia, as they are transformed from sustainable social systems into landscapes that feed unsustainable market systems, provides the evidence to support the claim that progress for some creates disenfranchised others. This is not a new claim. What often goes

unremarked, however, is that their disenfranchised status helps create enfranchised others. The view from the forest suggests that the cruelty required to disenfranchise these others, whose loss is a condition of the enfranchised's gain, lays a foundation for intergenerational trauma. This might be driving the self-destructive, addictive behaviours that are visible in communities of rich and poor alike.

The 'Aspirational We'

The 'aspirational we' are key players in sustaining the logic of unsustainable development. These are the losers, alienated from their relational economies, who legitimately desire inclusion as participating members of the privileged economy. Inclusion comes at the cost of collapsed social relations with the water, rocks, and animals with whom they achieve subsistence. The social contract for economic production established between people and the land, often mistaken for religion (**Work, 2023**), can be productively understood as a form of relational economics. Risking simplification, acknowledging that extractive economics and universal 'religion' changes practice through time (**Sprenger, 2018**; **Stolz, 2019**), this section proceeds to describe *ancestral economics*, a concept that emerged through engagements with rural and Indigenous people in Cambodia and readings from other times and places (**Kimmerer, 2013**; **Povinelli, 2021**). It looks like this:

> *We came just the three of us, my husband, child, and me. There were a few other families here and we found this place along the stream. We walked the edges of the place where we hoped to build our home, introducing ourselves to the ancestors of this place and asking if we could build a house here. We burned incense, and the smoke carried our voiced intentions: We want to make a home here, grow rice, and raise our children. We promise to take only enough and live happily together here… (**author interview, woman in her late 30s, February 2014, Kampong Chhnang province, Cambodia**).*

This contract for land use and subsistence is based on amiability and taking only what's needed. These sentiments are repeated in pursuit of technological life enhancements:

> *When we find a tree good for making a house, we ask the tree to consider becoming a house with us. After asking, we wait one night. Does the wind remain calm, are there signs of illness? We watch for accidents, watch our dreams, listen to the birds, and watch the actions of other animals. With no sign of disagreement, we proceed to cut tree and create house. The energy of the builder and the energy of the tree combine to make the house, and the excess energy is called 'the skill of*

> *the house (*jamniang ptha*)', which watches over the house, ensuring that the contract with the tree for kindness and conservative living is upheld (**author interview, male, 60 years old, June 2020, Kampong Thom province, Cambodia**).*

These brief stories come from my intimate conversations with people and describe the broad contours of an ancestral economics based in social relations, mutual care, conservation, and consumption.

No one in this economy is exempt from being eaten. When there is an incurable illness and the social healing ritual does not lift its effects, the ancestor is hungry. Ancestors eat people in the same way that people eat pigs (**Gibson, 2006; Remme, 2014**). The mutual consumption and regeneration between and across species in interaction with the minerals and microbes of soil and water is a basic scientific fact. When 'religious myth' and 'local lore' are analysed scientifically and economically a new understanding of economics and the politics of representation emerges. In this economy, 'gods' are revealed to be the physical rains, stones, and soils that are the means of production, which is what superstitious natives were saying (see also **Sahlins, 2013**). Extraction, consumption, and regeneration are implicated in all relationships. Ancestors eating people is not metaphorical. My colleagues in Cambodia say that Grandfather's mountain and tiger are their ancestors, 'They were here before we were, and we follow them' (**interview, woman in her 40s, Kratie Province, February 2024**). These relational political economies are often misrecognized by scholars as religion and myth, which renders them make-believe. My time in Prey Lang helped me see that these are biophysical and economic exchanges discussed in the register of kinship.

None of the people engaged in ancestral economics has anything to do with the unsustainable management of global resources and the ensuing ecological transformations—except inasmuch as the laws and practices of the contemporary economy constrain them into new roles as peasant farmers, domestic servants, factory workers, sex workers, etc., who all aspire to the luxurious life of the 'comfortable we'. For the disenfranchised, the alienation experienced firsthand and then passed down through generations via enslavement, degradation, and devaluation by the 'civilized' creates its own pathologies. The subjugated desire to become the subjugator—not necessarily to dominate others, but certainly to enjoy the comforts of elite privilege so visible in the hierarchical, extractive, exclusive economies of the kings (and their democratic-authoritarian-communist successors). In this environment, not only do my Kuy colleagues fiercely defend 'their' forest, degraded only in the past decade, many engage aggressively and strategically in the accumulation of capital and the status it brings. Social, symbolic, and monetary capital are

all highly desired by formerly sustainable subsistence cultivators. As one elder man told me, 'We do not know what the new road will bring. Will it be good or bad? We cannot know, but we want the road' (**field interview, man in his mid-60s, February 2019, Steung Treng Province, Cambodia**).

The 'Royal We'

The capture of territory and the enslavement of original inhabitants is an undisputed characteristic of economic growth, which is justified by a 'right to rule' articulated by the mandate of heaven (Confusion/Dao), the god-king (Hindu), and the righteous ruler (Christian/Buddhist). If we scratch at the surface of any ancient kingdom, we find heavenly or 'supernatural' support for the ruler. The details of these rituals reveal mountains, rivers, apex species, and most humans all undergoing particular economic activities in the service of a divine king (see **Qian, 2007; Lewis, 2007; Beban & Work, 2014**). The unchanging baseline of these economic activities, forest conversion for intensified grain and monocrop production, mountain disruptions for expanding metallurgy technologies, the creation of consuming elites, is hidden within discourses of development and progress.

The alienation of regular people from their relational economies is essential for building the privileged lifestyles implied in the 'greater good'. Across the ethnographic record, people living at the margins of kingdoms report being given permission or protection from contract-breaking ancestral extraction by royal or official order (**Boomgaard, 1991**; **Wessing, 2006**). The possibility for unsustainable living emerges from the sacred right of kings to develop the land, and to grant rights to others for both exploitation and the extraction of tribute. I point explicitly to the life of ease and luxury that comes from alienating, as opposed to relational, extraction. When relieved of the responsibility to care for the ancestor and share with immediate kin, wealth accumulates rapidly. This accumulation eventually exceeds the boundaries of royal lineages, and those endowed with wealth demand recognition and access to luxury. Voting, self-determination, and rights for all humans are understood as contracts enabling social progress. All humans are entitled to access luxury in an unsustainable political economy. Other species, and the mountains, rivers, and fungi that create them, remain excluded, devalued, and alienated from their rights to free economic sociality. Of course, these unruly actors cannot really be contained, but human economies are constrained by beliefs and activities that break the ancestral contract of mutual creativity, sharing subsistence, and death. These beliefs uphold rights to privilege and democracy, and the idea of 'we the people'.

The king speaks as a divine 'we' of all things, owner of the water and the land. As extractive success permeates privileged society, the 'royal we' broadens to include the 'comfortable we', those who can achieve capital and the luxuries of power, and with it the favourable light of divine 'right' spreads through society.

This process is clearly visible in the disenchanted modern economy, where the divine glow of extreme wealth and power is secularized, but not erased. The disenchantment does not fully cover the alienated relationships that privilege requires. Accepting the 'natural' servitude of poor members of society, and especially the disavowal of the social contract with ancestors of water and rock, through which technologies and subsistence were negotiated, registers as trauma in the social body. This can be understood as a 'primitive psychological force' resulting in 'ego inflation, addiction to power, and mindless acquisition' (**Bernstein, 2020: 47**). An important element of this trauma is visible in the transforming economy in Cambodia, as only a few members of formerly collaborating social groups make an effective transition to privilege. Those willing to mine the ancestors and prey upon their neighbours succeed first (see **Work, 2023**). The need for greed and selfishness in the non-relational colonized economy is unmistakable in landscapes transitioning from relational to alienated economies.

In a market-controlled landscape, free access to resources (a.k.a. ancestors) like wild game and land is criminalized. Getting food, buying land titles, and hunting licenses all require cash, which at the resource frontier can only be acquired through selling tigers, trees, and other ancestors or converting forest to market crops. This breaks the ancestral social contract described above. Humility, economic restraint, and moderation are simply not effective strategies for survival in a market economy, and generations of social adaptation to this situation create a 'comfortable we' who find it impossible to live sustainably. While there certainly *seem* to be winners in this game, destabilizing the geo-hydro-biological foundation of life on this small planet might not be a win. When viewed with a wider lens, it looks as if this game has only victims and perpetrators. While the plight of the former is strongly marked by the latter for improvement through sustainable development, the generational trauma of the perpetrators, a.k.a. winners, goes unremarked under the mantle of a secularized and meritorious success.

By what right do we claim the privileges we enjoy? And here I speak directly to the readers of this article. There is not a 'global we' of humanity that can claim the rights to a life of privilege. Many are consigned by divine intervention (bad luck, bad character…), into serving privilege, although some wear more comfortable shackles. What are the privileges for which

'we' have given up our relatedness to the rest of the living world? Is it hot and cold running water? Housekeepers? Or cashews and cows on demand?

Alienation and Addiction

One regular complaint among my Kuy colleagues is the disappearance of forest cows to hunt and fish to catch, coupled with the ubiquity of fish and beef available to buy from motorcycle vendors coming daily from the district capital (**Work, 2024**). Accessing food without money is now impossible, but it is possible to use money rather than local social relations to build a house, have sex, or gain local authority. My colleagues in Prey Lang speak persistently of fractured communities, drugs, debt, and economic precarity in the context of development and progress. This provocation feeds into a corrective discourse about generational trauma in Cambodia, which transformed from an 'underdeveloped' country into one with a growing population wealthy enough to live unsustainably.

I argue that the dramatic transformation of relational into market economies traumatizes people accustomed to food abundance and social solidarity. Emerging research confirms parts of this, revealing intimate connections between trauma and the kinds of addictive, compulsive behaviours visible in the blasted landscapes of planetary transformations (**Maté, 2022; LaCapra, [2001] 2014**). Addiction can be understood as 'the defenses of an organism against suffering it does not know how to endure' (**Maté, 2022: 164**). Behaviours that provide pleasure and relief from suffering, like roads that bring food daily, can also induce craving and create negative consequences (**2022: 170**). When parents disavow ancestral rules of economic comportment, what do they say to their children? Stories can also provide pleasure and relief from suffering: 'The old ways were wrong, child. Look how people following the old ways are hungry and poor.' Industrial and small-holder plantations and mines create wealth and privilege for some, who use this wealth to send children away to school or to factory work. This is the alienating engine that drives the good life and underscores its cruel optimism (**Berlant, 2011**). Cars, computer chips, fast fashion, electricity on demand…these are now considered basic rights for all 'divinely favoured' citizens, not just the ruling class.

The 'comfortable we' respond nobly to revelations of the violence of the economic system that gives them their privilege. They advocate for rights, for the universal value of *homo sapiens*, and for middle-class lifestyles for all alienated brethren, miners, factory workers, and maybe even sex workers, whose labour provides pleasure and relief for the comfortable

we. More-than-human ancestors, like mountains and rivers, remain largely excluded from this noble frame, despite or perhaps because of their centrality to all economic activity. The active and continued degradation of the ancestors that are soil, rock, water, and trees at the resource frontier is accompanied by continued failure to achieve middle-class comforts, which defines poverty for the major development donors (**Berrio Calle, 2023; Wade, 2004**). This need to extract and consume is a sneaky kind of noble addiction draped with the wealth that signifies favour of the god(s). The evidence supporting my thinking that addiction is an important frame for the generational trauma of the privileged perpetrator is complex, but it has key indicators in the violence of success within a 'cultural complex' that demands an alienated other (**Singer, 2020**).

The 'royal we' points directly at this economic system in which success depends on violent exclusive acts towards kin, both human and non-human. Invoking the inclusive 'we' in declarations of intent and responsibility, a king implicated both himself and god(s). The idea that continued good health and economic success is a passive indicator of ancestral agreement to the breach of contract supports this continued mandate from heaven: In January 2023, a ritual specialist and caretaker of an ancient temple declared as much when I asked if the ancestral energies he cared for in the ancient site supported the industrial gold mine recently erected close by. He said, 'If they did not agree, activities would not continue' (**Interview, 2023 February 06, Prasat Trapiang Prus, Kampong Thom, Cambodia;** see also **Anderson, 1990**; **Baumann, 2020**). There is an implied 'we' in the divine violence of the wealth-producing land grab, what Karl Marx famously called 'primitive accumulation', and also, I argue, in the structural violence through which individuals are born, either in privilege or servitude. Even indirect participation in this violence creates trauma, and its psychological effects often manifest in violence, cruelty, excess, and self-destructive behaviours. This trauma is multi-layered, generational, and understudied in the context I suggest (see **Mate & Mate, 2022** and **Wyatt, 2023** on the generational trauma of war and genocide).

The deep historical melancholy of 'civilization' has not gone unremarked by pundits, scholars, healers, and philosophers (**Freud, 1961 [1930]**; **Kiernan, 2001**; **Nietzsche, 1999**). My provocation here suggests that this is a discontent born of real trauma, the effects of which have been valorised and passed down through generations of the privileged, who continue to vilify the human labourers and non-human ancestors and kin who make their privilege possible. Neither greed nor culture can account for the non-transformation of activities so obviously destined to destroy the system supporting current forms of the planetary biosphere. The persistence of these behaviours, their justifications, and the strangeness of the solutions put forward—like 'renewable' energies embedded in fossil-fuel extraction,

manufacture, and distribution—all point toward addiction's avoidance behaviours. But this is not a simple addiction, it is generations deep and embedded in everything contemporary humans have been taught to value. The addictive behaviours are perceived to be virtuous, and all this 'virtue' seems to be forcing a planetary reboot. If there is a 'global we', it includes both comfortable and alienated people, as well as their technologies and structures, their disavowed ancestors (of water, rock, and pond), and their extended kinship networks, including ants, trees, tigers, and catfish. Perhaps the 'Misanthropocene' rests in the loneliness of a fractured 'we', the repair of which requires neither more funding nor new technologies.

Acknowledgements

Without the generosity, patience, and comradery of members in the Prey Lang Community Network and the Cambodian Youth Network in Cambodia, none of these insights would have been possible. Theodoor Richard is the driving force behind gathering together this collection of essays through two workshops and extensive chapter development. Great thanks to him for his insights, and thanks to the productive network of collaborators who gathered around his calls. Pieces of this paper were circulated at the Taiwan Anthropocene Network (TAN) workshops and gratitude goes to those scholars who vibrantly engaged with my provocations. Thanks also to the blind reviewers and the editors for this journal, the often-unsung heroes of academic productions.

Courtney Work is an associate professor in the Department of Ethnology at the National Chengchi University, Taiwan. Her research is focused on the tension between forest and developed, settled landscapes. Research interests include the Anthropology of Religion, Development, and the Environment; the History of Southeast Asian political formations; and the Contemporary Political Economy of Climate Change. Her current research and teaching consider interactions between humans and the more-than-human world in the context of changing environmental conditions.

References

Anderson, B. R. O'G, 1990. 'The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture' in *Language and power: Exploring political cultures in Indonesia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, pp. 17–77.

Baumann, B., 2020. 'Reconceptualizing the Cosmic Polity: The Tai Mueang as a Social Ontology' in Baumann, B., and Bultmann, D. eds., *Social Ontology, Sociocultures, and Inequality in the Global South*. Oxon and New York: Routledge, pp. 42–66.

Beban, A., and Work, C., 2014. 'The Spirits Are Crying: Dispossessing Land and Possessing Bodies in Rural Cambodia'. *Antipode* 46(3), pp. 593–610.

Berlant, L., 2011. *Cruel Optimism*. Duke University Press.

Bernstein, J., 2020. 'The Cultural Complex and Addiction to Dominion: Psychic Evolution Cannot Be Thwarted' in Singer, T., ed., *Cultural Complexes and the Soul of America: Myth, Psyche, and Politics*. London: Routledge, pp. 44–52.

Berrio Calle, J. E., 2023. 'Measuring Forest Dependence Outside the Development Myth - A Case in the Prey Lang Forest'. M.A. Dissertation, National Chengchi University, Taipei.

Boomgaard, P., 1991. 'Sacred Trees and Haunted Forests -Indonesia, Particularly Java, 19th and 20th Centuries' n *Asian Perceptions of Nature: Papers presented at a Workshop, NIAS, Copenhagen, Denmark*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press, pp. 39–53.

Carson, R., 2002. *Silent Spring*. Mariner Books Classics.

Freud, Sigmund. 1961 [1930]. 'Civilization and Its Discontents' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume 21. Hogarth Press.

Gibson, T., 2006. *Sacrifice and Sharing in the Philippine Highlands: Religion and Society among the Buid of Mindoro*. New York: Berg Publishers.

Kiernan, B., 2001. 'Myth, Nationalism and Genocide'. *Journal of Genocide Research* 3(2), pp. 187–206.

Kimmerer, R. W., 2013. *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions.

LaCapra, D. 2014 [2001]. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. John Hopkins University Press.

Lewis, M. E., 2007. *The Early Chinese Empires: Qin and Han*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Marshman, J., A. Blay-Palmer, and Landman, K., 2019. 'Anthropocene Crisis: Climate Change, Pollinators, and Food Security'. *Environments - MDPI* 6(2), pp. 22–38.

Mate, G., and Mate, D., 2022. *The Myth of Normal: Trauma, Illness, and Healing in a Toxic Culture*. New York: Penguin Publishing Group.

McMichael, P., 2014. *Food Regimes and Agrarian Questions: Agrarian Change and Peasant Studies*. Rugby: Practical Action Publishing.

Nietzsche, F., 1999. *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Hazleton: PSU-Hazleton.

Povinelli, E. A., 2021. *Between Gaia and Ground: Four Axioms of Existence and the Ancestral Catastrophe of Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Sima, Q., 2007. *The First Emperor*. Cambridge: Oxford University Press.

Rappaport, R. A., 1984. *Pigs for the Ancestors: Ritual in the Ecology of a New Guinea People*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Remme, J. H. Z., 2014. *Pigs and Persons in the Philippines: Human-Animal Entanglements in Ifugao Rituals*. Lanham: Lexington Books.

Sahlins, M., 2013. *What Kinship Is... And Is Not*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Singer, T., 2020. *Cultural Complexes and the Soul of America; Myth, Psyche, and Politics*. Routledge.

Sprenger, G., 2018. 'Buddhism and Coffee: The Transformation of Locality and Non-Human Personhood in Southern Laos'. *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 33(2), pp. 265–90.

Stolz, R., 2019. 'Making Aspirations Concrete? "Good Houses" and Mockery in Upland Laos'. *Ethnos* 0(0), pp. 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.2019.1696864 (last accessed 17 February 2026).

Wade, R. H., 2004. 'Is Globalization Reducing Poverty and Inequality?' *World Development* 32(4), pp. 567–89. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2003.10.007 (last accessed 17 February 2026).

Wessing, R., 2006. 'Symbolic Animals in the Land between the Waters: Markers of Place and Transition'. *Asian Folklore Studies* 65(2), pp. 205–39.

Work, C., 2023. 'Prowess and Indigenous Capture: Hinges and Epistemic Propositions in the Prey Lang Forest'. *Anthropological Forum*. https://doi.org/10.1080/00664677.2023.2254009 (last accessed 17 February 2026).

Work, C., and Ader, D., 2024. 'Motofish and Trashfish: Food Values and Rifts at the Agrarian Frontier'. *Journal of Political Ecology* 31 (1): 116–36.

Wyatt, Z., 2023. 'Intergenerational Trauma in the Aftermath of Genocide'. *European Journal of Theoretical and Applied Sciences* 1 (2), pp. 72–78. https://doi.org/10.59324/ejtas.2023.1(2).07 (last accessed 17 February 2026).

To cite this article:

Work, C., 2026. The Royal We and the Good Life: Alienation, addiction, and generational trauma. *Exchanges: The Interdisciplinary Research Journal*, 13(1), 111–123. Available at: https://doi.org/10.31273/eirj.v13i1.1782.