

## **Animus**

a queer anti-civilization collection of anarchic and anthropological  
writings

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Further distribution or printing by your own decision, for my part I raise no objection. Intended to open up cracks toward unknowable possibility, destroy some knowledge, and cast off an eddy or two of scintillating, ruinous chance encounters.

*for the silken expanse of lucid, dizzy possibility at the edge of boldness. 4ever free-falling backwards, tumbling deeper through the spiralling darkness*



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# Introduction

## (Anti-)Ontologies Against The World

This collection brings together anarchist writings (anti-civilization, queer, insurrectionary, and nihilist) with anthropological ones on the indigenous peoples of Amazonia, the North American Eastern Woodlands, Siberia, and Oceania (in the areas of ‘new animism’, Amerindian perspectivism, and on the relationships of gender and violence with hierarchy and egalitarianism), some history, and a few studies of insurgent strategy. In addition, there are recurring focuses on the origins and concealed qualities of state-like forms, the paradoxes of semiosis as both civilized and anti-civilized, and the complication of relations between ‘opposites’ beyond a simplified dualism or nondualism.

The intended audience is both those largely unfamiliar with the material discussed here, as well as those with a deeper theoretical basis. Almost all of the pieces included have been excerpted, some heavily. Where text has been removed it will be marked with an ellipse. Endnotes are at the end of each chapter. When not crucial to comprehension, and to reduce volume, I’ve removed some works cited and in-text citations (the authors provided many sources for specific claims, and many recommended extensive lists of further material in references and footnotes; I encourage you to consult the originals for these). A balance between nuance and brevity has been sought, but in order to maximize the potential energy of this already unfortunately long document, I have been a bit ruthless in shortening many pieces. All of the writings here are worth reading in their entirety. Authorization was not sought for the inclusion of any of the authors’ work. Chapters are purposefully arranged but are each stand-alone selections. I want this collection to go into the world and cause mental and material alteration. That is to say this book is anti-civilization and insurrectionary in it’s purpose as well as subject. My aim here is not primarily the pleasure or expression of personal creativity, which is why the content is primarily not my original work. The aim is closer to (anti)education, the kind of learning often at odds with institutional schooling. I wanted to get this out quickly and feel the original authors express their ideas better than my paraphrases could. The written word and academic thought are so clearly part and parcel of domestication, but so is ossified purism. I understand why so many people are hostile to ‘theory’. But we are all living in this theoretical world, and are subject from birth to so much historically and socially constructed mental framing that to simply not engage in this way is to continue operating out of normative suppositions. Theory can be difficult to read and understand (as a tip: if you don’t understand something, look it up, but don’t get too hung up on trying to understand

every sentence on your first read-through), however this shouldn't be a reason to avoid it. Difficulty and adversity are integral parts of full, enriched lives, and can be sources of real satisfaction as well as being bare realities we must face, out of personal as well as larger necessities. It's true that academic-style writing can be more difficult or unfamiliar for those structurally marginalized from/in educational spaces, or ill-tempered for such institutions (I mean this as a compliment). To be clear, it is a hostile territory to us, but so is almost everywhere else. There is insight to be stolen while avoiding being stolen ourselves. The intention should not be to associate oneself with long words and esoteric, exotic references for the sake of showing off how smart or tapped into the next big little hyperniche thing one is. Nor should all this be some nerdy hobby; the point is that we must take things seriously (our carefree pleasure most of all). Taking seriously our rejection of the organization of reality includes carefully examining how it works, both in words and in practice. This must go beyond infographics, tweets, and predefined, captured forms of rebellion-signaling leisure activity (& indeed beyond isolated theorizing divorced from practice). Theory cannot give real conclusions (thankfully), but while remaining aware of its reifying tendencies, it can point towards the gaps in itself, can sing for the beauty in illogic, inconsistency, and unrepresentability. Language as a system is foundational to the Ordered megamachine, but things also falling under this extensional set, in their many forms, have been potent tools for fugitive forms of life as well. The written word is closer to an all-flattening technology, but is also underneath it all still a means of *marking*. I want to use the language of the way a word dissolves itself when repeated over and over, of how the order of names which gives power over the named also must give us its own name, in language as exclamation or mournful moan (see Fred Moten) speaking ineffability, and as the flirtatious unspoken quietly throbbing. In the impossibility of both union and isolation confirmed in its very ability to act. If societies that have lost their connection to magic, to their place in the animated and agent-ed cosmos constantly transforming, mimicking, seducing, and cannibalizing each other in somehow endless entropy, compress this supposedly lost dimension ever tighter into the realm of words, let us explode these words. Just as we explode gender, as we explode war, identity and alterity, and what it means to live and die. In this vein, I'll try to limit prefacing or drawing conclusions about the included material.

This book's structure aims to boil down the amount of reading while increasing the level of effectual and nuanced positioning against the system as much as possible. Strategy, inspiration, and theoretical (dis)orientation deserve to be together and I've tried to do so here. Much practical insurrectionary guidance (techniques, local situations, new developments etc.) has been left out, dynamic and specific as it can be (and sometimes unsuited to a physical document). **Check out (Only on Tor Browser, seriously!** Preferably while also using the potentially anonymous and traceless **Tails OS**) **actforfree.noblogs.org** (and the other sites and texts linked to there), **scenes.noblogs.org**, **notrace.how** (excellent counter-surveillance/forensic mitigation info), **warriorup.blackblogs.org** (techniques, check notrace to confirm a method isn't outdated), and locally: **phlanticap.noblogs.org** and **anathema.noblogs.org**. **LibGen**, **Anna's Archive**, and **SciHub** are excellent resources for accessing paywalled scholarly, and other, content and books for free. You should read some Jean Genet, as well as *Against*

*His-Story, Against Leviathan!* by Fredy Perlman after this, and **fuck some shit up irl, for fucks sake!**

There are many points of contradiction between the writings in this collection, as well as unexpected correspondences and linkages; reading the texts against each other should help clarify some relative weaknesses and strengths. I don't agree with every assertion and some have been included specifically because I find their contrast with other included texts insightful. Many pieces show the influence of Deleuze and Guattari (something I noticed only after compiling these texts), while rejecting major aspects of their thought, giving us some necessary re-interpretations in our context of so many circumscribed, simplistic (and annoying) post-structuralist cheerleaders and denounciators.

The focuses of this reader are in response to broad areas of uncritical assumptions. General conceptions (theoretical or more intuitive) in our circles of what civilization or gender are, and how they capture us, seem to miss the mark disappointingly often. Meanwhile, consensus-based or programmatic approaches are mistaken as insurrectionary. 'Anti-colonial accomplices' who make sweeping and colonial mischaracterizations of indigeneity – universal ethics of tolerance, peacefulness, and harmonious, grateful coexistence with Mother Nature (and Aztec-chic infrastructure to make a city planner blush, unlike those primitive, dirty Europeans, or for that matter the hunter-gatherers in the forests). Vegans with strict conventional divides between human, plant and animal, inadvertently looking down on the animals, as well as many indigenous people, themselves in deeper conflict with the agents of the industrial slaughterhouse world than many vegans, who do kill and eat other beings. Straight-edge, rationalist anti-hippy militants, who discount the entheogenic (or perhaps more accurately, *'pharmakon-ic'*) and hedonistic practices of intoxication outside of civilization. Pagan revivalists, aping stratified belief systems Western or otherwise, Enlightenment esoteric traditions, commercial/boho-cool inventions, or syncretisms deeply infused with Catholicism or other monolithic faiths (not to mention the blatant apologists for Abrahamic or Vedic religions). Latently second-wave feminists who overlook how femininity is mutually constituted alongside masculinity and the patriarchy generating these genders in the first place. Trans theorists who talk as if some people are 'really' cis, or 'really' any particular gender (on some essential, objective level), unable to see the sociocultural, historical specificity of the modern framework of transness, and integrating gender-disobedient people into the logic of gender by rejecting any element of choice or genuine change, reducing ambiguity and disorder by defining people into further identities to inevitably be managed. Sainly fighters who endeavor to craft peaceful cities with de-escalation and 'strong communities', ignoring the true extent of homogenization and authoritarianism such 'caring', united metropolises would require and institute. Good Christian charity, and the avant-garde of hegemonic, systemic logic lurking everywhere. I certainly don't mean to criticize all vegans, trans theorists etc. Many people I love, otherwise among the most incisive, perceptive, and rebellious people I know, fall within some of these criticisms, and I've found myself repeating these same thought-patterns too; this is partly why I feel the need to point them out.

Besides this level, *efficacy* is crucial (and not that of the machine-logic swallowing us in pointless tasks, ever-more narrow and short-sighted as it tries to

cover every inch). Taking the example just of ‘arms’ – coordination and intentional, successful practices for generating and applying force are vital to even the relatively non-specialized, small group actions which are necessary for a generalized insurgent opening. The capacity to carry out an effective and sustained campaign of ambushes or hit-and-run strikes does require extensive and efficient training, planning, logistics, and real social connection and maintenance beyond immediate friend groups. Such capacity cannot be sidestepped entirely with just individual attacks, on property, symbolic, or otherwise, or a mythical final riot where Earth spontaneously purges civilization. It is true that lone or squad/cell-size actions are very valuable and necessary components, and a rising of the masses may be as well, but even these do not just occur spontaneously in the most efficient ways, and are not sufficient to maintain a situation of ruptured control, if they can generate one in the first place. This capacity does not arise on its own at some historically determined point in time, nor can this intentional and effective effort be replaced by ideology, friendship alone, vague popular support, catharsis and individual overcoming, professionalization, or some other more qualified or ‘legitimately’ positioned group.

Leadership does not have to be a static, exclusive, hierarchical position. Leading by example or initiative, being the first to take action, sharing one’s particular expertise or practiced understandings with others, coordinating certain collective actions of a group which assents to this (and is composed of others also participating the same), or focusing temporarily on particular tasks are not inherently authoritarian practices. We should all develop these skills. Too often entire swathes of supposed rebels can remain stuck in a subservient mindset, waiting to join or be told what to do by someone more experienced, more popular, or more representative of the most intersectionally oppressed possible identity combination. It is inviting domination to be so unwilling or unprepared to take initiative. We should remain acutely aware of the tendency for hierarchy to insinuate itself into our informal, supposedly horizontal organizations.

This is not a plea for hierarchy or vanguard, a contest of who’s most ‘qualified’, or more self-styled ‘Community Leaders’, ‘Organizers’, or ‘Invisible Party Members’. Doing what you think will draw people to your side itself pushes people away. Instead, a particular quality of practice. This means being realistic about where you’re at, and how far you really are willing to take things. How much are you willing to risk and how will you deal if these risks do come to pass for you? Finding out what you’re really capable of, moral wrestling, fugitivity, pain, injury, trauma, torture, separation from loved ones, prison, maybe violent death, but also some possible measure of lived freedom, harmony in chaos, honesty (via lies as well as truth), and dignity. If you really want it and have been developing your understandings and capabilities in a serious way, you might consider taking more initiative and being less shy about the ways you engage with others. To use the example of crowd actions, those who decide to break the first windows or trigger a breakaway march at a so-far peaceful action can trigger exponentially more powerful capacities in the crowd. However, those willing to play this part are often a small minority even compared to those who showed up with supplies and who enthusiastically join in on the destruction after it starts. I don’t mean to exempt myself at all in these words. We don’t want to direct the masses, we are people like everyone else, who want to succeed



as much as possible in destroying the existent, including our identities as part of the 'masses', alongside the rest of the 'masses' who want the same. We are neither solitary monads nor faceless partisans of universality. Conditionally cooperating, not out of compromise or massified, populist politics, but as a part of going further in our own destructive desires. If you have long-term relationships of criminal-level trust with different people who don't know each other, and are looking for more angles of attack and escape, think about overlapping your friend groups. Hang out! 'The Community', 'The Organization', along with indeed the city and mass society as a whole are certain kinds of enemy formations, but this default of real atomization along with coercive collectivities (impoverishing both individual and collective) must be fought, in part at least, by real groups of actually individual people (an individualism however, which sees the multiple 'individualist' beings within and without the person). Besides, what pleasures, what treasures we can steal together! Living possibility against this order, being a vibrant node of networks, intelligence and coordination, sharing skills or learnings, and pulling closer to real gravity in what we mean. Coming together (and apart) to learn and desire (& unlearn, undesire, etc.) in ever deeper (and shallower) ways.

Unique *senses of style* which take pleasure in acting in a manner in the moment which leads to the most efficacious insurrectionary results, making the smartest tactical and strategic decisions and performing as best we can (necessarily impossible to pin down and divergent as these qualities must be). Executing coordinated actions effectively, acting what we've learned in practice and performing dynamically as a team of autonomous individuals. Having the actually successful skill and/or deserved trust in others who do to collectively commit to and successfully carry out actions which will produce the desired effects (and the fluid artfulness to do so under the one fact we know and desire, that the choice is free and outcome is unknown). Not being swayed by the carrot and stick of civilization's rewards and punishments, self-limiting excuses, collective neurotic justifications, or the false promises of symbolic, performative activism. Disciplined, striving dedication to only the wildest pleasures, the hedonic giving-over of oneself to the satisfaction of suffering looked straight in the face. Obeying, as Clastres puts it, the 'law' that excludes a separated, hierarchical law. Yes, a successful, universal revolution is unlikely, and even more so for the majority of the participants. There is still value in standing up and putting your life into *play*, in a 'defeat' in something that matters, for no lack of trying. And it is also still worth aiming to make our joyful chaos which gestures out into the possibility of living spread as widely as possible. Control and civilization can never be total, and do have their vulnerabilities. There is some measure of an equilibrium perpetually out of equilibrium left in the world, and the jenga tower of civilization reaches higher every day. We can do better, and we can win, at least some of the time, in some places. We must try, before this form of (non)living spills out into the cosmos and escapes this round of self-balancing.

Like jazz (or hip-hop, electronic, punk), we can amplify our chaotic power by playing with pattern. The beat serving only to make it that much more moving when it skips into something else. Layering rhythms breaking out of Time. Improvisation and form switching back and forth, neither what they seem. Self-entrancement drawing ourselves into movements unimagined, one step ahead

of control and also under an agency itself beyond control. The stars which darken the black of night. Not a Left proto-state in service of future anarchy, nor the iridescent murmurings straining in the muscles of hegemony, not the exception which proves the rule, the Other defining the center, not just the self-limited Music of this world in itself but that from another world, precisely the one from the farthest place possible: right here. Something I can not speak of. Slipping, fractal, recursive.

Along with pattern: resonance, tautness, metastability, skillful and mature wisdom, humble confidence, lucid absorption, kinetic engagement or echoing dissociation. These as well are powerful affects which exist in Möbius continuum with their counterparts in looseness, pleasure-seeking, chaotic erraticism, lashing out, youthful spark, creative experimentation and raw intimacy. This is another terrain, like gender, of not-quite opposites, which we would do well to broaden and deepen our quality of action along.

The beginning chapters of this collection are an intro to or refresher on some concepts of anarchy, as well as pieces I've found particularly powerful. This is followed by some anarchist historical context seemingly unfamiliar to many nowadays; some inspiring and some also relevant as cautionary examples of missteps referenced elsewhere in this book. From here, we turn back to gender and violence in both anarchist and anthropological materials, and in indigenous as well as colonial cultures, looking also at 'animism'. Next, some deeper treatment of indigenous 'ontologies' both against the state and in parallel or formative of the state, as well as deeper examinations of gender and violence in the same context. The ideas of Amerindian perspectivism are introduced and explored, putting some previous topics into relation and extending the discussion into broader and more meta territory; with the previously established basis of practical action fresh in the mind urging past this mostly academic level, while the contextual insights into what is specific to indigenous and colonial settings calls into question some of the anarchist material, affirms others, and points to new ground for anarchic engagement. We close with some insurgent strategy (including about how prescriptive strategy itself is often unstrategic). I hope you draw and enact your own, ever-spiraling, (in)conclusions.

I'll open with a short fragment from Paul Shepard's *A Post-Historic Primitivism* that touches on a few of the topics to come (and was too short to comfortably fit elsewhere). This section was quoted in the 2017 essay 'Of Indiscriminate Attacks and Wild Reactions: An Anti-Civ Anarchist Engages With ITS and Atassa, Their Defenders and Their False Critics' by Edelweiss Pirates. The piece revolves around the controversy at that time over the group '*Individualistas Tendiendo a lo Salvaje*' (Individuals Tending Toward Savagery, aka ITS), a Mexican anti-civilization group who announced themselves in 2011 with letter-bombs sent to nanoscientists. Praising Ted Kaczynski, they spoke in reified, Western terms about embodying Wild Nature and being against all moralism in highly moralist arguments inconsistent with their actions. Later, they claimed responsibility for several indiscriminate attacks, including a femicide of a student killed for being drunk and out late, murders of hikers, incendiaries left in crowded street markets, letter bombs on park benches, and bombs in crowded city centers targeting bystanders. They justified their killings of random people as 'interlopers' in nature, and that the human race itself is a cancer. Many of their claimed at-

tacks were questioned, as evidence emerged that other people had carried them out, or that they hadn't happened at all. Attempting to kill other anarchists, and renouncing that descriptor, they adopted openly patriarchal, homophobic, and authoritarian beliefs, praising fascists, ISIL, and serial-killers. The greater insurrectionary and anarchist movement, while initially largely supportive of the attacks on nanoscientists, later came out strongly against ITS, although as the authors of 'Of Indiscriminate Attacks' note, few focused on their patriarchal aspect, and others lumped anti-civilization anarchists in with ITS in pro-progress, leftist arguments. This essay greatly broadened my awareness of some of the conceptual failures driving common anarchist and adjacent perspectives, both civilized and anti-civilized. I grew to find many of the authors' main contentions inadequate, in ways I hope this collection can illuminate, but I do feel many of the questions raised in this episode can be reinterpreted in helpful ways.

... We may ask whether there are not hidden imperatives in the books of [romantic agrarian] Wendell Berry obscured by the portrayal of the moral quality, stewardship syndrome, and natural satisfactions of farm life. He seems to make the garden and barnyard equivalent to morality and aesthetics and to relate it to monotheism and sexual monogamy, as though conjugal loyalty, husbandry, and a metaphysical principle were all one. And he is right. This identity of the woman with the land is the agricultural monument, where the environment is genderized and she becomes the means of productivity, reciprocity, and access to Otherness, compressed in the central symbol of the goddess. When the subsistence base erodes, this morality changes. Fanaticism about virginity, women as pawns in games of power, and their control by men as the touchstone of honor and vengeance have been clearly shown to be the destiny of subequatorial and Mediterranean agriculture...

**Note:**

The following were cut mainly due to space constraints, but still have much to offer:

- **“What is Green Anarchy? An Introduction to Anti-Civilization Anarchist Thought and Practice”** by the *Green Anarchy Collective* (Good intro, a few characteristic blindspots)
- **“Peace Chiefs and Blood Revenge: Patterns of Restraint in Native American Warfare 1500-1800”** by *Wayne E. Lee*
- **“I Don't Bash Back I Shoot First: On Queer Gangs”** by *Anonymous*
- **“Criminal Intimacy”** by *A Gang of Criminal Queers/The Mary Nardini Gang*
- **“Section 5”** of **“Critical Metaphysics As a Science of Apparatuses”** by *Tiqqun* (I disagree with much of 'Tiqqunism'; for an insightful anonymous critique of them, see **“Against the Party of Insurrection: A Look at Appelism in the U.S.”**)
- **“Black Seed 6 Call For Papers”** by *Black Seed*
- **“The Glorious Tyranny of Silence and the Resonance of Shamanic Breath”** by *George Mentore* in the anthology *In Darkness and Secrecy*
- **“First Mythos: Enkidu and Shamhat”** in *baedan - a queer journal of heresy - issue two*
- **“Horizontal Treason: Jean Genet's Funeral Rites”** in *Sex Drives: Fantasies of Fascism in Literary Modernism* by *Laura Catherine Frost*
- **“Say You Want an Insurrection”** in *Rolling Thunder* by *Crimethinc* (Worth reading with a grain of salt but still feels fresh with some insightful approaches to social aspects of insurrection)
- **“Organization and Community: The Determinants of Insurgent Military Effectiveness”** by *Alec Worsnop* (I disagree with the pro-hierarchy thesis however some of the key terms and qualities can be understood differently. Also useful for understanding institutional or insurgent enemies.)

# At Daggers Drawn With the Existent, its Defenders and its False Critics

Anonymous, 1998. Translated from Italian by Jean Weir in collaboration with John Moore and Leigh Stracross. Excerpted.

## II

It is by doing things that need to be learned in order to be done,  
that you learn them. —Aristotle

The secret is to really begin.

The present social organisation is not just delaying, it is also preventing and corrupting any practice of freedom. The only way to learn what freedom is, is to experiment it, and to do so you must have the necessary *time* and *space*.

The fundamental premise for free action is dialogue. Now, any authentic discourse requires two conditions: a real interest in the questions brought up to be discussed (the problem of content) and the free search for possible answers (the problem of method). These two conditions should occur at the same time, given that the content determines the method, and vice versa. One can only talk of freedom in freedom. What is the point of asking questions if we are not free to answer? What is the point of answering if the questions are always false? Dialogue only exists when individuals can talk to each other without mediation, i.e. when they relate reciprocally. If the discourse is one-way, no communication is possible. If someone has the power to impose the questions, the content of the latter will be directly functional to this (and the answers will contain subjection). Subjects can only be asked questions whose answers confirm their role as such, and from which the bosses will draw the questions of the future. The slavery lies in continuing to reply.

In this sense market research is identical to the elections. The sovereignty of the elector corresponds to the sovereignty of the consumer, and vice versa. TV passivity is called audience; the legitimization of the power of the State is called sovereign people. In either case individuals are simply hostages in a mechanism that gives them the right to speak after having deprived them of the faculty of doing so. What is the point of dialogue if all you can do is elect one or the other? What is communication if all your only choice is between identical goods and TV programmes? The content of the questions is meaningless because the method is false.

'Nothing resembles a representative of the bourgeoisie more than a representative of the proletariat,' Sorel wrote in 1907. What made them identical was the fact that they were, precisely, representatives. To say the same of a right or left wing candidate today would be banal. But politicians do not need to be original (advertising takes care of that), it is sufficient for them to know how to administer that banality. The irony is that the media are defined a means of communication and the voting spree is called elections (which in the true sense of the word means free, conscious decision).

The point is that power does not allow for any other kind of management. Even if the voters wanted it (which would already take us into full 'utopia', to imitate the language of the realists), nothing important could be asked of them from the moment that the only free act—the only authentic election—they could accomplish would be not to vote. Anyone who votes wants inconsequential questions, as authentic questions deny passivity and delegation. We will explain better.

Imagine that the abolition of capitalism were to be requested through referendum (putting aside the fact that such a question is impossible in the context of existing social relations). Most of the electorate would vote in favour of capitalism simply because, as they tranquilly leave home, the office or the supermarket, they cannot imagine a world other than one with commodities and money. But even if they were to vote against it nothing would change as, to be authentic, such a question would exclude the existence of voters. A whole society cannot be changed by decree.

The same could be said for less radical questions. Take the example of the housing estate. What would happen if the inhabitants were able (once again, we would be in 'utopia') to express themselves concerning the organisation of their own lives (housing, streets, squares, etc.)? Let us say right away that such demands would inevitably be limited from the start, because housing estates are a consequence of the displacement and concentration of the population according to the needs of the economy and social control. Nevertheless, we could try to imagine some form of social organisation other than such ghettos. One could safely say that most of the population would have the same ideas as the police on the subject. Otherwise (that is, if even limited practice of dialogue were to give rise to the desire for a new environment), this would mean the explosion of the ghetto. How, under the present social order, do you reconcile the inhabitants' desire to breathe with the interests of the bosses of the motor industry? Free circulation of individuals with the fears of the luxury boutique owners? Children's play areas with the cement of the car parks, banks and shopping centres? The empty houses left in the hands of the speculators? The blocks of flats that look like army barracks, that look like schools, that look like hospitals, that look like asylums? To move one wall in this labyrinth of horrors would mean putting the whole scheme in question. The further we move away from a police-like view of the environment, the closer we get to clashing with the police.

*How can you think freely in the shadow of a church?* wrote an anonymous hand on the sacred wall of the Sorbonne during May '68. This impeccable question has wider implications. Anything that has been designed for economic or religious purposes cannot fail to impose anything but economic or religious

desires. A desecrated church continues to be the house of God. Commodities continue their chatter in an abandoned shopping centre. The parade ground of a disused barracks still contains the marching of the soldiers. That is what he who said that the destruction of the Bastille was an act of applied social psychology meant. The Bastille could never have been managed as anything other than a prison, because its walls would have continued to tell the tale of incarcerated bodies and desires.

Subservience, obligation and boredom espouse consumerism in endless funereal nuptials. Work reproduces the social environment which reproduces the resignation to work. One enjoys evenings in front of the TV because one has spent the day in the office and the underground. Keeping quiet in the factory makes shouting in the stadia a promise of happiness. Feelings of inadequacy at school vindicate the insensate irresponsibility of a Saturday night at the disco. Only eyes emerging from a McDonald's are capable of lighting up when they see a Club Med billboard. Et cetera.

You need to know how to experience freedom in order to be free. You need to free yourself in order to experience freedom. Within the present social order, time and space prevent experimentation of freedom because they suffocate the freedom to experiment.

### III

The tygers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction. —W.  
Blake

Only by upsetting the imperatives of time and social space will it be possible to imagine new relations and surroundings. The old philosopher said one can only desire on the basis of what one knows. Desires can only change if one changes the life that produces them. Let's be clear about this: rebellion against the organisation of time and space by power is a material and psychological necessity.

Bakunin said that revolutions are three quarters fantasy and a quarter reality. The important thing is realising where the fantasy that leads to the explosion of generalized rebellion originates. The unleashing of all evil passions, as the Russian revolutionary said, is the irresistible force of transformation. For all that this might make the resigned or the cold analysts of the historical movements of capital smile, we could say—if we did not find such jargon indigestible—that such an idea of revolution is extremely modern. Passions are evil, in that they are prisoners suffocated by that gelid monster, normality. But they are also evil because the will to live rather than shrink under the weight of duty and masks, transforms itself into quite the opposite. When restricted by daily duties, life denies itself to reappear in the guise of a servant. Desperately searching for space, it manifests itself as an oneiric presence, a physical contraction, a nervous tic, idiotic, gregarious violence. Does not the massive spread of psychotic drugs, one of the latest interventions of the welfare State, denounce the unbearable-ness of the present conditions of life? Power administers captivity everywhere in order to justify one of its own products: evil. Insurrection takes care of both of them.

If they do not wish to deceive themselves and others, those struggling for the demolition of the present social edifice must face the fact that subversion is a game of wild, barbarous forces. Someone referred to them as Cossacks, someone else hooligans; in fact they are individuals whose anger has not been quelled by social peace.

But how do you create a new community starting from anger? Let us put a stop to the conjuring tricks of dialectics. The exploited are not carriers of any positive project, be it even the classless society (which all too closely resembles the productive set up). Capital is their only community. They can only escape by destroying everything that makes them exploited: wages, commodities, roles and hierarchies. Capitalism has not created the conditions of its overcoming in communism—the famous bourgeoisie forging the arms of its own extinction—but of a world of horrors.

The exploited have nothing to self-manage but their own negation as such. That is the only way that their bosses, leaders and apologists in various guises will disappear along with them. In this ‘immense task of urgent demolition’ we must find joy, immediately.

For the Greeks the word ‘barbarian’ did not only refer to the stranger, but also to the ‘stammerer’, he who did not speak the language of the polis correctly. Language and territory are inseparable. The law fixes the borders enforced by the order of Names. Every power structure has its barbarians, every democratic discourse its stammerers. The society of commodities wants to banish their obstinate presence—with expulsion and silence—as though they were nothing. It is on this nothing that rebellion has founded its cause. No ideology of dialogue and participation will ever be able to mask exclusion and internal colonies completely. When the daily violence of the State and the economy causes the evil part to explode, there is no point in being surprised if someone puts their feet on the table and refuses to accept discussion. Only then will passions get rid of a world of death. The Barbarians are just around the corner...

## VII

... This world is poisoning us and forcing us to carry out useless noxious activity; it imposes the need for money on us and deprives us of impassioned relationships. We are growing old among men and women without dreams, strangers in a reality which leaves no room for outbursts of generosity. We are not partisans of abnegation. It’s just that the best this society can offer us (a career, fame, a sudden win, ‘love’) simply doesn’t interest us. Giving orders disgusts us just as much as obedience. We are exploited like everyone else and want to put an end to exploitation right away. For us, revolt needs no other justification.

Our lives are escaping us, and any class discourse that fails to start from this is simply a lie. We do not want to direct or support social movements, but rather to participate in those that already exist, to the extent to which we recognise common needs in them. In an excessive perspective of liberation there are no such things as superior forms of struggle. Revolt needs everything: papers and books, arms and explosives, reflection and swearing, poison, daggers and arson. The only interesting question is *how to combine them...*

IX

Don't ask for the formula for opening up worlds to you in some syllable like a bent dry branch. Today, we can only tell you what we are not, what we don't want. —E. Montale

Life cannot simply be something to cling to. This thought skims through everyone at least once. We have a possibility that makes us freer than the gods: we can quit. This is an idea to be savoured to the end. Nothing and no one is obliging us to live. Not even death. For that reason our life is a *tabula rasa*, a slate on which nothing has been written, so contains all the words possible. With such freedom, we cannot live as slaves. Slavery is for those who are *condemned to live*, those constrained to eternity, not for us. For us there is the unknown—the unknown of spheres to be ventured into, unexplored thoughts, guarantees that explode, strangers to whom to offer a gift of life. The unknown of a world where one might finally be able to give away one's excess self love. Risk too. The risk of brutality and fear. The risk of finally staring *mal de vivre* in the face. All this is encountered by anyone who decides to put an end to the *job of existing*.

Our contemporaries seem to live by jobbing, desperately juggling with a thousand obligations including the saddest of all of them—enjoying themselves. They cover up the incapacity to determine their own lives with detailed frenetic activity, the speed that accompanies increasingly passive ways of behaving. They are unaware of the lightness of the negative.

We can choose not to live. That is the most beautiful reason for opening oneself up to life with joy. 'There is always time to put an end to things; one might as well rebel and play'—is how the materialism of joy talks.

We can choose not to act, and that is the most beautiful reason for acting. We bear within ourselves the potency of all the acts we are capable of, and no boss will ever be able to deprive us of the possibility of saying no. What we are and what we want begins with a no. From it is born the only reason for getting up in the morning. From it is born the only reason for going armed to the assault of an order that is suffocating us.

On the one hand there is the existent, with its habits and certainties. And of certainty, that social poison, one can die.

On the other hand there is insurrection, the *unknown* bursting into the life of all. The possible beginning of an exaggerated practice of freedom.



# Musings on Nothingness, And Some of Its Varieties

baedan, 2012. A chapter in *baedan - journal of queer nihilism - issue one*. Excerpted.

*I should have liked to talk to you about encounters. I have a notion that the moment that provoked — or provokes — them is located outside time, that the shock spatters the surrounding time and space, but I may be wrong, for I want to talk about the encounters that I provoke and that I impose upon the lads in my book. Perhaps some of these moments that are set down on paper are like populous streets on whose throng my gaze happens to fall: a sweetness, a tenderness, situates them outside the moment; I am charmed and — I can't tell why — that mob of people is balm to my eyes. I turn away, then I look again, but I no longer find either sweetness or tenderness. The street becomes dismal, like a morning of insomnia; my lucidity returns, restoring within me the poetry that the following poem had driven out: some handsome adolescent face, that I had barely caught a glimpse of, had lit up the crowd; then it had disappeared. The meaning of Heaven is no longer strange to me. - Jean Genet*

*We were shadows, shadows in what you refer to as “everyday life”: countless invisible figures you walked past in the streets. Faces that reminded you of something but you were never sure of exactly what.*  
- anonymous

*Abandon yourself to peace, to the point of annihilation.*

## Humility

I should have written nothing<sup>1</sup> at all, but it is far too late for that. Sin and guilt<sup>2</sup> have entered the world<sup>3</sup>— never mind where from, since in any case it would do no good to close that box — and I am no longer striding the crests of my dreams, filling my lungs with air and expelling it again, now instead I am manipulating the keys of a machine<sup>4</sup> striving to thus let my dreams pour and play out across the space of an information-obsessed plane of existence.

There exists no good reason<sup>5</sup> to occupy this space, especially when I have the heights and depths of life wholly available to me at any moment, and yet something compels me, God help me.<sup>6</sup> I have no hope that I will save anyone

this way. Not even myself. I know I will not even reach to prevent the wretched<sup>7</sup> from abusing whatever I create. It is a fact that to take something from oneself and put it out into the world is to let it escape and become everything you didn't want it to be. They say this is so for God the Father as for every human father. I do not believe in either one, but their stories both hold a strange beauty for me.

One can create a monster<sup>8</sup> or a babe; the difference is purely aesthetic. But it is this question of creation. Many simply put it aside, to their own loss. They still create things but they deny they are doing so. They are befallen by atrophy.<sup>9</sup> Others take on the question of creation by accepting the market assurance that whatever makes money must be good because, so the logic goes, people buy things that are good.<sup>10</sup> They become lost to the world of production. Others, in reaction to this, turn toward smaller and smaller circles to keep their creatures safe from the real world. But these spaces are either infected by the social disease or else suffocate for lack of oxygen.

There are some rare exceptions. No one can say where they come from. They destroy all that has come before. They blow into a dying ember. Without them there would be nothing at all.

Now, we have to say that the whole world without them would be an empty<sup>11</sup> dull<sup>12</sup> pale<sup>13</sup> and suffocating lifeless and deathless nothingness, and that they themselves are also a nothingness, but an ecstatic explosion of creative destructive nothingness. So it will be worth keeping in mind that there is a huge and unspeakable gap between the qualities of different sorts of nothingness. Otherwise everything will be overcome by an immense confusion.<sup>14</sup>

The first aspect which ensures that there is something interesting rather than nothing is the explosive energy of the sun. The second is the implosive energy of the earth. These provide for the habitation of a thin membrane where their intercourse takes place. Here there exists a tension between them. Much life forms by rebelling against being crushed into the bowels of the earth and the depths of the sea, whether this rebellion is volcanic, evaporative, or organic. Life must protect itself from being lost in the emptiness of space or scorched in the heat of the sun, and so it also flows, crumbles, burrows, glides, swims, falls and floats downward. This might be all, were it not for something else. Organization, organism, orgasm...<sup>15</sup>

## **How Rules Work**

Rule<sup>34</sup> is always arbitrary.<sup>35</sup> Its arbitrary nature exists beyond the question of what purpose any particular rule serves or what explanation can be given for it. Rule is its own explanation and justification,<sup>36</sup> founded only upon itself and the negation of its negation. The child asks "why?" and an answer may be given but this answer will meet the following "why?" until the authority figure has lost all capacity and patience, admitting that it is simply "because I said so," to which there is no recourse. Yet power has revealed its nakedness.

The exception to the rule proves the rule. The exception has nothing to do with the negation of rule. The negation of rule is not its suspension, but rather the recognition of its nakedness. The emperor who is wearing no clothes is less laughable than the subjects who pretend he is clothed. The absurdity of the ritual carries its own destruction by destroying all who are duped into it.

The particular rule may have a reason. The critic points instead to its function, which is force. The fact remains that it is arbitrary because rule itself relies only on reason itself and force as such. To be more clear, it is arbitrary because it does not care about its own reasoning, does not care for its own reasoning, and does not measure itself by its own reasoning. Reason is merely its outgrowth, *a certain manner of extending itself*.

Something is arbitrary if it is based on choice or whim and not on any reason or system. So rule is both arbitrary and non-arbitrary. It is a system that is not based on a system, but is nevertheless systematic in itself; a reason that is not based on reason. What is the reason for reason? Always just *because I said so*.

Reason lacks playfulness with itself and with any deviations from it. It is thus both arbitrary and serious. The queer finds this funny and laughs at the rule, and the ruler, and the straight line.

There is no such thing as a straight line to be found anywhere except for one place, and that is the beautiful world of pretend known as mathematics. Once an enjoyable diversion, an amusing gamble between companions to see who could travel farthest away on a flight of fancy,<sup>37</sup> mathematics somehow became a serious<sup>38</sup> game that today imposes itself on every child as a discipline mandated by the state.

Some will object that straight lines do exist, in the things that humans make, and others will say that a sunbeam travels in a straight line, but neither assertion is true.<sup>39</sup> Man-made rulers and even computer-drawn lines are only crude approximations of the impeccably straight and true lines that exist only in our own minds. The sunbeam's path is curved by, among other things, the forces of gravity and the curvature of space.

All straightness is farce,<sup>40</sup> more or less successful.

As mathematics has become more serious, it has manifested an overwhelming<sup>41</sup> and terrifying<sup>42</sup> desire to become more than a complex game playing<sup>43</sup> with numbers, a desire to produce information monsters to solve problems, and to try by all means to make the world as it understands it (a complex system of information, a large matrix of data points), and the world as it is, one and the same.

I don't understand this.

But in any case, something has always escaped<sup>44</sup> it. At first, nearly everything escaped it, all that mathematics could do was try to count the grains of sand on the shore<sup>45</sup> until one was forced to erupt in laughter at remembering one of the simple beauties of life. But then, zero<sup>46</sup> was invented. This was a strange concept having to do with nothing, but what the invention of zero accomplished, completely by accident, was an incredibly fast way to express and perform calculations on numbers that were once impossibly large, too large to even conceive of. One still could not count all the grains of sand on the shore, but thought began to gradually lose its humor.<sup>47</sup>

## **Humor**

*What can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence. - L. Wittgenstein*

1

1.1 The total quantity of energy in the universe is constant.

1.11 Magic<sup>48</sup> is a form of energy.

1.12 If magic once existed in the world, then it follows that it must still exist.

1.13 Everything tells us that magic once existed but does not anymore. So it must either be that magic still exists, or else everything is a lie.

- **aside:** Every irruption of magic belies everything.

1.14 Magic can be defined as all phenomena such as cannot be modeled through a system of mathematical functions such that the models have a reasonably strong capacity to predict the behavior of the original phenomena.

- **aside:** One may raise the challenge: But how does one determine a reasonably strong capacity? There is no way to establish a rubric for the measurement of such a datum except through the establishment of a rubric for the measurement of reasonability itself. This latter rubric is, however, reasonably enough defined: the citizen is the one who is logical and thus can know what is reasonable. The one who shows herself to be mad<sup>49</sup> can reasonably be disqualified from citizenship.

1.15 As such, all turbulent<sup>50</sup> phenomena (atmospheric, aquatic, mineral, animal or cosmic) are magical.

- **remark:** Likewise, all unobserved phenomena are magical.

1.2 Were it not for the practice of scientific<sup>51</sup> inquiry, everything would be magic and nonsense.

1.21 Scientific inquiry thus has a way of making unpredictable phenomena become predictable.

- **aside:** From the perspective of scientific inquiry, it was for a long time considered illogical and inconceivable that inquiry could possibly convert phenomena from an unpredictable flux into controlled behavior, as if the whole natural world was entirely made up of unruly schoolchildren who stood quite still and walked in perfectly straight lines when being overlooked by their stern<sup>52</sup> and serious master, but who would immediately start to play and fight and act chaotically<sup>53</sup> when no longer stared at. The fact that the proof of this is actually quite straightforward and apparent never occurred to the perspective of scientific inquiry until a few of its adherents had looked at such small things so closely and for such a long time that their eyes had begun to cross and their data came out all wrong. At this point they came to a very definite conclusion, which was that things were much more uncertain than they had thought, and that their observation caused some very uncertain clouds<sup>54</sup> of possibility to snap into place like schoolchildren or objects in the more recent versions of Adobe InDesign.

- **cont'd:** Having been so heavily observed by scientists for centuries now, things in the world tend to behave in a substantially more predictable manner while under human observation. Like an animal that has learned to run away from all humans, not knowing which of them might be carrying weapons, or like the transparent worm-shaped<sup>55</sup> spots<sup>56</sup> one sees drifting across the film of one's vision, which escape one's trying to look at them directly,<sup>57</sup> all magic tends to flee from all civilized humans. This is, however, a condition that is far from irreparable.

1.22 The name for the way in which scientific inquiry converts the unpredictable into the predictable is seriousness.

1.23 Seriousness cannot destroy humor. Seriousness is nothing more than the lack<sup>58</sup> of awareness of humor, just as science is nothing but a manner of looking that overlooks magical phenomena.

- **remark 1:** It will tell you, in all seriousness, that it doesn't see anything funny at all.

- **remark 2:** Everything is funny, so the joke is everywhere to be seen, but seriousness just does not see it. It is not even quite clear why not.

- **aside:** Perhaps, with the laughter of the unseen constantly ringing in its ears and not knowing what to do, seriousness blushes to such a great extent that the blood rushing in its ears makes it so that seriousness can no longer hear it.

- **remark 3a:** Seriousness is always trying to catch humor, but it will never get it.

- **remark 3b:** Seriousness is especially funny.

- **remark 4:** To laugh at oneself is the greatest form of humility. To take oneself seriously is the most terrible form of arrogance.

- **aside:** Nevertheless, he who laughs at himself is full of himself, and he who takes himself seriously is empty of himself.

1.24 Laughter always immediately destroys seriousness.

- **aside:** The trick is that seriousness has a funny way of always coming back.

1.25 Much of laughter is silent, and much of humor is dry.

- **aside:** For that matter, it must be admitted that seriousness is fully capable of laughing. It's just not all that convincing.

1.3 A prediction which is arrived at by means of the scientific method has a definable probability of being correct. This probability is between 0 and 1.

1.31 A prediction which is not arrived at by means of the scientific method has an undefinable probability of being correct.

- **aside:** The alchemists who paved the way for science were attempting to accomplish feats that the later scientists would consider hopelessly impossible and magical. Yet in their slow, certain<sup>59</sup> way, scientists today still seek the same goals of transforming lead into gold and achieving immortality. This can be observed by the pursuit of controlled and practical nuclear fusion, which could turn lead into gold, and by the reappearance of the quest for eternal life among the stated goals of the transhumanist movement.

- **cont'd:** In their strange, backwards, and unconscious way, however, outside of their field of vision, the scientists have already accomplished both of these feats. If they were able to recognize their accomplishments for what they are, they would certainly behave much in the manner of Doctor Frankenstein toward his creature.<sup>60</sup>

1.32 If the thing predicted happens,<sup>61</sup> the prediction is correct, and if not then it isn't. That's all there is to it.

- **remark:** From this we can observe that prediction is a losing proposition.

- **aside:** From the perspective of science, a cat in an irradiated container is both alive and dead until the scientist looks in the box. But the scientist is dead all along.

1010

2.1 The most pressing problem in mathematics is the question of whether or not there exists a mathematical process capable of solving every mathematical problem.

2.11 Said problem has not been solved.

2.12 The second most pressing problem in mathematics is the question of whether or not there exists a mathematician capable of getting the joke.

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3.1 Sexual intercourse is whatever takes place between a phallus<sup>62</sup> and an orifice.<sup>63</sup>

- **remark 1:** Understood energetically, a phallus is whatever has an explosive (or repulsive) energy, and an orifice is whatever has an implosive (or attractive) energy. Understood materially, a phallus is whatever protrudes and the orifice is whatever consumes.

- **remark 2a:** Thus the five primary human orifices are the mouth, the anus, the cunt, and the eyes. The six secondary human orifices are the ears, the nostrils, the naval (the orifice which begins to atrophy upon birth), and the urethra. The tertiary human orifices are the one thousand one hundred pores<sup>64</sup> of the skin.

- **aside:** One of the three hyperbolic sexual fantasies is that of having every orifice fucked<sup>65</sup> at once. The atrophied form of this fantasy is the double or triple penetration, while its sub-cosmic form is the simultaneous penetration of all of the one thousand one hundred and eleven orifices.

- **remark 2b:** The six primary human phalluses are the head, the four limbs, and the cock or clitoris. The twenty-seven secondary human phalluses are the nose, the ears, the tongue, the chin, the nipples, the ten fingers and the ten toes. The tertiary human phalluses are all the three thousand three hundred hairs of the body.

- **aside:** The second hyperbolic sexual fantasy is that of having every one of one's phalluses sucked at once. Atrophied forms of this fantasy appear in fetishes<sup>66</sup> such as toe-sucking, while its sub-cosmic form is the simultaneous fellatio of all of the three thousand three hundred thirty-three phalluses.

- **remark 3a:** The atrophied phallus is convex, and the atrophied orifice is concave. The strength of the phallus is thus conceived of in relation to the extent of its protrusion, and for the orifice its depth.

- **remark 3b:** The pure phallus, however, protrudes infinitely, and the pure orifice is infinitely deep. These are thus neither concave nor convex, but hyperbolic.

- **aside:** The human cock, which protrudes finitely and has its own orifice in the urethra as well as its many pores, is therefore not a pure phallus. The human cunt, whose depth is finite and which has its own phallus in the clitoris as well as its many hairs, is therefore not a pure orifice.

- **aside:** The sun is nearly a pure phallus, and the earth is nearly a pure orifice. Neither, however, is pure or hyperbolic.

- **aside:** The supernova is closer still to a pure phallus, and the black hole to a pure orifice. Neither, however, is pure or hyperbolic.

- **aside:** The Big Bang would have to have been a pure phallus, and the Big Crunch would have to be a pure orifice.

3.12 All intercourse takes place between a phallus and an orifice.

- **aside:** Indeed, all intercourse takes place between the pure phallus and the pure orifice, since these are the beginning and end of the universe, respectively.

3.13 Therefore all intercourse is sexual intercourse.

3.14 All human intercourse is queer.<sup>67</sup>

- **remark 1:** Queer refers to whatever is not heterosexual.

- **remark 2:** The veracity of this proposition can be demonstrated by means of a simple proof: Heterosexual intercourse is whatever intercourse takes place between a pure phallus and a pure orifice. Since there exists no human being who is a pure phallus or pure orifice, every body having one thousand one hundred eleven orifices and three times as many phalluses, it thus follows that human intercourse cannot be heterosexual.

- **remark 3a:** Not only is all human intercourse queer, but no form of human intercourse is more queer than any other.

- **remark 3b:** Some forms of human intercourse are, however, straighter than other forms of intercourse. For example, the penetration of a cunt by a cock is straighter than the penetration of an ear by a tongue, which is in turn straighter than the penetration of an anus by a fist, which is in turn straighter than the penetration of a naval by a nose, and so on.

- **aside:** The preceding remarks may seem contradictory, but it is only because straightness can only be understood as a measurement, a question of how closely a particular fuck measures up to the grand old fuck between the pure phallus and the pure orifice. Queerness cannot be understood as a measurement, but only as the humor in the face of the fact that no measuring stick can ever be right, that the rightness of any measurement can only be measured by how far off the mark it is relative to another stick.

- **remark 4a:** It is illogical to claim that a given person is heterosexual, since only a couple can be heterosexual.

- **remark 4b:** But it is likewise illogical to claim that a given couple is heterosexual, when what is meant instead is that the couple is remarkably more successful than most couples at presenting itself as approaching the heterosexuality of the intercourse between the pure orifice and the pure phallus.

- **remark 4c:** A given human couple presents itself as tending toward heterosexuality to the extent that its members are extremely polarized from each other in terms of the various gendered attributes which include physique, personality, dress, and mannerisms.

- **aside:** Here is the ideally feminine woman with the hypermasculine man. He is at least a head taller than she. He has put his arm around her, and it is the size of her thigh, it as if it is his cock that holds her around the waist, as if his member were the size of her thigh. They show themselves off as if to provoke in every passerby the staggering thought of such a large member penetrating such a small body, as if they were playing at being daddy and girl (which is still one of the most popular fantasies, though it may cloak itself as schoolteacher and student, father and babysitter, and so on) and she is made up so well that on the one hand it is strikingly obvious how made up she is, but on the other hand

this face is understood by anyone who is watching to be nothing but the perfect expression of her true nature, which is to say her superficiality, and this again has the effect of staggering the onlooker, who can hardly imagine how a girl so lacking in depth could take it from such a beast of a man. What a champ; it must be truly painful.

- **remark 4d:** For the heterosexual fantasy draws its fascination almost purely from the obsession with the penetrative act being performed at the most extreme levels of stretching, as if the heterosexual imagination's ideal fantasy would be the image of some monstrous cock, possessed perhaps by a titan or by Zeus himself, penetrating inexorably into the tightest of holes.<sup>68</sup>

- **aside:** Thus the third hyperbolic sexual fantasy concerns itself with the degree to which a tight orifice is stretched by a large phallus. It has as its atrophied form the fetish for a large cock or fist penetrating a tight hole. On the sub-cosmic level, its forms are birth and death. On the cosmic level, this and the other two hyperbolic sexual fantasies converge as the passage of the infinitely-large body of God through the infinitely-small hole of a moment in time.

- **remark 4e:** In the heterosexual imagination, the polarized couple is understood to possess a strong (re)productive power, while the imperfectly gendered couple possesses a weak (re)productive power, perhaps to the point of sterility. • **aside:** A given human couple may present itself as tending toward homosexuality to the extent that its members are extremely similar to each other in appearance. To the extent that this similarity is performed in the manner that heterosexuals perform difference, it is a farce. But while to the heterosexual imagination the importance of intercourse is understood as (re)productive and strengthened by polar difference, intercourse understood queerly is a narcissistic endeavor that proceeds in spite of the tremendous variations between different individuals.

- **remark 5:** Understood queerly, all intercourse is queer, while intercourse in the heterosexual imagination is measured as more or less straight.<sup>69</sup>

- **aside:** In the queer understanding of society, it can be seen that the strong (re)productive force that the polarized couple exerts does not pass from their loins to their offspring (as they themselves believe) but rather from their image onto everyone who perceives one pole of that couple as his or her ideal and strives to realize it him or herself. However futile, this effort (which is queer both in that it rests on the fact that people are not real men or women and in that people have to go through at least one sex change in the course of this effort) is itself a powerful (re)productive process.

- **aside:** Thus does the queer understanding of society grasp that no one is a man or a woman except to the extent that they strive to realize the ideal man or woman and trample desperately upon the backs of whoever they find beneath them in an enormous game of king of the hill where the hill is a pile of human bodies.

## 0100101110100010101011101

4.1 All logic is phallic logic.<sup>70</sup>

- **remark 1a:** This can be demonstrated by the fact that all logic consists in propositional energy: the putting-forward of various<sup>71</sup> elements, definitions,



claims and proofs.

- **remark 1b:** This is further demonstrated by the fact that logic is universally repulsive in nature.

- **remark 2:** The counter-argument might arise that the existence of negational logical processes would negate the claim that all logic is propositional or positive. It is true that there is negational logic. However, this logic is only negates certain specific claims. Indeed, all negational logic can be seen to negate a certain claim only and ever for the purpose of justifying the opposite of said claim. Moreover, even negational logic must put forward a series of positive claims in order to reach the denial of the opposite claim. Hence, all logic is negative only ever deceitfully and in passing and is always positive and propositional in its true process and aim.

- **aside:** There might be said to exist a kind of logic that is negational of all logical propositions without putting forward any propositions of its own. These qualities, however, would disqualify this hypothetical kind of logic from being logic at all.

4.11 Given that all logic is phallic, there is also an orificial counterpart to logic, namely madness.

- **aside:** When speaking of orifices and orificial tendencies, it is technically incorrect to posit that they exist, since they do not and cannot. This is a difficulty not yet resolved, and the expression ought to be taken for what it is, while keeping this caveat in mind.

4.12 The intercourse between logic and madness is thus heterosexual intercourse between a pure phallus and a pure orifice.

4.13 The intercourse between logic and madness is governed by logic. Madness yet has a tendency to defy every form of this governance.

- **aside:** When logic tightens its grip, madness tends to act like a liquid. When logic forms a bowl to hold it, madness evaporates. When logic encapsulates the gas, madness burns away. When logic uses this fire for itself, madness perishes. When madness perishes, logic perishes with it.

- **aside:** This relation can be seen in the organism, whether single-celled or complex. To have substance, the organism must incorporate and breaks down solids to build itself, but to not stiffen and freeze it must drink water and become water. But to not dissolve away it must envelop the water in a membrane. But to not be pierced and thus lose its insides it must be able to sense dangers and move around them. To move and sense it must have energy. To have energy it must absorb this from the sun. Since the sun is not always present it must store energy in a certain form and burn it later. This storage of energy makes it a potential target for other organisms seeking energy. And so on.

- **aside:** For the most part, the game of survival and death is governed by the logic of survival, and would proceed with or without consciousness. However, consciousness is more than a mere coincidence, happenstance, gift from God, or defiance of God's will. It is also the greatest trick by which to guarantee a precise and brutal play of the game of survival. . .

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6.1 The difficulty that exists within the sphere of computer technology as concerns issues of efficiency, random<sup>78</sup> data, complex algorithms, and of course the

imminently important field of cryptography,<sup>79</sup> all comes down to the inefficiency of using a model based on pure orifices and pure phalluses to map and calculate the behavior of impure orifices and impure phalluses.

- **remark:** I refer, of course, to the binary system of computation.

- **remark:** If a researcher wants to understand randomness they need look no farther than /b/.

6.11 One of the most pressing tasks that society has set itself is to develop computing machines capable of manipulating non-binary and random data at rates of efficiency substantially surpassing existing technology, for cryptographic purposes.

6.12 What scientists have yet to understand is that there has never been a scientific breakthrough achieved on the basis of the scientific method.

- **remark:** Indeed, every scientific breakthrough has been a break through the scientific method.

6.2 Any statement that is true is also a truism.

- **remark:** All discourse consists of nothing but an endless series of affirmations no more insightful than remarking that water is wet, phrased in more or less interesting and more or less roundabout ways. The rest are lies.<sup>80</sup>

- **aside:** Lies are there to make things interesting.

6.21 By its very nature, a logical system can never consist of more than the sum of its parts and can never attain insight, properly speaking.

- **remark 1:** Or, more accurately, it can only attain insight if there occurs the intrusion of a foreign agent, a eureka!

- **remark 2:** In other words, the outcome of a logical process is entirely predictable.

00011001001011101011111100110111001000110110100101110101001-1011110111100001101100001101110100111

*You have to do away with the mind, as with literature. I say the mind and life communicate at all levels.*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Nothing, nil, zero, naught. The Germanic root of 'thing' meant not an object but an appointed time. The origin of the word 'naughty' is parallel to, but more interesting than, that of 'nothing.' Its sinister meaning is related to its derivation from 'naught,' whose etymology (nawiht, nothing) reveals a further delight in the Old English wihht (thing, creature), of Germanic origin (still appearing, albeit very rarely, in the modern spelling 'wight'.)

<sup>2</sup>'Sin,' through the Germanic sense of transgression, is ultimately rooted in the sense of being true. Is this from the sense 'he is truly be the guilty person,' or because to be true necessitates transgression? Guilt is of unknown origin.

<sup>3</sup>The world, originally just the domain of 'human existence and affairs' or 'humankind' (its pre-Germanic root was literally 'age of man:' wer- [man, as in 'virile'] -ald [age, as in 'old']), has been extended gradually include most everything, as we well know.

<sup>4</sup>Via a many-layered and intriguing etymology one may reach through Latin and Greek to that a machine is kind of a means for enabling one's ability to do something.

<sup>5</sup>If we go back far enough to the pre-Latin we find the origin of our word 'reason' rests in counting things.

<sup>6</sup>The origin of 'God,' via the Germanic, means to call upon or invoke.

<sup>7</sup>The 'wretch' was once the German hero or warrior reck (Cf. 'wreck'). It is thus a just account of the banishment and sorrow intrinsic to the hero.

<sup>8</sup>Of Latin origin, 'monster's root (monere, to warn) reminds us that misshapen animals were once regarded as foreboding omens.

<sup>9</sup>From the Greek atrophos (malnourished) negative of trephein (to fatten) as in trophy.

<sup>10</sup>It is a fact that long before 'good' was ever used to refer to property, it meant something with the quality of goodness, and before that it was only an adjective. Before even it took on a moral color, its Germanic root referred simply to what fit or belonged together.

<sup>11</sup>Empty once meant unmarried, at leisure. Literally to have not.

<sup>12</sup>Referring to lack of wit before taking on the sense of lacking (mental, then physical) sharpness, 'dull' is of a dusty pre-Germanic origin.

<sup>13</sup>Before it was used to distinguish between races, 'pale's root words refer to a lack of saturation, as in 'pallid,' and not to a lack of darkness. Its dullness of color could be grey, brown, white, or yellow.

<sup>14</sup>From the Latin confundere (to pour together).

<sup>15</sup>All with the same root. But of them, orgasm has the purest relation to its pre-Latin root -werg (to do, related to -wrog, urge) which is the origin of 'work' (Germanic), 'energy' (Greek), 'urge' (Latin), and 'orgy.' The original urging takes on the meaning of swelling, becoming excited, in the Greek organ, to then become orgasmos, 'orgasm.' The others come by way of the Latin organum (organ or instrument, as in an organ of the body's functioning).

<sup>34</sup>Closely related to 'right,' 'rule' derives from the Latin regula (a straight stick or guide) from which we also get 'regulate.'

<sup>35</sup>Meaning deciding on one's own discretion and will, 'arbitrary' comes from the Latin arbiter whose name conveys the fact of his coming and going (as witness or judge) — in other words, a kind of displacement inherent in the legal process.

<sup>36</sup>A curious concept, 'justice' unsurprisingly derives from a Latin concept of (especially legal) right, ius. The Old Latin ious only found its way into the common tongue by influence of the religious cults.

<sup>37</sup>'Fancy' is a recent (six centuries back) contraction of 'fantasy,' whose roots have to do with picturing to oneself.

<sup>38</sup>Ultimately a matter of having weight, 'serious' has a different heavy root than 'axiom,' one that did not come to bear material worth.

<sup>39</sup>Behind the pre-Germanic sense of good faith, 'truth' derives from a likeness to the steadfastness of a tree (-dru, tree, as in 'druid').

<sup>40</sup>Originally to stuff, as with meat. Latin.

<sup>41</sup>Turning upside-down: in Middle English whelmen is to turn over.

<sup>42</sup>It seems that every variety of fear resonates with trembling: the ancient origin of 'terror' meant to shake.

<sup>43</sup>Once revelry, frolicking, enjoying music, from Germanic plegan.

<sup>44</sup>To get out of the grasp of your pursuer, quite literally leaving them with only your cape. Latin.

<sup>45</sup>Shore from pre-Germanic skur- (cut) related to 'shear.'

<sup>46</sup>From the Arabic sifr, cipher (empty, null), from Sanskrit sunya-m meaning empty place or desert.

<sup>47</sup>A long and amusing path takes us to get wet. Completely aside: Per H.W. Fowler, among the eight types of humor, humor (as a subset of itself) is the one interested in discovery in the realm of human nature.

<sup>48</sup>'Magic' sits aside the machine as a kind of power. They share the same root in their relation to the capacity to do.

<sup>49</sup>From the pre-Germanic ga-maid-jan (changed, abnormal), related to 'mutate.' The old English word of choice for madness was once 'wood,' an adjective of a different Germanic origin than the wood of trees. It comes from a root wet- to blow, inspire, or spiritually incite.

<sup>50</sup>From the Latin turba (turmoil, crowd) as in 'disturbed.'

<sup>51</sup>Looking further back than the roots that deal with knowing, we find that 'science' derives from separation, cleaving, division, rending. In this it shares the same with 'consciousness' as it does with 'shit.'

<sup>52</sup>'Stern' is a cousin to 'stare' and 'sterile,' all from a pre-Germanic root for stiffness.

<sup>53</sup>The Greek khaos: the gaping abyss is vast and empty, like a yawning mouth. The sense of disorder did not arise until the modern era.

<sup>54</sup>Originally a mass of rock (as in 'clod'), 'cloud' was extended almost a millennium ago to the things in the sky by similarity of appearance.

<sup>55</sup>'Worm,' from Germanic meaning worm, serpent, or dragon.

<sup>56</sup>A 'spot' was once specifically a moral stain before being taken up for other uses, such as the stains left by immoral activities. Germanic.

<sup>57</sup>In 'direct' we have again a word that concerns itself with guiding or setting straight. (See 'right,' 'rectum,' 'regulate,' etc.)

<sup>58</sup>'Lack's source was used to describe a just-trickling spring.

<sup>59</sup>In fact, certainty is, like science, based on separation.

<sup>60</sup>This prediction was not arrived at by means of the scientific method.

<sup>61</sup>'To happen' once meant to occur by hap (by chance). 'Hap,' little used today, is of Germanic

origin (chance, fate, luck).

<sup>62</sup> Like orgasm, it is ultimately a matter of swelling, since the phallus introduced into Greek by the cult of Dionysus that worshipped it was always erect.

<sup>63</sup> Via the Latin orificium, speaking of the mouth.

<sup>64</sup> Greek poros, also a pore, literally a passage or way.

<sup>65</sup> Parts of 'fuck's etymology read more like a detective story than scholarship, but point to the Germanic ficken (to fuck, earlier to move quickly back and forth, and earlier still to itch or scratch).

<sup>66</sup> From a Portuguese word for sorcery, further back in its Latin roots it refers to the act of creation.

<sup>67</sup> Of Germanic origin, queerness comes from being oblique or off-centered, an imperfection that can make a wheel or machine part wobble awkwardly (or interestingly). Further back in time we find this notion derives in turn from twisting and turning.

<sup>68</sup> 'Hole' has the root kel- meaning to hide, shared with 'cell,' 'conceal,' and 'hell.'

<sup>69</sup> A truth can be discerned from the Germanic root of 'straight,' which has nothing to do with perfect lines and is all about tension. Indeed, 'stretch' and 'strain' both derive from the same point as straight.

<sup>70</sup> From logos (word, speaking).

<sup>71</sup> 'Variety' gets its sense from bodily variation; it is related to 'wart.'

<sup>78</sup> 'Random' is from the Frankish root rant (running).

<sup>79</sup> From the Greek kryptos, hidden, and -graphy, which ultimately derives from carving or scratching in stone.

<sup>80</sup> Earlier forms of 'lie' referred to speaking untruths but also to deceit and betrayal in general.

# The Antisocial Turn

baedan, 2012. A chapter in *baedan - journal of queer nihilism - issue one*. Excerpted.

## Pure Negativity

... Many anarchists find themselves compulsively responding to negative characterizations of our intentions and dispositions. In the face of an array of flattering accusations—we are criminal, nihilistic, violent, sowers of disorder—the proponents of a positive anarchism instinctively respond by insisting that we are motivated by the highest ideals (democracy, consensus, equality, justice), seek to create a better society, are non-violent, and believe anarchism to be the greatest order of all. Over and over again anarchists and other revolutionaries offer their allegiance to society by denying the reality or possibility of their enmity with the social order.

Leftist notions of reform, progress, tolerance, and social justice always come up against the harsh reality that any progressive development can only mean a more sophisticated system of misery and exploitation; that tolerance means nothing; that justice is an impossibility. Activists, progressive and revolutionary alike, will always respond to our critique of the social order with a demand that we articulate some sort of alternative. Let us say once and for all that we have none to offer. Faced with the system's seamless integration of all positive projects into itself, we can't afford to affirm or posit any more *alternatives* for it to consume. Rather we must realize that our task is infinite, not because we have so much to build but because we have an entire world to destroy. Our daily life is so saturated and structured by capital that it is impossible to imagine a life worth living, except one of revolt.

We understand destruction to be necessary, and we desire it in abundance. We have nothing to gain through shame or lack of confidence in these desires. There cannot be freedom in the shadow of prisons, there cannot be human community in the context of commodities, there cannot be self-determination under the reign of a state. This world—the police and armies that defend it, the institutions that constitute it, the architecture that gives it shape, the subjectivities that populate it, the apparatuses that administer its function, the schools that inscribe its ideology, the activism that frantically responds to its crises, the arteries of its circulation and flows, the commodities that define life within it, the communication networks that proliferate it, the information technology that surveils and records it—must be annihilated in every instance, all at once. To shy away from this task, to assure our enemies of our good intentions, is the most crass

dishonesty. Anarchy, as with queerness, is most powerful in its negative form. Positive conceptions of these, when they are not simply a quiet acquiescence in the face of a sophisticated and evolving totality of domination, are hopelessly trapped in combat with the details of this totality on its own terms.

... The death drive is a psychoanalytic concept describing the constant eruption of disorder from within the symbolic order itself. It is an unnameable and inarticulable tendency for any society to produce the contradictions and forces which can tear that society apart.

To avoid getting trapped in Lacanian ideology, we should quickly depart from a purely psychoanalytic framework for understanding this drive. Marxism, to imagine it another way, assures us that a fundamental crisis within the capitalist mode of production guarantees that it will produce its own negation from within itself. Messianic traditions, likewise, hold fast to a faith that the messiah must emerge in the course of daily life to overthrow the horror of history. The most romantic elaborations of anarchism describe the inevitability that individuals will revolt against the banality and alienation of modern life. Cybernetic government operates on the understanding that the illusions of social peace contain a complex and unpredictable series of risks, catastrophes, contagions, events and upheavals to be managed. Each of these contains a kernel of truth, if perhaps in spite of their ideologies. The death drive names that permanent and irreducible element which has and will always produce revolt. *Species being, queerness, chaos, willful revolt, the commune, rupture, the Idea, the wild, oppositional defiance disorder*—we can give innumerable names to what escapes our ability to describe it. Each of these attempts to term the erratic negation intrinsic to society. Each comes close to theorizing the universal tendency that any civilization will produce its own undoing.

Explosions of urban rioting, the prevalence of methods of piracy and expropriation, the hatred of work, gender dysphoria, the inexplicable rise in violent attacks against police officers, self-immolation, non-reproductive sexual practices, irrational sabotage, nihilistic hacker culture, lawless encampments which exist simply for themselves—the death drive is evidenced in each moment that exceeds the social order and begins to rip at its fabric.

The symbolic deployment of queerness by the social order is always an attempt to identify the negativity of the death drive, to lock this chaotic potential up in the confines of this or that subjectivity. Foucault's work is foundational to queer theory in part because of his argument that power must create and then classify antagonistic subjectivities so as to then annihilate any subversive potential within a social body. Homosexuals, gangsters, criminals, immigrants, welfare mothers, transsexuals, women, youth, terrorists, the black bloc, communists, extremists: power is always constructing and defining these antagonistic subjects which must be managed. When the smoke clears after a riot, the state and media apparatuses universally begin to locate such events within the logic of identity, freezing the fluidity of revolt into a handful of subject positions to be imprisoned, or, more sinisterly, *organized*. Progressivism, with its drive toward inclusion and assimilation, stakes its hope on the social viability of these subjects, on their ability to participate in the daily reproduction of society. In doing so, the ideology of progress functions to trap subversive potential within a particular subject, and then to solicit that subject's self-repudiation of the danger

which they've been constructed to represent. This move for social peace fails to eliminate the drive, because despite a whole range of determinisms, there is no subject which can solely and perfectly contain the potential for revolt. The simultaneous attempt at justice must also fail, because the integration of each successive subject position into normative relations necessitates the construction of the next Other to be disciplined or destroyed.

Rather than a progressive project which aims to steadily eradicate an emergent chaos over time, our project bases itself upon the persistent negativity of the death drive. We choose not to establish a place for queers, thereby shifting the structural position of queerness to some other population. We identify with the negativity of the drive, and thereby perform a disidentification away from any identity to be represented or which can beg for rights

... This negative queerness severs us from any simple understanding of ourselves. More so, it severs us from any formulaic or easily-represented notions of what we need, what we desire, or what is to be done. Our queerness does not imagine a coherent self, and thus cannot agitate for any selves to find their place within civilization. The only queerness that queer sexuality could ever hope to achieve would exist in a total refusal of attempts at the symbolic integration of our sexuality into governing and market structures. This refusal of representation forecloses on any hope that we ever have in identity politics or positive identity projects. We decline the progressive faith in the ability for our bodies to be figured into the symbolic order. We decline the liberal assurance that everything will turn out right, if we just have faith.

No, instead we mean to "unleash negativity against the coherence of any self-image, subjecting us to a moral law that evacuates the subject so as to locate it through and in that very act of evacuation, permitting the realization, thereby, of a freedom beyond the boundaries of any image or representation, a freedom that ultimately resides in nothing more than the capacity to advance into emptiness."

A non-identitarian, unrepresentable, unintelligible queer revolt will be purely negative, or it won't be at all. In the same way, an insurrectionary anarchy must embrace the death drive against all the positivisms afforded by the world it opposes. If we hope to interrupt the ceaseless forward motion of capital and its state, we cannot rely on failed methods. Identity politics, platforms, formal organizations, subcultures, activist campaigns (each being either queer or anarchist) will always arrive at the dead ends of identity and representation. We must flee from these positivities, these models, to instead experiment with the undying negativity of the death drive. Edelman again:

The death drive's immortality, then refers to a persistent negation that offers assurance of nothing at all: neither identity, nor survival, nor any promise of the future. Instead, it insists both on and as the impossibility of Symbolic closure, the absence of any Other to affirm the Symbolic order's truth and hence the illusory status of meaning as defense against the self-negating substance of jouissance... [Queerness] affirms a constant, eruptive jouissance that responds to the inarticulable real, to the impossibility of sexual rapport or of ever being able to signify the relation between the sexes. [Queerness] then, like the death drive, engages, by refusing,

the normative stasis, the immobility, of sexualization. . . breaks down the mortifying structures that give us ourselves as selves and does so with all the force of the Real that such forms must fail to signify. . . the death drive both evades and undoes representation. . . the gravediggers of society [are] those who care nothing for the future.

...

### *Jouissance*

... If we refuse politics (with its positive projects, reproductive futurity and drive toward intelligibility) we are left with the question of what means of enjoyment immediately exceeds it. How to constitute the purely negative project that is called for by such a rigorously critical conception of queerness?

To articulate such an escape, we must look outside the framework of the teleologies which promise progressive paths toward utopia, outside the abstract symbolic world where politics and identity function. Edelman would urge us to look to the psychoanalytic realm of the Real: the material and affective facts of our existence which escape representation and signification. For Edelman, the real of queerness—which cuts through the positivist baggage of identity—is *jouissance*. He writes:

Queerness undoes the identities through which we experience ourselves as subjects, insisting on the Real of a *jouissance* that social reality and the futurism on which it relies have already foreclosed. Queerness, therefore is never a matter of being or becoming but, rather, of embodying the remainder of the real internal to the symbolic order. One name for this unnameable remainder as Lacan describes it, is *jouissance*, sometimes translated as “enjoyment”: a movement beyond the pleasure principle, beyond the distinctions of pleasure and pain, a violent passage beyond the bounds of identity, meaning and law.

It is useful, in understanding this concept of *jouissance*, to follow Edelman in thinking the elements of queer reality which escape representation: the remainders, as he’d term them. These remainders are what is left over after capital colonizes the positivities of queerness—its fashions, parties, academic pursuits, aesthetics, labors, social networks—and after politics integrates intelligible queerness into its symbolic order. And so what is this remainder? What remains after one subtracts the progressive ideology of inclusion, the humble victim, the upstanding citizens, the eccentric selling points, the fluid permutations of Identity, the volumes of theory? What remains is *jouissance*.

Edelman describes *jouissance* as a supersession of the boundaries of pleasure and pain, a shattering of identity and law. We should analyze this distinction between pleasure and pain as being an inscription of the social order into our bodies. And in the same way, it is the mundane and miniscule pleasures produced through contemporary power arrangements which keep us dependent on those arrangements for our well-being. *Jouissance*, in abolishing both sides of this distinction, severs us from pain as a self-preservation instinct and from



pleasure as the society's alluring bribe. It is the process that momentarily sets us free from our fear of death (literal or figurative) which is such a powerful inhibitor.

We can locate this *jouissance* in the historic moments of queer riot: Compton's cafeteria, Dewey's, the White Night, Stonewall, and countless other moments where queer bodies participated in rupture—throwing bricks, setting fires, smashing windows, rejoicing in the streets. But more to the point, *jouissance* is located in precisely the aspects of these moments (and of others unknown to us) which elude historians, the ones which cannot be captured in a textbook or situated neatly within narratives of progress for queer people, or of rational political struggle for a better future. *Jouissance* is the rage which boils over in the first queen to set a fire; the hatred of an entire social order which flows through one's veins while they set a dozen San Francisco police vehicles on fire. It is the ecstatic bliss that must have shivered its way through the spines of any blessed enough to hear the siren songs of those police cruisers wailing in flames. *Jouissance* is the way that the sexual encounters immediately following such riots were totally incommensurable to the mundane sex of daily life. *Jouissance* is the driving élan of queer sex culture, and yet it is precisely that element of queer sex which still cannot be locked up in an industry, sold as a commodity or scheduled at some mass commercialized ritual. While each element of the sex industry attempts to resolve some fundamental lack and to integrate one's desires into a coherent subjective experience, *jouissance* is specifically that element of sexual desire which makes such a union impossible. It is a desire for *jouissance* which sends us into the night seeking to overwhelm our bodily capacity, to disintegrate the corporeal limits of ourselves, to truly flee from what and who we are. It is specifically this remainder, which defines the unbridgeable chasm between the public sex culture of New York and San Francisco in the seventies (massive squatted sex warehouses, perpetual orgies, a culture of cruising which entirely dissolved the distinction between sex and the rest of life) and the so-called cruising of the cybernetic era (Grindr, craigslist, sparsely attended and overpriced parties at failing sex clubs). This distance might also be understood as what separates the anarchy of an orgy from the democratic ideology of purist polyamory. *Jouissance* is the unnameable desire that one hopelessly attempts to summarize before giving one's body to another: "I want to be negated." *Jouissance* is that essence of queer criminality which cannot be reduced to any vulgar determinism. It is the joy found in the retribution of robbing some bourgeois john, the thrill of theft, the satisfaction of destruction. It is because we are addicted to the intertwining pleasure and pain which brings us again and again into the streets: seeking to riot or fight or fuck. It is specifically the pursuit of the unnameable *jouissance* which causes, without fail, to risk everything in sacrifice to some more grand chaos. This *aufheben* of the categories of pain and pleasure is also the overthrowing of our attachments and investments in political activism, stable identity, and reason. The negativity of *jouissance* is the same that drives us away from obligations to the economy, the family, the law, and, above all, the Future.

Edelman:

This *jouissance* dissolves such fetishistic investments, undoing the consistency of a social reality that relies on Imaginary identi-

fications, on the structures of Symbolic law, and on the paternal metaphor of the name. Hence, there is another name that designates the unnameability to which *jouissance* would give us access: Behind what is named, there is the unnameable. It is in fact because it is unnameable with all the resonances you can give to this name, that it is akin to the quintessential unnameable, that is to say death. The death drive, therefore manifests itself though in radically different guises, in... *jouissance*...

To the extent that it tears the fabric of symbolic reality as we know it, unravelling the solidity of every object, including the object as which the subject necessarily takes itself, *jouissance* evokes the death drive that always insists as the void in and of the subject, beyond its fantasy of self-realization, beyond the pleasure principle.

It is worth following Edelman in cautioning against the ways in which *jouissance*, or more specifically, futile attempts to identify with or name *jouissance*, can lead to a reification of the categories which we'd call upon *jouissance* to abolish:

To the extent that *jouissance*, as fantasmatic escape from the alienation intrinsic to meaning, lodges itself in a given object on which identity come to depend, it produces identity as mortification, reenacting the very constraint of meaning it was intended to help us escape.

Any attempt to situate *jouissance* as a positive project can only ever be a step away from it. Circuit parties, pornography, social networking applications, political demonstrations, activist organizations, art: all of these strive to recuperate *jouissance* into some alternative structure, and yet must always fail because *jouissance* is inherently that which evades capture and ruptures the coherent narratives which justify such structures. This critique is particularly ironic coming from Edelman, whose own practice as a '*jouisseur*' never seems to exceed participation in those same circuit parties, academic conferences, senseless hours at the gym and lavish shopping sprees. He specifically advocates "the meaningless eruption of *jouissance* associated with the 'circuit parties' that gesture toward the circuit of the drive." In his affirmation of this or that element of contemporary gay culture, he fails do the work of locating *jouissance* within the actual subversive histories of queerness (compared to which, gay culture can only be just a pathetic substitute). It's important here to reassert that our conception and praxis of *jouissance* absolutely must go beyond the limitations of Edelman's work.

Queerness, conceived entirely in the negative, names the *jouissance* forbidden by, but permeating the social order itself. It is the specific reason why we can say that behind the facade of the normal operations of life within capital, there is a subversive current which infallibly and irrationally lashes out against the conditions of the existent. This is why we can also say that in moments of widespread rupture and revolt, there exists a powerful and sinister drive to assimilate revolt back into the circuits of politics, identity, and the economy itself. This tension explains why urban revolt, as witnessed in London or Oakland, must be rationalized by activists, politicians and police agencies as the expression of finite grievances by coherent communities. And yet this contradiction is

also why routine traffic stops or raids by police officers have triggered pain and death for those officers at the hands of those they are accustomed to governing. Returning to Edelman once more:

This I suggest is the ethical burden to which queerness must accede in a social order intent on misrecognizing its own investment in morbidity, fetishization, and repetition: to inhabit the place of a meaninglessness associated with the *sinthome*; to figure an unregenerate, and unregenerating, sexuality whose singular insistence on *jouissance*, rejecting every constraint imposed by sentimental futurism, exposes aesthetic culture—the culture of forms and their reproduction, the culture of Imaginary lures—as always already a “culture of death” intent on abjecting the force of a death drive that shatters the tomb we call life.

The negativity of *jouissance*, which we understand to be the vital characteristic of our queerness, is the methods by which we expose the banality and horror of contemporary life. If the social order consistently produces moments of rupture and anti-social violence—expropriation, riot, looting, street fights, sexual depravity, spree arson, hacking—these moments expose society for what it is: hell on earth. Our acquiescence to the pull of *jouissance* functions as a mirror into which society must gaze and recognize its decadence, the impending actualization of its undoing. In the context of such horror, our task is then to “materialize the force of negation, the derealizing insistence of *jouissance*.”

This material force of negation must be one that goes on, not only to disrupt the daily circulation of society, but also to sabotage the apparatuses which function to reproduce us as subjects within those flows. We must, as Edelman says, “break open with *jouissance* and launch [ourselves] into the void around and against which the subject congeals.”

*Jouissance* must be the attack on those all the subjective apparatuses that entrench us into Identity at every turn: education, careers, identity politics, political identity, bank accounts, biometric surveillance technologies, internet avatars, communication infrastructure, ad nauseam. Capitalist subjects are formed through the perpetual war between living beings and these technics, and so any project to abolish capital and its subjects must study and liquidate these apparatuses. An insistence on *jouissance* is to consistently intervene in this war against symbols on the part of the unsymbolized remainder which is exploited in the game of subjectivity. *Jouissance* is the range of deviant and subversive practices which connect our struggle against society to our refusal to be its subjects.

That we pursue *jouissance* does not make us queers. Our queerness isn't that reified identity but is rather “a mode of enjoyment at the social order's expense.” (Edelman). And in doing this, we must resist any recuperative tendency to identify *jouissance* with any identity or grouping of identities. Jack Halberstam critiques Edelman on this point:

The gay male archive, because it is limited to a short list of favored canonical writers is also bound by a particular range of affective responses. And so, fatigue, ennui, boredom, indifference, ironic distancing, indirectness, arch dismissal, insincerity and camp

make up. . . “an archive of feelings” associated with this form of anti-social theory. But, this canon occludes another suite of affectivities associated, again, with another kind of politics and a different form of negativity. In this other archive, we can identify, for example: rage, rudeness, anger, spite, impatience, intensity, mania, sincerity, earnestness, over-investment, incivility, brutal honesty and so on. The first archive is a camp archive, a repertoire of formalized and often formulaic responses to the banality of straight culture and the repetitiveness and unimaginativeness of heteronormativity. The second archive, however, is far more in keeping with the undisciplined kinds of responses that Bersani at least seems to associate with sex and queer culture and it is here that the promise of self-shattering, loss of mastery and meaning, unregulated speech and desire are unloosed. Dyke anger, anti-colonial despair, racial rage, counter-hegemonic violences, punk pugilism, these are the bleak and angry territories of the anti-social turn; these are the jagged zones within which not only self-shattering (the opposite of narcissism in a way) but other-shattering occurs.

We again find it useful to follow Halberstam’s criticism, and we’ll happily appropriate the negative affects named above. And yet we must constantly repeat the importance of severing these affects from belonging to any subject. Edelman may be wrong for focusing on the gay male subject, but then so too would Halberstam’s more inclusive project fail by focusing on others. Edelman fails for exploring *jouissance* only within the fields of literature and film, and this failure wouldn’t be fixed (as Halberstam argues) by widening the canon of artwork to explore. No, we must experience queer theories limits here, in its attachment to identity and to art altogether. Specifically because we want to engage with *jouissance*, that unnameable remainder, we must avoid the positivities to be named in literature and identity. Our project of negativity and *jouissance* will be one that is located in the subversive potential hidden by daily life—a potential which cannot be trapped in subjectivity, but instead possesses subjects and turns them against themselves.

We’ll conclude our attempts to articulate *jouissance* by returning to Jacques Camatte in his essay “This World We Must Leave,” written by the time he’d already concluded that any struggle against capital must seek to destroy domestication, and by extension civilization itself:

... The choice for [humans] appears as the acceptance of [their] destructive multiplication of life or the domination = restriction of its inhuman quantitative multiplication, which would allow its continuance. To abandon a certain fear of death which forces it to look for life in the extension of life, multiplication and progression of life. Reproduction is a certain fear of death and [humans] live it in its extension and not in the intensity of living; that translates the uncertainty in the world as if the species was not yet sure of its existence on the planet. The intensity of living implies a reflection of life on itself, then there is enjoyment by the resorption of life inside the living [being] and not delegated to another generation...

# Against Identity Politics: Spectres, Joylessness, and the contours of resentment

Lupus Dragonowl, 2015. In *Anarchy – A Journal For Desire Armed* No. 76. Excerpted.

**Identity Politicians** (IPs) are a particular kind of leftist who use the *spectre* of an identity-category (gender, race, sexuality, etc) as a lever to obtain power. In the sense discussed here, they should not be considered coterminous either with groups of people oppressed by identity categories, or even that subset who prioritise identity as a key site of struggle... [N]ot all feminists, anti-racists, or even separatists are IPs. Racism, sexism and other oppressions along identity axes are sociologically real, and not every person involved in the struggle against such oppressions is an IP..

What is being criticised here is a particular *political style*, rather than a theoretical orientation - a style which labels as oppressive any deviation from a particular political line, which resorts almost immediately to public denunciation and exclusion, and which entails analytical and categorical rigidity, with corresponding boundary-policing. They can be distinguished from those whose approaches pursue open-ended becomings through the deconstruction of identity-categories (eg Heckert), which are *minoritarian becomings* rather than minority identities.

IPs see one axis of oppression as primary - the *principal contradiction* (The fundamental aspect of tension/destructiveness of class society; for traditional Marxists, it's bourgeoisie-proletariat within the framework of capitalism). They demand that everyone focus on this axis. If someone fails to do so, IPs label them racist, sexist, white supremacist, patriarchal, etc. Ditto if they refuse leadership by the oppressed group (often meaning the IPs themselves), deviate from the IP's proposed political line, or criticise an IP. Such terms are deployed only by a member of the correct group, and are used to silence criticism - in the case of Patriarchy Haters, even the word *violence* is monopolised; those who oppose them "do not get to decide what counts as violence" (Voline). The idea of a principal contradiction leads to contempt for other issues and priorities. For instance, IPs in APOC, who focus on race, argue that "bleating about gender and class" is an instance of "diversionary tactics" to deflect from race (Anon, Open Letter). Early CWS work treated issues other than racism as "distractions" (Dot Matrix), and Lorenzo Ervin demands that "anti-racism/anti-colonialism" be made "the core concern" of every activist group (315). He also dismisses

anything outside his own agenda - from climate change to anti-fascism - as a “white rights” issue (133, 290, 302).

This political style boundary-polices identities in a way which renders them rigid and authoritarian. In many cases, fighting alleged racism or sexism *inside radical groups* is seen as the most important issue in radical politics - more important than fighting racism/sexism in the wider society. Ervin calls white radicals the worst kinds of racists, worse than hardcore conservatives (240, 272-3). Usually, these attacks take the form of militant struggle from the Maoist milieu: public denunciation and/or disruption, criticism/self-criticism, purging/exclusion, and the policing of micro-oppressions within the movement or scene; activists refuse to draw distinctions between allies and sympathisers, active enemies, and anything in-between. Ostracism, “the ultimate form of social control,” “is very infrequently used” in indigenous cultures (Peaceful Societies), but is used almost immediately by IPs for the smallest perceived transgressions.

Ervin’s repeated tirades against white anarchists provide a textbook case of this approach; his recent antics include labelling the entire Anarchist Black Cross racist because, at their recent convention in Denver, someone - at the request of Black political prisoner Jalil Muntaqim - read aloud a racist letter by a prison guard. Roger White’s *Post Colonial Anarchism* exemplifies this too, as do the faction of APOC who disrupted the Crimethinc convergence in Philadelphia in 2009, verbally abusing participants and damaging their belongings. Kill Whitey, one of the cheerleaders for this attack, later extended the disruptors’ accusations of “white supremacy” to Food Not Bombs and other anarchist groups, demanding that all such groups accept black leadership. The attack by activists from the Qilombo social centre on the CAL Press table at the Bay Area Anarchist Book Fair in 2014 is another case; subsequent comments online by Qilombo supporters clearly show the same rhetoric. Patriarchy Haters, the group which emerged from the Patriarchy and the Movement event in Portland, represent a feminist variant; their most notorious intervention was to shout down Kristian Williams at an unrelated event for criticising their political style in his article, *The Politics of Denunciation*.

## Identity and Spectres

From a Stirnerian anarchist perspective, at the root of the problem with IPs is the *spectre* - the use of an identity-category as a transcendent, abstract category which possesses and defines values. In Stirner’s theory, the problem of oppression is the problem that people value spectres and the things which benefit spectres - *instead of valuing the things which they desire as a “unique one.”* All categories, words, concepts, can become spectres if they are allowed to possess and dominate us - even those which refer to our properties or attributes (59, 151). If people are defined as essentially and primarily *something* - whether it be humanity, whiteness, blackness, masculinity, femininity - this is always alienating, because the category is always “his *essence* and not he himself,” and therefore something alien (28), which requires “my valuelessness” (145). As a real person, each of us is a processual being, an embodied self, located in a field of becoming.

From a Stirnerian perspective, systems of oppression such as racism and patriarchy are oppressive impositions of a particular spectre. Systems of op-

pression based on gender, race, and so on are *sociologically real*, but ultimately rest on *other people imposing a particular spectre* - treating another person not as a unique one, but as an instance of femininity, or “just another X.” Such systems entail valuing a particular category to the exclusion of others, leading to violence against those excluded.

However, the subordination of one spectre to another is not the base level of the problem; the problem is that spectres do not liberate or empower those who belong to the category they value, because those belonging to the category are valued only as instances of the category, not in their full, unrepresentable being. Hence, a *right of humanity* or a *white privilege* is never my right or privilege, because my *unique being* is not identical with humanity or whiteness. Even if I qualify as human or white (by falling within the extensional set of each category), there is some residue of uniqueness which is prohibited by the spectre. Stirner’s concept of the *un-person* expresses this clearly. An un-person falls within the category *human*, but is deemed to deviate from the essence, for instance by putting uniqueness before humanity. The un-person is not liberated, but jailed or hospitalised. Indigenous people always fell within the extensional set of humans, but were historically exterminated or assimilated because they fell outside the essence of what colonisers defined as having human value. *The hierarchising of representational categories is secondary to the initial oppressive gesture of subordinating real becomings to abstract categories.*

By analogy, white or male privilege is the privilege of the spectre, not of the extensional set. There is the spectre as a category, which usually has a set of normatively defined characteristics (such as masculinity, whiteness, humanity). And then there is the set of people who are classified as part of the spectre, who may or may not have these characteristics. A male white person becomes *un-white* or *un-male* when he ceases to conform to dominant ideas about the category. We might say that white privilege is not something which is *owned* by a person defined as white; it is owned by an alien spectre (112), the category of whiteness.

Spectres are connected to sovereignty, as theorised by Agamben. In sovereignty, a political ruler has the power to decide which instances of the extensional set conform to the essence of the spectre and are accorded value - who is “person” (qualified life) and who is “un-person” (bare life). This leads to “abyssal thought,” the devaluing of those who fall outside dominant normativity (de Souza Santos). In Maoism and Leninism, sovereignty operates in the form of vanguardism or substitutionism. The Party or leader defines the spectre and hence claims to speak for all those covered by it - but such statements are really political decisions rather than empirical claims. The IP, the leader, claims to speak as and for POC, Black people, women, and so on - but never for all those covered by the category. In a sneaky semantic move, the moment the oppressed criticise the vanguard, *they are no longer the oppressed*, but objectively have become allied with the oppressors. An enemy of the IP becomes an enemy of the entire category — the spectre.

### Identity Politics and Maoism

IPs IMAGINE SPECTRES TO BE MATERIALLY REAL. Whereas Stirnerians insist that becoming is unrepresentable, IPs follow Marx’s view that it can be identified

with an essence. For Stirner, binaries are artificial effects of spectres; for Marxists, they are correct theoretical reflections of binary structures within reality itself. The IP's style is descended from Maoism. Younger IPs are unlikely to have been directly influenced by Maoism, but important elements of Maoist political grammar were imported into earlier forms of Identity Politics and continue to operate.

Maoists and IPs are strong structural determinists. This means that they work with a model of social life in which macro-social structures determine people's identities and political outcomes. For instance, Ervin says that any white radical has "middle class racial privileges... and it does not matter about their personal beliefs" (268). IPs deny that people exist as unique individuals at all; people are simply instances of spectres. As an APOC writer says, "It's completely arrogant and pretentious to think you are unique. You are just another white person" (Anon, Open Letter). People are taken to be effects of, and reducible to, particular social structures: these structures determine their material interests, which determine their unconscious investments, which determine their beliefs and actions. People's real, unconscious desires are always "racialized desires" stemming from "racialized, classed, and gendered subjectivities" (comments on Anon, Smack a White Boy Part Two). In the case of privileged people, desires are not to be liberated, but purified. In the case of oppressed people, what they desire is automatically, instinctively right — *provided* it follows from the spectre.

This approach depends on the conflation of the spectre (eg whiteness, masculinity) and the extensional set it covers (eg white people, men). Roger White asserts that "white, Christian men have held power and privilege" - without distinguishing between the spectres, the elite, and all members of the categories. And the founder of CWS writes of "the guilt that comes from being who I am: a white person of conscience in a white supremacist society" (Dot Matrix).

All of these positions entail the view that *we are our spectres*. As Williams argues, it classifies people as "particular types of people who are essentially those things," and reduces oppressed as much as abuser/oppressor to "political symbols used by others to advance some specific ideological line." Normatively, anything which aids the oppressed spectre is good; anything which harms it is bad. The same action - silencing, violence, abuse, eviction - is praised in the former case and condemned in the latter. A person's intent is irrelevant; the real significance comes from the effect, as defined in the IP's frame. Duplicating the historic role of the activist or militant (Vaneigem, 111; Anon, *Give Up Activism*), the IP makes her/himself indispensable as an Expert on oppression, based on claimed knowledge of the spectre and the correct response to it.

Such spectres are used to channel the anger of the excluded into controlled political forms. Maoism is a power-politics of ruthless control, but it is seductively appealing to marginalised people because it contains a moment of empowerment. Especially when out of power, Maoism encourages the expression of accumulated anger against real oppressors such as landlords and government functionaries. This practice is the origin of the culture of denunciation, and the reason why Black and feminist groups in the '60s were attracted to Maoism. Once in power, however, Maoists cannot continue to allow attacks on power-holders. Instead they channel anger onto folk-devils, such as disempowered former oppressors, in carefully managed denunciation campaigns (Perry and Li,



7). In the Euro-American context this method takes the form of moral panics.

This contradictory role is also channelled theoretically. Maoists and IPs deploy a contradictory fusion of two incompatible ontologies: *realism* and *perspectivism*. Realists maintain that an external reality is knowable through rational methods by anyone, whereas perspectivists maintain that everyone's standpoint is culturally unique, and there is no way to establish any standpoint as more true than others. Maoists/IPs are ontological realists in identifying the principal contradiction and depicting the actions of the privileged (which can be reduced to externally knowable structures), but perspectivist in their treatment of the standpoint of the oppressed: if a Black person says something is racist, it is racist (comments on Jarach et al); if a woman alleges abuse, the allegation is self-evidently true (comments on Black Orchid Collective). This turns women and Black people into Experts, to be unquestioningly listened to and obeyed - a position dehumanising for them as well as others. In contrast, the *real* meaning of a white person's or a man's actions is externally knowable, and intent is irrelevant.

There is method in this madness. In Maoist theory, knowledge is a fusion of experience, which comes from the masses, and rational theory, which comes from the vanguard (Mao, *On Practice*). In practice, this meant that knowledge emerging from mass meetings, denunciation campaigns, speak-bitterness campaigns, and so on was systematised and reprocessed by the Party into the Mass Line, which was presented as the unmediated experience of the masses. Disagreements within the movement are "resolved by the method of criticism and self-criticism" (Mao, *On Contradiction*). In practice this meant denunciation and self-denunciation. During the Cultural Revolution, different Maoist factions began denouncing each other as "objectively counter-revolutionary," as part of a competition for resources. Elements of both of these approaches can be seen in the actions of IPs, the former as an insistence on leadership by members of a particular group (Black, women, etc), the latter in the distribution of prestige to allies based on conspicuous self-abasement and political performance.

Ultimately, denunciation, exclusion, border-policing, promoting us/them binaries among the oppressed, and harping on principal contradictions are the methods through which IPs/Maoists mould autonomy into political power. Anarchism is a threat to Maoism, not because it denies oppression or comes from privileged groups, but because it carries the self-expression of the oppressed further.

References to liberation, autonomy, decolonisation, and so on notwithstanding, in such perspectives, liberation necessarily means *liberation of a spectre*, not of concrete people - not even of concrete people categorised by a spectre (as women, Black people, POC, etc). By implication, leadership or authoritarian rule by a member of the spectre is unproblematic. It is still *self-determination by the spectre* - the spectre itself remains *autonomous*, even if its members do not. This is clear in Ribeiro's essay *Senzala or Quilombo*: "[the quilombo] was no communist society" but had a king; "this is neither here nor [there] ... [it had] freedom and self-determination." It does not matter if an autonomous zone is hierarchically structured, as long as the leaders are POC.

To enforce this primacy of the spectre, IPs encourage massive simplifications, reproducing the wider equivalence between stereotypes and roles (Vaneigem,

134). Members of entire groups (white, male, straight, middle-class) are deemed *privileged*. Privilege is often alleged despite being a result of the actions of a third party (the police, for example), rather than one's own. But it carries implications that the privileged individual is somehow a direct oppressor of the oppressed individual (Kill Whitey, in *True Colors*, refers to "white people" as the oppressor), that they are part of a small, isolated elite (Ervin, 309), and that they've "got it good" in an absolute sense (Anon, Open Letter). Strategically, the focus is on the privileged person, rather than the person who actually discriminates against or oppresses the oppressed person. Such a person is to admit, identify with, unlearn, or give up their privilege, as if it were an attribute they controlled, rather than an attribute of a spectre, assigned and reinforced by others.

In terms of political strategy, IPs declare that people should do what the Expert defines as structurally responsible, *rather than following their desires*. This encourages people to focus on their weaknesses or internal conditioning, rather than their strengths or outer struggles (Gelderloos), situating oppression mainly in individual activists' psyches rather than the dominant social system. IPs insist movements must have leaders, and these leaders must come from the oppressed group (Dot Matrix, CWS; Ervin, 291). Spaces must implement extensive policies of normative regulation and enclosure to meet criteria of safe space, reflecting a "need for protection and security that eclipses the desire for freedom" (Landstreicher, 12). Any refusal to do so is taken to be an instance of racism/sexism within the radical movement - an instance which is tied to occasional cases of insensitive or prejudiced comments or actions to paint a misleading picture of a radical scene in which oppressive behaviour is pervasive and out of control. Normative policing through safe space policies often makes spaces *less* safe, by creating risks of denunciation and purging which are greater than the risks of micro-oppression (Anonymous Refused). Mixed movements are labelled not as *incidentally* white/male, but as *deliberately* white supremacist and patriarchal. The illusion is that exclusion creates inclusion; this rests on the implication that the power to exclude is unproblematic, provided it is vested in or exercised by the in-group. For anarchists, the best way to help people feel safer is to recreate autonomous forms of self-organized control over the basic economic and social conditions of life, and to provide care and support within networks of affinity. Without roots in material scarcity, spectres would lose their power to wound.

To create a politics of sacrifice, people have to be taught they have no inherent value, so they believe in and support the systems of compensation associated with roles (Vaneigem, 139). IPs convey this message by defining privilege as an ineliminable attribute of identity and encouraging guilt. Experiences of different groups - separated by social categories - are taken to be incommensurable and incomparable, whereas those of individuals in the same group are taken to be equivalent or identical: incidents of alleged anarchist racism are likened to slavery and genocide, but instances of police brutality against black people and white protesters are absolutely incomparable (Ribeiro). Objecting to IPs' abuse is "entitlement," which is always a bad thing, since privileged people need to "know their place" as docile subordinates of the new rulers-to-be. In some cases they are also expected to funnel resources to IPs' groups, without anything in re-

turn, all the while respecting the group's "autonomy" to bad-mouth and exclude them (Ervin, 291; Qilombo).

Despite their rhetorical radicalism, IPs, like all good Maoists, do not challenge capitalism. On the contrary, Perlman argues that national liberation movements - the inspiration for IPs - are actually means of capitalist nation-building. *Why is a supermarket packer not a manager, or a security guard not the chief of police? Because of racism.* "There's no earthly reason for the descendants of the persecuted to remain persecuted when nationalism offers them the prospect of becoming persecutors" (Perlman). The point, however, is that they become persecutors and not free beings. The overall system remains intact, dominant, with the spectres reshuffled.

### Between anarchy and identity politics

There is a common misunderstanding, going back to Marx's critique of Stirner and exhibited in Roger White's critique of Lawrence Jarach, that anarchists believe that spectres are simply figments of the imagination - "pretending [racist/s-exist] discourse doesn't exist just because you didn't create it" (White). This means we can wish away spectres. *Stop believing in them, and they lose any power to oppress.* This is a mischaracterisation. While it is true that Stirner believes that spectres lose their *normative* force when we disbelieve them, we can also be oppressed by other people who continue to believe in and act on spectres. Structural oppressions are sociologically real but are not material in the Marxist sense. This simply means that one's own will is pitted against the wills and beliefs of others - most of whom continue to be possessed by spectres.

For anarchists such as Stirner, normative thought, or statism, is a deeper structure of oppression which generates the various other axes. Binary thinking is itself closely tied to European thought and the underpinnings of patriarchy and colonisation. Eurocentric statism and capitalism are bound-up with colonialism, modern thought, rationalism, and the modern world-system, but at a deeper level, Europe was also *self-colonised first* (Clastres, Perlman). While European countries became the global imperial powers, the problem of imperialism and ethnocide are inherent to *all states* (Clastres). The irony is that IPs are in fact Eurocentric, relying on European concepts such as rights and strong binary oppositions (Aragorn!, *Non-European Anarchism*, 10). On a deeper level, to be anti-Eurocentric and anti-ethnocidal requires a rejection of the state.

With their inversions of binaries, IPs seek to reproduce institutions of hierarchical power. The alternative here is affinity: the attempt to form connections, informal groups, and unions of egoists without these groups being mediated by spectres. Creating *unmediated intercourse* across socially operative hierarchies (race, gender, etc) is complicated, but by no means impossible - nor necessarily more difficult than creating unmediated intercourse between members of the same category. Where radicalism works well, it manages to construct such direct connections. As Landstreicher argues, "[t]he awareness each has of the others' individuality creates a basis where decision and action need not be separate" (21). Relating to others as unique beings, as non-disposable creatures valuable in themselves, makes possible communication *even in contexts of radical difference*. Anarchic affinity is undermined by the inability to challenge others' views, the construction of oppressed people as Experts, and the idea of incommensura-

bility (Dot Matrix, CWS). This actually reinforces binary thinking and relations of domination.

IPs start from a standpoint within the dominant system of spectres, and encourage us to identify with our position within systems of oppression (Gelderloos, 13). They require that “any person interested in radical transformation relinquish the ability to define her/himself” (Jarach, 5). Instead, people are to dissolve themselves into the pre-existing social categories into which they are classified, both by the dominant system and by IPs. As Jarach argues, “they can’t conceive of the possibility that the elevation of any particular culturally constructed marker into a significant value-laden category could lead to oppression” (3). Indeed, they define the possibility out of existence: we really *are* our categories; to oppress is to oppress a category; to liberate is to liberate a category. And leadership of Experts is necessary, if the extensional set are to be reduced to the spectre.

From a Stirnerian point of view, instead of starting from a subject-position assigned by the regime of spectres and categories, anarchists should start from a standpoint of being a unique individual irreducible to any spectre or category (*including* those of uniqueness and individuality). A Stirnerian recognises racism or sexism, not as one’s own privilege separating one from the other, but as an *act of normative repression against other unique ones, and an insult against one’s own uniqueness*. The intensity of internal and external barriers to free expression vary with context, but there is a basis for networking together in the rejection of alienation and spectres. This is recognised from non-Eurocentric perspectives; some indigenous scholars argue that modern alienation is a kind of sickness, *afflicting colonisers as well as colonised* - indeed, that the colonisers infected the colonised *because they were already sick* (Duran and Duran, Burman). This position meshes with the Stirnerian view that oppressor as well as oppressed is possessed by spectres.

Anarchy does not necessarily stem from any identity at all. More often, it comes from a standpoint outside the field of available identities - as in Stirner’s idea of a standpoint unique to each person (190-1). Gelderloos argues that his own experience is that “[a]ll the identities that society tried to stitch me into don’t fit, and the fabric is coarse” (6), offering “an inheritance stripped of anything I value” (7). Similarly, for another anonymous anarchist, “Our task is not to give up some phantom privilege that has never really been our own, but to expose and move beyond the artificial identities that smother our individuality” (Willful Disobedience).

Rather than expressing white male privilege, anarchy should be seen as a form of *ethnogenesis*: the emergence of a subculture or counterculture which, if able to continue on its line of flight (or *détournement*), would become a different culture entirely (New Travellers and, historically, Irish Travellers are good examples). The emergence of new cultures through ethnogenesis is well-documented, and often stems from flight from state power (Scott), a process which begins with a choice to differ from the majority of an existing group. In other words, forming a counterculture is the first step in becoming non-white. Ethnogenesis is a problem for essentialists because it entails fluidity in the very formation of the structural basis; it frustrates border-policing. IPs denounce both dropping-out and cultural hybridity, dismissing the latter as cultural ap-

propriation.

### The Politics of Affect

... Affectively, the orientation of anarchy is to unmediated, active joy. There is a level of immediate, free becoming which is deeper than the hierarchy of spectres. Stirner theorises a kind of intense, joyous exercise of capacities “without reservations” (171), giving “free play” to one’s capabilities (167), and playing “as freely as possible” (130). Bonanno argues that capitalism denies us an experience of active (rather than passive) joy, and counsels a “search for joy... through the search for play,” driven by a “vital impulse that is always new, always in movement.” In the excitement of play “lies the possibility to break with the old world and identify with new aims and other values and needs” (15-16). Hakim Bey argues that insurrections and autonomous zones should create peak experiences of extraordinary consciousness and intensity (*TAZ*). Such peak experiences are “value-formative on the individual level,” allowing a “transformation of everyday life” (*Occult Assault*). Various anarchist practices, from the *TAZ* to rewilding, from joyous insurrectionary struggle to dropping-out and living differently, are means of recovering this level of becoming and immediacy.

In contrast, the dominant affects for IPs are wallowing in the loss of immediacy and the inevitability of alienation (guilt, melancholy, inadequacy), a kind of joyless anger. They reproduce a style of politics which focuses on telling people “how to behave” (Dot Matrix, CWS), conditioning people into roles which reproduce the power of the spectacle. IPs reproduce conventional morality and its structures of *resentment* — negative affect (often including irrational, even self-destructive, verbal or physical lashing out) towards others as an expression of one’s own powerlessness, in contrast to celebration of one’s power. *I have lost my capacity to enjoy; you have stolen it; you must be punished.*

On the side of the supposedly empowered, Ervin encourages ruthlessness and “cold-blooded efficiency” as key virtues (245), reproducing the affective structure of managers, soldiers, and police. The practice of calling-out frames whiteness, white supremacy, and patriarchy as *personal* moral failures, even though the underlying theory frames them as *structural* realities. The cultivation of individual guilt and blame actually reproduces dominant Calvinist normativity (Gelderloos, 13), and the development of elaborate group norms reinforces white middle-class status orientations and etiquette.

For IPs, neither (those assigned as) privileged nor oppressed are able to escape *resentment* and become empowered. The latter become angry, rigid, and dependent on the spectre for their sense of power; the former become docile, submissive, and incapable of autonomous action. With intense joy forbidden, people become vulnerable to the mundane manipulation of transitory pleasure and prestige. IPs create a “system of rewards... to encourage compliance” with leaders from marginalised groups (Gelderloos, 12), reflecting the broader dynamic by which “skill in playing and handling roles determines rank in the spectacular hierarchy” (Vaneigem, 131). For the former out-group, anger and frustration with the dominant system are channelled onto other radicals, which sustains continued submersion in systems of oppression by providing a safety-valve for frustration, creating a substitute for a less reliable substantive rebellion. It also renders the oppressed dependent on the oppressors as either

docile allies or targets of anger, and often leads to a politics focused on demands for recognition from those one also seeks autonomy from. The binary nature of the spectres adopted by IPs preclude ever becoming autonomous from the supposed oppressor, whom they paradoxically *need* to remain in place in order to ground their own role as Experts. Hence the irony when Ribeiro says of APOC “it is not about white people at all” — at the end of an entire article which is *all about white people*.

The structure of impotent anger, displaced aggression, and policing of etiquette is most notable in the practice of *calling-out* or denouncing other radicals — either for micro-oppressions (small comments or actions which are insensitive or latently racist/sexist), or for political disagreement categorised as racist/sexist. For instance, the CrimethInc disruptors call for a “culture of calling people out on their shit” (Anon, Smack a White Boy Part Two). In general, calling-out involves a crude, aggressive style; it carries a tone of *I get to tell you what to do, and you have to obey*.

Negative effects of anti-oppression normativity are paradoxically felt most strongly by the oppressed - poor whites, Black people, young people, people with psychological problems, and newcomers to a movement - who are less accustomed to self-policing their social appearance, less able to do so, or less aware of the operative norms. IPs thus close down radical groups into tightly bordered sects. Gelderloos deems the emphasis on micro-oppressions a kind of purism which seeks to banish deviance so as to create a monolithic personality-type (18). In practice, what is being challenged is not the person’s degree of complicity in regimes of oppression, but the extent of their knowledge of the appropriate anti-oppressive terminology and related normative codes...

IPs tend to react aggressively to any response to being called-out which does not amount to unconditional apology. Usually, the responses are not inherently objectionable. They deploy strategies of argumentative rebuttal, mitigation by context or motive, etc, which are standard in many conversational contexts. It is never entirely clear why these predictable responses are deemed intolerable by IPs (the claim that they seem to deny the other’s perspective [Tekanji] seems spurious), but it seems to be because they entail the absence of the desired affective response of submission.

Landstreicher suggests that IPs turns us into “a bunch of shy, yet inquisitorial mice tip-toeing around each other for fear of being judged, and just as incapable of attacking the foundations of this society as they are of relating to each other” (16). Instead, he urges us to become “a certain sort of being ... capable of acting on our own terms to realize our own desires and dreams,” in struggle against domination (3). The point is “to transform ourselves into strong, daring, self-willed, passionate rebels” (6). This strength and passion is impeded by affects such as guilt, pity, and regret. We are aiming, remember, for a state of full life *without reservations*.

IPs conceive of their angry, disruptive style of politics as a way to express the authentic experience of being traumatised. But their distribution of commensurability (absolute *within* a spectre, but utterly absent *outside* it) entails downplaying the degree of specific traumas suffered by concrete people. And while it is true that listening to and believing a survivor’s story is crucial to healing, the sources and symptoms of trauma are too diverse to be dealt with through

homogenised identities and prescriptive restrictions. Furthermore, the tactics of calling-out and excluding deviants can themselves be traumatic or triggering.

IPs often turn trauma into a source of power and identity, but marking trauma as an identity is also a barrier to autonomy. It prevents us reaching the level of immediacy and joy, keeping us in a field of scarcity thinking. It's no coincidence that the most extreme regimes of oppression (such as Gitmo, supermax segregation, concentration camps, Native residential schools, and the "seasoning" of slaves) are *designed* to cause as much post-traumatic stress as possible. Trauma is also a block on active becoming and on living life to the fullest. In indigenous cultures, it is conceived as a sickness of the soul, in which part of the self retreats from the world or loses its life-energy (Burman; Duran and Duran).

Being open to people as *unique individuals* is the best way to respond to these kinds of problems. The fact that someone else has needs incompatible with one's own, or that they can't guess in advance what common action or object might be personally unbearable, *does not mean they are oppressing someone*.

### Exodus versus submersion

One of the biggest disagreements between Stirnerian anarchists and IPs is on the question of exodus. IPs (and most left anarchists) generally condemn exodus as a privileged, middle-class strategy, instead favouring submersion in existing communities of the oppressed. For instance, the APOC disruptors claim that CrimethInc "encourage the culture of dropping out of society, which makes the assumption that the reader/attendee has that privilege" (Anon, Smack a White Boy Part Two). An anonymous Qilombo supporter terms the anarchist scene a "subcultural playpen" and an "all-white fantasy world" (comments on Jarach et al). Kill Whitey labels dumpster-diving as privileged, condemning "white college kids and middle-class punks hiding in drop-out culture" (Kill Whitey, *Food Not Bombs*), while Ervin classifies criticism of the "state's ability to hold back a free lifestyle" as middle class (110). IPs allege that the entire tactical repertoire of horizontalism is privileged, in contrast with their preferred focus on community organising or intra-movement struggle.

The grain of truth in this position is that tactics of escape, exodus, and physical resistance carry different levels of difficulty and risk for different people. It's easier to quit a job than to escape from prison. It's easier to run from the police if one is physically fit. But anyone can adopt a *perspective* of escape, and *attempt* to create lines of flight from the system. While it may be easier for some than others, nobody should be under a moral obligation to remain oppressed just to avoid being different from others; any such obligation only reinforces oppression.

There are far more people who squat, shoplift, or dumpster dive who are from poor and marginal backgrounds; in the global South there are entire strata living in squatted shantytowns, abstracting electricity, and scavenging in rubbish tips. Historical practices such as the celebrated *quilombos* show that dropping-out is a serious, and often successful, strategy for the most oppressed.

James Scott's work shows that peasants, slaves, and marginal groups use various tactics of exodus to minimise their subservience to elite power. Similarly, when highly oppressed groups become sufficiently angry, they often use the

most militant forms of protest - as we have seen in cases like Paris 2005, London 2011, Los Angeles 1992, and so on. Poor people also use all kinds of high-risk survival strategies, from undocumented border-crossing to involvement in the drug trade. There is also evidence that dropping-out *worked* to defeat aspects of capitalism in the 1970s (Shukaitis).

Why, then, do IPs oppose exodus? I would hazard a guess that the real underlying objection is not that poor people *cannot* drop out, but that they *should not*: dropping-out contradicts the IP's political agenda, resting on strong spectres and identities *within* the existing frame. Structural determinism precludes escape on principle. IPs celebrate their current blockages, internalise their cage, and insist that the cage is both inescapable *and* revolutionary. This is not a perspective of escape — it is a perspective of entrapment in the guise of solidarity.

IPs' emphasis on community really comes down to a fear of *placelessness*. Their ideological vision of society requires that everyone have definable positionalities: a conservative vision, but inverted. This requires that categories remain dominant over lines of flight, escape, and becoming. Hence the need to enforce a prohibition on exodus - a prohibition which reveals their similarities with states and other hierarchical systems, which similarly prohibit the withdrawal of participation and restrict mobility. It is easy to see how the fear of the uncontrollable and unknowable - and the parallel desire to order all of reality into a fixed schema - lies beneath these discursive strategies.

A lot of the objection to exodus comes down to a hatred of *play*. Drop-outs are accused of turning poverty into a *game*, of saying someone can be poor and *have fun* (Anon, Smack a White Boy Part Two). This may just as well be said of important strands of peasant resistance such as carnivalesque and folk culture. IPs flourish on a culture of deadly seriousness and urgency, tied up with a celebration of trauma. *Real* activism, after all, is hard work, sacrifice: *I cant have fun, so you shouldn't either*. This entails denying pleasure to others whenever possible. Of course, dropping out does lead to a kind of privilege - the person who has escaped clearly has a better life than the person still trapped in the system. This is equally true of *quilombos*, maroon communities, pirate utopias, and so on. But is this really a case against dropping-out?

### Common sense and the community

Instead of seeking to escape the system, IPs place great emphasis on serving the *community*, the *people*, the *oppressed*, or a particular oppressed group. Ervin insists that the usefulness of revolutionaries depends on whether they serve the community (136), as opposed to “Declasse punks with red Mohawks” (276). White suggests that the “first priority of resistance” is community consciousness raising. Ribeiro argues that the “people” are failing to flock to existing anarchist groups because they represent “a white, petty-bourgeois Anarchism that cannot relate to the people,” an anarchism which is “individualistic, self-serving, [and] selfish.” A Qilombo supporter goes as far as to argue that “involving oneself in the school system” is an “excellent... investment,” far superior to drop-out anarchism, while another posits a “need to emphasize community norms and practices” (Kurukshetra), and Veranasi tells anarchists to get a job so as not to separate from the oppressed (comments on Smack a White Boy Part Two). There is also a wider accusation, particularly in Ervin's work, that the allegedly



bad race, gender, or class politics of radical movements is the reason for their continued failure (303, 310). This is the Maoist view that a tide of latent energy is always waiting to be released, which is currently fettered by the principal contradiction and inadequate leadership (Mao, *On Contradiction*; Bouc, 137; Howe and Walker, 176; Gurley).

A collective proprietary attitude to geographical areas corresponds to this political bias. White anarchists active in poor communities are accused of failing to get community consent, disrespecting locals, and gentrifying areas by inserting whiteness (Kill Whitey, *Smack a White Boy*; Kurukshetra). Ervin suggests anarchists have no “right to be” in a Black area (282), Kill Whitey tells white radicals to “get the fuck out of POC communities” (*True Colors*); in effect, white radicals are banned from Black areas in an inverted reproduction of segregation. This is a double-bind, since anarchist events in rural locations are declared inaccessible to poor people (Ervin, *Racism in ABC*; Veranasi, comments on *Smack a White Boy Part Two*). This reflects a broader irresolvable predicament: radicals are both told to be part of the people, and told they cannot (since their perspective is incommensurable and their privilege is ineliminable). The glorification of ghettos as autonomous zones runs up against the reality of imposed racial segregation.

There is a strong tone of *ressentiment* in the position: *I can't drop out so you mustn't*. If I was jailed and unable to escape from power, I would take courage and hope from the fact that others are still able to do so. The objection to separation tries to force radicals back into avoidable systems of authoritarian domination, such as work and schooling, thus reinforcing these institutions. IPs glorify escape from controlled spaces, such as fleeing the *senzala* (slave quarters) to the *quilombo* (autonomous zone). Yet in practice, they tell us never to flee the *senzala*, but instead to work within it as overseers, conditioning children into conformity, or as exploited, joyless workers. There is nothing radical and empowering about getting a job. In a context of generalised entrapment, to separate is not to alienate, but rather to escape, to slip out of place, to flee dominant categories and those who impose them.

Community politics is hamstrung by a major problem: the community are not especially radical. The IP assumption that “the people” or “the community” has revolutionary instincts is an effect of its construction as a spectre, not a result of observation of actual people. It also embeds vanguardist assumptions that the role of radicals is to locate, lead, and imbue these communities with revolutionary interests. The orientation to liberate a spectre rather than concrete people is the source of IPs’ hostility to individualism, personal freedom, and supposed selfishness among radicals.

IPs also run up against the realities of contemporary capitalism. Today, most of us do not belong to real, substantive communities. As Landstreicher argues, “the dominant forms of relating are economic, based on the domination of survival over life ... Today, neither the daily interactions of one’s ‘communities’ (these strange, disconnected ‘communities’ of family, school, work) nor the chance encounters (at the market, on the bus, at some public event) have much chance of sparking a real and intense interest in another, an impassioned curiosity to discover who they are and what we might be able to create with them” (7). Bey argues that simply coming together is already a victory over capitalism

(*Immediatism vs Capitalism*), and the Situationists exposed the emptiness of everyday life and the role of urban residential areas as state-controlled warehouses for workers (Debord, sections 169-76). Even where some kind of community life persists, it rarely entails a unitary set of beliefs, demands, and interests, or even (outside of certain subaltern social movements and indigenous groups) any kind of collective power. In looking to “the community,” IPs are seeking a source of strength which is at once a product of the system, and thereby constituted as weak. If they want dense, mutually supportive, socially meaningful communities, then they - like the rest of us - will have to *build* these communities, often from scratch, on the basis of affinity and living-otherwise. When IPs speak for the community, they typically do so as a vanguard, a representative, who substitutes for a community which is absent in practice.

A short time ago, the new BBC class survey (Heyden) became a fad among those activists who use social media. Nearly everyone who completed it came out in a category called “emergent service workers” (ESWs). The survey has eight categories, and ESWs are the second-bottom category, defined by low income and precarious work. They differ from the worse-off precariat in only two ways - “social and cultural capital.” In other words, the average anarchist is in the same position as the poorest group, except that we have more education and stronger social networks. ESWs are not some middle-class elite, hovering over the authentic poor. The precariat make up only 15% of the population according to the survey. ESWs are well below halfway. And the moment a precarian becomes politicised, they tend to gain education and networks, and become ESWs. So, realistically, anarchy is not a movement of middle-class kids. It is a movement of politically conscious, socially networked poor people.

IPs believe that anarchy is irrelevant to the community because anarchists are privileged, and separate from the community. In fact, anarchy seems irrelevant to the community because most people who’ve been conditioned to live within such system-constructed communities have internalised repressive, statist beliefs, and accept capitalist common sense (the Gramscian notion of an incoherent everyday philosophy or ideology prevalent among subaltern people, which embeds uncritical, hegemonic, and reactionary beliefs). The idea that the oppressed are just waiting for the right activist leadership, which is blocked by the allegedly inherent racism/sexism in social movements, is a delusion. Working in wider communities entails putting up with (and even glorifying) a lot of common-sense ideologies, prejudices, and bigotry on a scale far greater than anything within radical scenes. The real problem is not organisation, or the correct line, or the right leadership. The problem is whether people actually *desire* revolution/insurrection. In fact, no revolutionary “people” exists, because of what Stimer terms the *police sentiments* of actually existing people (116).

The hypothesis that the community is more radical than so-called privileged anarchists is simply false. Most anarchists already oppose work, police, prisons, government, and so on whereas most community members do not. It is not uncommon for anarchists fighting gentrification, CCTV and other forms of the surveillance state, or morality-policing to be pitted against other local residents. It might be in poor people’s material interests to oppose dominant institutions, but for the most part they don’t. People who lack formal or informal political education tend not to become anarchists because they tend to remain stuck in

capitalist common sense, dependent on the discourses made available by the mainstream, and caught up in the pursuit of values of individual advancement. Their supposed interests have little effect in mitigating these influences. Any anarchist project directed at the worse-off need to start from some kind of political education or political de/resocialisation of the poor (not primarily of ourselves, though most critical pedagogy is also reflexive and dialogical). Otherwise, anarchists pursuing such projects will simply be overwhelmed by the unreflexive common sense of those whose perspectives they idealise.

The theme of *urgency* is closely connected to the community orientation. IPs often posit immediately apparent realities, which are deemed extra-theoretical and extra-political. Disagreement with the IP's perspective or actions is belittled as a "topic ripe for a drunk PhD" (White) or "some intellectual's grad thesis" (Weaver). The oppressed are said to "know oppression" from experience: "we lost the need to understand pain philosophically when we learned it physically" (Ribeiro). Ervin postures as having no particular expertise, except "a decent supply of good common sense and street knowledge" (10), and urges us to "trust the best instincts of the people" (119). Patriarchy Haters condemn political debate as contrasting with real, life-or-death stakes for them: "We do not agree with people having a 'political argument' at our expense" (*Statement*). They suggest that their positions come from their "BODIES," which are not "to be politicized, theorized, speculated upon" (Weaver).

IPs advance a framework in which theory distracts from reality. The historical origin of this framework is the Maoist emphasis on "experience" (suitably processed by the party) as superior to "book learning," and the corresponding "Red versus expert" struggles of the Cultural Revolution. The basic gesture is to split issues between the *real reality* posited by IPs and associated with experience and the principal contradiction, and a field deemed secondary or tertiary, and therefore trivial. This grounds apparently obvious, self-evident claims and is used to create a sense of urgency: IPs are doing real, life-or-death politics, and everyone else is just messing around (notice once again the prejudice against play). The function of this gesture is to "declare certain questions off-limits" because "the answer is already known" (Williams). Arguments against IPs' claims are often displaced onto the issue of *who has the right to decide*, which is returned to the question of spectres.

Black radicals don't have to listen to white critics, male experts have no right to expound on survivors' experiences, etc. This is a category-error, to which the appropriate answer is: *I've not exposed your mistake because I think you need my permission - I've exposed your mistake because it leads to oppression, bad politics, or ineffectiveness*. This strategy gives power to those who define which issues are urgent. In fact, none of the cases discussed here were anywhere near to being life-or-death situations. And paradoxically, to heal from trauma, one *needs* to theorise and intellectualise it.

In fact, the idea of obvious experiences is fallacious. There is no simple divide between reality/experience and thought/theory. Humans process experiences through conceptual categories, and in many cases, these categories affect the impact of an experience - or what, subjectively, is experienced. People don't lack theories simply because they are not formally educated or academically trained. Rather, everyone has their own stock of theories and concepts

through which they unconsciously process the world, and without which the world would simply be an incomprehensible mess of sense-impressions. Whenever somebody claims that their own conceptions are *real*, or are unmediated *experience* in contrast to others' mere ideas or opinions, they are actually reifying and naturalising their own socially constructed beliefs - usually beliefs based on capitalist common sense. There is no such thing as direct, unmediated knowledge from experience (as distinct from unmediated experience, which is *felt as unrepresentable*). In any case, IPs create a regime of roles, which in Vaneigem's terms, "express lived experience, yet at the same time they reify it" (131).

This does not mean that academic theories are always best. Academic thought is often tied-up with corporate and state power (Dot Matrix, Science As Capital). Everyday, local knowledges can also be effective ways of theorising the world. But it is a mistake to reify them into unmediated experiences which are somehow directly (and therefore more objectively) true. It shuts down dialogue and reinforces the enclosure of common sense. And in many cases, everyday common sense is also extremely oppressive, accepting and imposing normativities complicit with, and directly reinforcing, institutionalized forms of power. In addition, many key terms in IPs' discourse - structural oppression, privilege, patriarchy, trauma, framing, supremacy, *senzala*, *quilombo* and so on - are not everyday common sense terms, but imports from university cultural studies texts or historical reading. Anti-intellectualism handily insulates IPs from rebuttal, but does not make their poorly based strategies any more effective.

### For a World Without Spectres!

From all of this, we must conclude that IPs are just another type of leftist, promoting sacrifice and renunciation, posing as liberators of the oppressed. IPs are seductive in the ways they have of identifying and channelling the anger of the oppressed, the guilt of the (relatively) privileged, experiences of trauma, and awareness of the possibility of unintended oppression. But they channel these affects into political power, using them to entrench the role of IPs as Experts. This role requires that privilege/oppression be theorised as an ineliminable original sin.

Against this prevalent form of disguised vanguardism, let us hold forth the beacon of a *world without spectres*. Structural oppressions are sociologically real, but their roots can be traced deeper, to the structures of statism and representation. If we must theorise a primary contradiction, then let it be the contradiction between ourselves - as unique ones, forces of becoming, irreducible and unrepresentable beings - and the entire regime of spectres and alienation. Let us dispense with boundary policing, and instead nurture affinities *across* social categories. It is in rediscovering the level of immanent, abundant becoming, the joy of life, the flow of desire and direct connection, that we destroy the power which spectres exercise over us. Let us start always from this joy, share it with others when we can, and use it as a weapon to break down common sense, to rebuild and redefine community, to replace the graveyard of spectres with a world of life. May the alien privileges of spectres and the alien oppressions they engender never come between a unique one, a free being, and its immanent becoming. @

# Timeline of the Anarchist Propaganda of the Deed Era

• **April 4, 1866** – Nihilist Dmitry Karakozov makes an unsuccessful attempt on the life of Tsar Alexander II of Russia at the gates of the Summer Garden in St. Petersburg. As the Tsar leaves the Summer Garden, Dmitry rushes forward to fire his weapon. However, the attempt is thwarted by Osip Komissarov, a peasant-born hatter's apprentice, who jostles Karakozov's elbow just before he fires his shot.

• **May 11, 1878** – Anarchist Max Hödel (all mentioned attackers in this timeline are anarchists except those specified as nihilists) attempts to assassinate Kaiser Wilhelm I of Germany by shooting at him with a revolver. He is apprehended and executed by beheading on August 15. Less than a month later, Dr. Karl Nobiling makes another attempt on the monarch and wounds him by shooting him with a double-barrelled shotgun from the window of his apartment, he then shot himself in the head with a revolver when witnesses tried to disarm him, and died of his injuries three months later.

• **November 17, 1878** – Giovanni Passannante attempts to assassinate King Umberto I of Italy with a dagger he had traded his jacket for, he only slightly wounds the King after he deflects the blow and the Queen throws a bouquet of flowers in his face, but severely wounds the Prime Minister Benedetto Cairoli in the leg, who withdraws from public life for a time as a result. Passannante is sentenced to death but his penalty is commuted to prison for life. While imprisoned in a small, dark cell under sea level in complete isolation with no toilet facilities and heavy chains around his neck, he develops scurvy and parasite infestations, loses his body hair, and goes insane, with sailors passing by his prison hearing his screams, and is taken to the asylum. He never recovers. His family are all imprisoned, only his brother escapes, and his hometown is forced by royal decree to change its name. After his death his corpse is beheaded and his head and brain are subject to study by criminologists. His skull and brain, preserved in formaldehyde, are then displayed under neon lights in the Criminal Museum in Rome until 2007 when his remains are secretly buried in his hometown, (the decree allowing this had been authored nine years before) with the presence only of the mayor, an undersecretary of the governor, and one journalist. The next month, a mass in his memory is held in the town.

• **February, 1879** – Nihilist Grigori Goldenberg shoots Prince Dmitri Kropotkin (cousin of eminent anarcho-communist theorist Peter Kropotkin), the Governor of Kharkov in the Russian Empire, to death. He eludes capture after the

killing.

- **April 20, 1879** – Nihilist Alexander Soloviev attempts to assassinate Tsar Alexander II of Russia. The monarch spots the weapon in his hands and flees, but Soloviev still fires five shots, all of which miss. He is captured and hanged on May 28.

- **February 17, 1880** – Nihilist Stepan Khalturin successfully blows up part of the Winter Palace in an attempt to assassinate Tsar Alexander II of Russia. Although the Tsar escapes unharmed, eight soldiers are killed and 45 wounded. Khalturin is hanged on the orders of Alexander's son and successor, Alexander III, in 1882 after the assassination of a police official.

- **March 1, 1881** – Tsar Alexander II of Russia is killed by nihilists along with one of his guards and one of his assassins, with around 21 others, mostly bystanders, injured. Two men each threw a bomb at his carriage, Ignacy Hryniewiecki and Nikolai Rysakov. Hryniewiecki died in the blast, Rysakov and three other men and one woman who helped carry out the assassination are hanged, another conspirator commits suicide to avoid capture, one man and one woman are imprisoned, and another woman, Vera Figner eludes capture long enough to assassinate the military prosecutor of Odessa, General Mayor Strelnikov, before being imprisoned in February 1883.

- **May 4, 1886** – The Haymarket Affair takes place in Chicago, when an unknown person throws dynamite at police as they attempt to disperse a protest of workers striking for the eight-hour work day. The explosion and ensuing gunfire between police, and likely protestors as well, kills seven police officers and at least four civilians, wounding dozens of others. Seven anarchists are sentenced to death, with an eighth sentenced to prison. Only two of the eight were even in Chicago on that day. Two sentences were commuted to life imprisonment. Defendant Louis Lingg (captured after a gunfight with police) commits suicide the day before his hanging, putting a smuggled blasting cap in his mouth (four bombs had been discovered in his cell four days before) and lighting it, blowing off his lower jaw and disfiguring a large portion of his face. He survived for another six hours, writing "Hoch die anarchie!" (Hurrah for anarchy!) on the cell wall in his own blood before the guards came. Lingg had bombs in his apartment, which he admitted he had made to blow up police, but denied there was evidence it was his bombs that were used in the riot. Speaking before sentencing he said, "I die happy on the gallows, so confident am I that the hundreds and thousands to whom I have spoken will remember my words. When you shall have hanged us, then they will do the bombthrowing! In this hope do I say to you, I despise you, I despise your order, your laws, your force propped authority. Hang me for it."

- **March, 1892** – François Koenigstein, also known as Ravachol, places bombs which wound seven people and cause considerable property damage in a police barracks, the living quarters of a judge, and that of a prosecutor involved in repressing anarchist combatants after a police massacre of demonstrators. The day before his trial, a bomb went off at the restaurant where the informant responsible for his capture worked, killing the owner. He was sentenced to life and then later guillotined for other crimes predating the bombings (including graverobbing, illegal sale of alcohol, counterfeiting, burglary, and killing a rich old hermit in order to rob him, as well as a landlady).

• **July 23, 1892** – Alexander Berkman tries to kill American industrialist Henry Clay Frick, chairman of Carnegie Steel, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in retaliation for the hiring of Pinkerton detectives to break up the Homestead Strike, who killed nine striking members of the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers (seven Pinkertons were also killed by strikers). Berkman shoots Frick twice in the neck with a revolver, and in a struggle, manages to stab him four times in the leg with a poisoned dagger made from a sharpened file. Frick survives, and Berkman is immediately arrested, with police thwarting his attempt to commit suicide by chewing on a dynamite capsule, and eventually sentenced to 22 years in prison. Born to a wealthy Jewish family in present-day Lithuania (Tsarist Russia then), he moved to the United States after being expelled from school for stealing exams, and being identified as a “nihilist conspirator”. In the United States he joined the anarchist movement and lived in a communal New York City apartment with influential anarcha-feminist and early LGBT advocate Emma Goldman, her sister, and his cousin. Emma Goldman formed a polyamorous relationship with Berkman and his cousin; although Berkman’s relationship with Goldman would be complicated, they remained life-long friends. Goldman assisted his preparations and begged to take part but was dissuaded by Berkman. In prison Berkman attempted escape, and became open to homosexuality after initial disgust, engaging in an intimate affair with another male prisoner. After his release, he was very active in the movement and publishing anarchist newspapers. He and Goldman were later deported to Bolshevik Russia, where they became involved in anti-authoritarian resistance before leaving the country. They both remained active anarchists until their deaths.

• **September 24, 1893** – Paulí Pallàs throws two bombs at Catalan Captain General Arsenio Martínez Campos in revenge for his violent repression of the Jerez uprising the year before, and the execution by garrotte of four anarchists. The general suffers minor injuries and at least two bystanders are killed, Pallàs doesn’t flee the scene. Executed by firing squad on October 6, 1893, Pallàs’ last words were “The vengeance will be terrible.” He had previously thrown a bomb into the Alcantara Theater in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in May 1892.

• **November 7, 1893** – The Spanish anarchist Santiago Salvador, and friend of Pallàs, throws two Orsini bombs into the orchestra pit of the Liceu Theater in Barcelona during the second act of the opera *Guillaume Tell* to avenge Pallàs’ execution, killing some 20 people and injuring scores of others. He is arrested in January 1894.

• **December 9, 1893** – Auguste Vaillant throws a nail bomb in the French National Assembly, killing nobody and slightly injuring twenty deputies. He is then sentenced to death and executed by the guillotine on February 4, 1894, shouting "Death to bourgeois society and long live anarchy!" (*A mort la société bourgeoise et vive l'anarchie!*). During his trial, Vaillant declares that he had not intended to kill anybody, but only to injure several deputies in retaliation against the execution of Ravachol.

• **February 12, 1894** – 21 year old Émile Henry, intending to avenge Auguste Vaillant, sets off a bomb in *Café Terminus* (a fancy café near the Gare Saint-Lazare train station in Paris), killing one and injuring twenty. During his trial, when asked why he wanted to harm so many innocent people, he declares,

"There is no innocent bourgeois." The year before, he had placed a time bomb at a coal mining company's office, killing five police officers who removed it. He also took credit for a series of other bombings in Paris. Henry is convicted and executed by guillotine on May 21.

- **February 15, 1894** – A chemical explosive carried by Martial Bourdin prematurely detonates outside the Royal Observatory, Greenwich in the United Kingdom, killing him.

- **June 24, 1894** – Italian anarchist Sante Geronimo Caserio, seeking revenge for Auguste Vaillant and Émile Henry, stabs Sadi Carnot, the President of France, to death. Caserio is executed by guillotine on August 15.

- **June 7, 1896** – Anarchist bombing of a Feast of Corpus Christi procession in Barcelona. Three people were killed instantly and another nine died from their injuries over the following days. The victims, however, were overwhelmingly poor and working class people attending religious worship, which caused some anarchists to denounce and disown the bombing.

- **November 3, 1896** – In the Greek city of Patras, Dimitris Matsalis, an anarchist shoemaker, attacks local banker Dionysios Fragkopoulos and merchant Andreas Kollas with a knife. Fragkopoulos is killed on the spot; Kollas is seriously wounded.

- **April 22, 1897** – Pietro Acciarito tries to stab King Umberto I of Italy. He is sentenced to life imprisonment.

- **August 8, 1897** – Michele Angiolillo shoots dead Spanish Prime Minister Antonio Cánovas del Castillo at a thermal bath resort, seeking vengeance for the imprisonment and torture of alleged revolutionaries in the Montjuïc trial. Angiolillo is executed by garotte on August 20.

- **September 10, 1898** – Luigi Lucheni stabs to death Empress Elisabeth, the consort of Emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria-Hungary, with a needle file in Geneva, Switzerland (he couldn't afford a stiletto). Lucheni is photographed smiling and proud after his first interrogation, is sentenced to life in prison and eventually found hanged in his cell. His head was preserved in formaldehyde and on display in a medical museum in Vienna until 2000.

- **April 5, 1900** – Two shots fired at Edward VII, Prince of Wales by fifteen-year old Belgian anarchist and tinsmith's apprentice Jean-Baptiste Sipido, who had lept onto the footboard of the royal train right before it left the Brussels station, shooting through the window but hitting no one. Sipido was motivated by revenge for the brutal deaths of thousands in concentration camps during the Boer War in South Africa, and was acquitted at trial on account of his age. Sipido remained a leftwing activist throughout his life.

- **July 29, 1900** – Italian-American anarchist Gaetano Bresci shoots dead King Umberto I in Milan, in revenge for the Bava Beccaris massacre. Bresci, known as a firebrand and dandy playboy, had travelled from Hoboken, New Jersey to kill the king, and that morning he prepared his pistol, groomed himself thoroughly, and spent the morning walking around town, eating ice-cream. Bresci is sentenced to life on Santo Stefano Island, where he is found dead less than a year later.

- **September 6, 1901** – Leon Czolgosz, inspired by Bresci, shoots U.S. President William McKinley at point-blank range at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York. McKinley dies on September 14, and Czolgosz is executed



by electric chair on October 29.

- **April 23, 1902** – Luigi Galleani speaks to striking silk workers at a factory in Paterson, New Jersey, urging all American workers to declare a general strike and overthrow capitalism. Galleani, who is wounded in the face when police open fire on the striking workers, is later indicted for inciting a riot. He flees to Canada, where he is apprehended and returned to the US by Canadian authorities.

- **November 15, 1902** – Gennaro Rubino attempts to murder King Leopold II of Belgium as he returns in a procession from a Requiem Mass for his recently deceased wife, Queen Marie Henriette. All three of Rubino's shots miss the monarch's carriage, and he is quickly subdued by the crowd and taken into police custody. He is sentenced to life imprisonment and dies in prison in 1918.

- **May 31, 1906** – Catalan anarchist Mateu Morral tries to kill King Alfonso XIII of Spain and Queen Victoria Eugenie immediately after their wedding by throwing a bomb into the procession. The King and Queen are unhurt, but 24 bystanders and horses are killed and over 100 persons injured. Morral is apprehended two days later and commits suicide while being transferred to prison.

- **February 1, 1908** – Manuel Buiça and Alfredo Costa shoot to death King Carlos I of Portugal and his son, Crown Prince Luis Filipe, respectively, in the Lisbon Regicide. Both Buiça and Costa, who are sympathetic to a republican movement in Portugal that includes anarchist elements, are shot dead by police officers.

- **February 23, 1908** – Sicilian anarchist Giuseppe Alia fatally shoots Fr. Leo Heinrichs, a Roman Catholic priest of the Franciscan Order, in front of a church filled with witnesses during Mass at St. Elizabeth of Hungary Church in Denver, Colorado. Alia was arrested while attempting to flee the scene, convicted of first degree murder after four different alienists ruled him sane, and executed by hanging.

- **March 28, 1908** – Selig Cohen aka Selig Silverstein tries to throw a bomb in New York City's Union Square. A premature explosion kills a bystander named Ignatz Hildebrand and mortally wounds Cohen, who dies a month later.

- **November 14, 1909** – Argentine anarchist Simón Radowitzky assassinates Buenos Aires chief of police, Lieutenant Ramón Falcón by throwing a bomb at his carriage while Falcón was returning from a deceased fellow officer's funeral. The assassination prompted President José Figueroa Alcorta to declare a state of siege and pass the Social Defense Law, which allowed the deportation of anarchist "agitators".

- **December 6, 1909** – Russian general and commander of the Moscow Military District Sergey Konstantinovich Gershelman is targeted in a shooting which misses him while wounding another general present. The would-be assassin is Jewish illegalist anarchist Moishe Tokar, who is sentenced to death and burns himself alive in his cell before his execution. Tokar had been captured years before in Warsaw (then part of the Russian Empire) after escaping previous arrest attempts for attacks carried out there, but withstood torture without divulging his identity and managed to escape. He traveled through Paris and London as a fugitive, and returned to Russia after being exiled from Paris as a result of a foiled bank robbery plot he had undertaken with a gang of other young Russian

illegalists.

- **May 20, 1910** – In Japan, the High Treason Incident begins when police find bomb-making materials in the room of Miyashita Takichi, a young lumber-mill employee. Hundreds of anarchists, socialists, and nihilists are arrested nationwide for their alleged involvement in a plot to assassinate the emperor Meiji and members of the royal family. Some are found with explosives, however only five or six of the arrested were actually involved in the plot. Among those arrested were four Buddhist monks, the prominent anarcho-feminist Kanno Sugako, and the highly influential anarchist Kōtoku Shūsui. Kōtoku was a leading figure in bringing anarchism to Japan after coming in contact with the works of Peter Kropotkin (which he translated into Japanese), the *Industrial Workers of the World*, Emma Goldman's *Mother Earth* newspaper, and the terrorist tactics of the Russian Socialist-Revolutionaries while staying in California. Twelve people are ultimately executed by hanging (including Kanno Sugako and Kōtoku Shūsui), and twelve others receive life sentences.

- **June 15, 1910** – The Bosnian anarchist Bogdan Žerajić attempts to assassinate the Governor of Bosnia and Herzegovina Marijan Varešanin, but failed and subsequently committed suicide.

- **October 25, 1911** – Qing General Feng-Shan is assassinated by members of the anarchist Chinese Assassination Corps in Guangzhou, during the Xinhai Revolution, in a bomb attack that also kills 14 of his guards and the servants carrying his litter. The Corps was part of a federalist anarchist faction in the republican anti-Qing coalition. The group was formed through members' contact with anarchism in Tokyo, Paris, and Russia, as well as nihilist and socialist-revolutionary terrorist tactics. On August 13, 1911, members of the Corps and another insurrectionist group had wounded Qing commander Li Chun in a bombing that killed several of his guards and resulted in the killing of two of the assassins. In 1907, a previous Corps attempt on Li Chun had caused prominent anarchist Liu Shifu to lose a hand and spend two years in prison after his device detonated prematurely. In February 1910, Wang Jingwei (at the time heavily influenced by anarchism, but who would later become a rightwing Japanese collaborator) planted a bomb to kill the regent Zaifeng, Prince Chun, which failed and led to prison terms for him and two others.

- **November 12, 1912** – Anarchist Manuel Pardiñas shoots Spanish Prime Minister José Canalejas dead in front of a Madrid bookstore. Pardiñas then immediately turns the gun on himself and commits suicide.

- **July 4, 1914** – A bomb being prepared for use at John D. Rockefeller's home at Tarrytown, New York explodes prematurely, killing three anarchists, Arthur Caron, Carl Hansen and Charles Berg, and a bystander, Mary Chavez.

- **1914** – Galleanists (police/media term for the anarchist circle around Luigi Galleani) detonate two bombs in New York City at St. Patrick's Cathedral and the priests house at St. Alphonsus Church after police forcibly disperse a protest by anarchists and communists at John D. Rockefeller's home in Tarrytown. The Bronx County Courthouse and The Tombs, a jail, are also bombed. Marie Ganz threatens to shoot John D. Rockefeller as she arrives with a crowd and a loaded pistol in front of the Standard Oil Building in Manhattan but he isn't in.

- **December 14, 1914** – Chilean colonel Roberto Silva Renard is severely injured in Santiago, Chile after being stabbed seven times in the back and head

by Spanish anarchist Antonio Ramón Ramón. Ramón was avenging the Santa María de Iquique massacre of thousands of striking workers and their families, in which his half-brother was killed, which occurred while Ramón was living in Argentina at the time. Captured at the scene, Ramón drank a bottle of strychnine he was carrying, but vomited most of it and survived, being sentenced to five years in prison. Workers held public campaigns to raise money for his defence, and the colonel lost all movement on half of his face, became blind, and was largely disabled for the rest of his life until dying in 1920.

- **1916** Chicago-based Galleanist, chef Nestor Dondoglio, known by the alias *Jean Cronos*, laces soup with arsenic in an attempt to poison some 100 guests, all figures in industry, business, finance, or law, at a banquet to honor Archbishop Mundelein. A doctor among the guests furnished a hastily prepared emetic that induced vomiting. None of the guests died, though many suffered greatly. Police discovered many vials of poison when they searched Dondoglio's rooms, but never apprehended him. Dondoglio left a series of taunts for the police, then fled to the East Coast. He survived in abject poverty, hidden in the homes of other Galleanists, until his death in 1932.

- **December 6, 1916** – Galleanist Alfonso Fagotti arrested for stabbing a policeman during a riot in Boston's North Square. The next day Galleanists exploded a bomb at the Salutation Street station of the Boston harbor police. Fagotti was convicted, imprisoned, and later deported to Italy.

- **November 24, 1917** – Nine policemen and a bystander in Milwaukee, Wisconsin killed when a time bomb left at a Catholic church by Galleanists was taken to a police station, where it exploded.

- **Late 1917, early 1918** – Bombings in New York City, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., Boston, and Milwaukee which were later attributed to Galleanists, but no criminal prosecutions followed.

- **December 30, 1918** – The Philadelphia homes of the President of the Chamber of Commerce, the Acting Superintendent of Police, William B. Mills, and Judge Robert von Moschzisker were heavily damaged by bombs filled with metal slugs, an act later attributed to the Galleanist group. A woman standing across the street from Superintendent Mills' home was struck above the eye by a metal slug. At each site leaflets were scattered denouncing "the priests, the exploiters, the judges and police, and the soldiers" whose time was coming to an end.

- **April to June, 1919** – 1919 United States anarchist bombings:

- **April 28** – Mayor Ole Hanson of Seattle, Washington, receives a Galleanist mail bomb (defused). 34 other mail bombs discovered nation-wide addressed to officials, newspaper editors, and businessmen after the distinctive details of the package are circulated.

- **April 29** – A Galleanist mail bomb intended for U.S. Senator Thomas W. Hardwick explodes, burning a servant and blowing off her hands.

- **June 2** – Nine large bombs detonated simultaneously in eight cities, targeting judges, government officials, the Catholic Church, and industrialists. Wanted Galleanist Carlo Valdinoci dies when his bomb explodes prematurely. New York City night watchman William Boehner killed by a Galleanist bomb placed at a judge's house.

• **September 25, 1919** – ‘The Explosion in Leontievsky Lane’, 12 Bolsheviks killed (Lenin however, a prime target and due to be present, hadn’t yet arrived) and 55 injured at the premises of the Moscow Committee of the Russian Communist Party, including many prominent officials, after a powerful bomb is thrown by anarchist Pyotr Sobolev through the window during a meeting, destroying large parts of the building. The perpetrators were a coalition of underground anarchists, Maximalists, and Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, who had been carrying out robberies and attacks and printing underground publications, acting partly in revenge for the many Bolshevik killings of their previous allies, the anarchist Makhnovists, as well as killings of Left SR militants. Their fight was against the counter-revolutionary party bureaucracy, in favor of direct, unrestricted and continuing revolutionary struggle of the oppressed for liberation. Sobolev and a main anarchist organizer of the attack and group – Kazimir Kovalevich – are hunted down and shot soon after while they shoot back and throw bombs, and seven more anarchists are surrounded in their headquarters with the printing press and shoot at the cops before blowing up their house, totally destroying it and killing them all. Eight more anarchists are shot after forced confessions, and two Left SR members, the leader of their section of the coalition – Donat Cherepanov – and his partner Tamara Gasparyan, are arrested and later strangled to death in prison by the Cheka secret police. Cherepanov had been personally interrogated by the head of the Cheka and told him that his only regret was that those killed weren’t more important and that when he was arrested he had been grabbed from behind, without time to shoot the secret policemen.

• **September 16, 1920** – The Wall Street Bombing kills 38 and wounds 400 in the Manhattan Financial District, two days after the arrests of Sacco and Vanzetti. Galleanists are believed responsible, particularly Mario Buda, the group’s principal bombmaker, although the crime remains officially unsolved.

• **March 8, 1921** – Three anarchists on a motorcycle shoot dead Spanish Prime Minister Eduardo Dato Iradier in Puerta de Alcalá, Madrid.

• **July 14, 1921** – Galleanists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti are sentenced to death for the murders of a paymaster and guard during the April 15, 1920 armed robbery of a shoe company’s payroll transport, in Braintree, Massachusetts. The trial was blatantly corrupt, with anti-Italian, anti-immigrant sentiment, recanted testimony, conflicting ballistic evidence, a prejudicial pre-trial statement by the jury foreman, likely evidence tampering, and a confession by a different alleged participant in the robbery stating they were innocent. Sacco and Vanzetti were active, illegal anarchists, and the robbery probably was the work of Galleanists, however it’s unclear if Sacco and Vanzetti actually committed the robbery. Later evidence suggests Sacco may have been guilty and Vanzetti likely innocent. By 1926, the case had attracted worldwide attention as one of the largest causes célèbres in modern history. In 1927, numerous prominent intellectuals and public figures signed petitions, including Einstein, George Bernard Shaw, and H.G. Wells. Actions on their behalf were held in every major city in North America and Europe, as well as in Tokyo, Geneva, London, Paris, Amsterdam, Sydney, Melbourne, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, Dubai, Montevideo, Johannesburg, and Auckland. They were executed by electric chair on August 23, 1927. Over 10,000 mourners attended the viewing,

and a wreath over their caskets read “*In attesa l’ora della vendetta*” (Awaiting the hour of vengeance). On August 15, a bomb had exploded at the home of one of the jurors.

- **October, 1921** – A bomb is sent to the American ambassador in Paris by anarchists in solidarity with Sacco and Vanzetti, wounding his valet. Through their whole detention, bombs explode at American embassies around the world.

- **July 14, 1922** – 23 year old Gustave Bouvet attempts to kill French president Alexandre Millerand, firing several revolver shots during a parade at a car he believed was his, but was actually the Prefect of Police, missing after a bystander grabs his arm. Knocked to the ground with a bicycle thrown by a cop and beaten by the crowd, he’s arrested and spends two years in prison, later marrying and living for another 59 years.

- **January 27, 1923** – Argentine lieutenant Héctor Benigno Varela is assassinated in Buenos Aires by German anarchist Kurt Gustav Wilckens, who throws a bomb and fires four shots at him before yelling “I have avenged my brothers!” The four shots were for the four shots Varela ordered firing squads to fire at striking workers during his murderous actions suppressing the Tragic Week and Patagonia Rebelde uprisings. Wilckens is sentenced to 17 years in prison and on the 15th of June, 1923, prison guards smuggle in rightwing former police sergeant Jorge Ernesto Pérez Millán Témpereley who shoots Wilckens in the chest as he sleeps, killing him. Millán gets a light sentence but is himself mortally wounded in 1925 by the anarchist Esteban Lucich who’d been working for him as a servant, who shoots him in the chest with a revolver, saying “This is from Wilckens.”

- **September, 1923** – Japanese military police beat to death the prominent Japanese anarchist Ōsugi Sakae, his lover the also prominent anarcha-feminist Itō Noe, and Ōsugi’s six-year old nephew, then throw their bodies in an abandoned well, in what is known as the Amakasu Incident. This takes place as part of the Kantō Massacre, where an estimated 6,000 Koreans and left-wing dissidents are killed by the Japanese military, police, and vigilantes in the aftermath of the devastating Kantō earthquake. In the summer of 1921, a member of Ōsugi’s clique had planned to assassinate Japanese Prime Minister Hara Takashi, however the prime minister was killed by a rightwing assassin in November 1921 before they could carry out the plot. The Guillotine Society, a group in the social orbit of Ōsugi, had also planned to assassinate the English Prince of Wales: future King Edward VIII, during his 1922 visit to Japan, but were foiled, before plotting another aborted plan to assassinate the crown prince Hirohito. Ōsugi’s ashes are later stolen from an anarchist affinity group’s offices by members of the rightwing Anti-Socialist League who arrive disguised as mourners and then shoot at those present before making off with the ashes in a getaway car.

- **September 23, 1923** – Japanese anarchist, nihilist, and feminist Kaneko Fumiko is arrested along with her lover the Korean anarchist Pak Yol and other members of their group Society of Malcontents in the chaos of the Kantō earthquake on charges of conspiring to blow up the emperor Taisho and his son the crown prince Hirohito at Hirohito’s wedding. Both are sentenced to death after confessing to the plot, although their sentences are later commuted to life imprisonment. When the chief of the prison handed Kaneko the commutation cer-

tificate from the emperor, she immediately ripped it up in his presence. Kaneko was a powerful thinker and wrote an essay in prison 'What Made Me Do What I Did' as well as an autobiography *Memoirs of a Japanese Woman in Prison*, where she explains the trajectory of her life and beliefs, never renouncing them. She was found hanged in her cell in 1926. Pak Yol was released from prison by U.S. occupation authorities at the end of World War II.

- **December 27, 1923** – Japanese communist Daisuke Nanba attempts to assassinate the Crown Prince and Regent Hirohito as revenge for the Kantō Massacre and the execution of anarchist Shūsui Kōtoku in the High Treason Incident, in what becomes known as the Toranomom Incident. Daisuke, the son of a member of the Diet, fired a small pistol at Hirohito's carriage in downtown Tokyo, while Hirohito was on his way to the opening of the 48th Session of the Imperial Diet. Daisuke's bullet shatters the carriage's window and injures a chamberlain. Daisuke is executed 19 days later.

- **September, 1924** – Multiple attempted assassinations of Fukuda Masa-tarō, the general in command of the troops during the Amakasu Incident, are made by the anarchist illegalist group the Guillotine Society, composed of former friends of Ōsugi (some born rich, others in poverty, poets, drinkers, gamblers, playboys, factory workers, ex-socialists, and newspaper editors). In the first attempt Wada Kyūtarō shoots and wounds Fukuda. In the second attempt several days later, Fukuda's house is bombed, but he isn't home at the time. Further bombings also fail. Five members are arrested in the following days, and two more are arrested for threatening the judge and Fukuda. One of the arrested, Daijirō Furuta, had stabbed a banker to death in Osaka during a bank robbery (they had carried out numerous other successful robberies) the previous year, 8 other members involved in the robbery were arrested at the scene but Furuta had managed to escape. Another, Genjiro Muraki, attempts to light his house on fire when the police come but doesn't have enough time, he dies of tuberculosis after only a few days of imprisonment in poor conditions. Tetsu Nakahama, who had already been in prison for previously attacking the president of the Kanebo company as well as involvement in the bank robbery killing and the plot to assassinate Hirohito is sentenced to death in 1926 and hanged. Two more members are arrested after police intercept them while they attempt to break their comrades out of prison with bombs. None of them renounce their beliefs at trial or after. Wada receives a life sentence and commits suicide in prison in 1928. Furuta is sentenced to death and at 25 years old is hanged with a picture of his dog and cat in one hand and a leaf from a tree sent by his older brother in the other hand. Nine others receive prison terms of varying lengths. Furuta wrote in poems from death row: "Everything comes to an end. My conscience does not bother me. I am at peace", "In these conditions, despite the pain and the anger, I can patiently and serenely await the sting of death", and shortly before his execution "It's a real pity I won't see the chrysanthemums again / But at least it's such a glorious autumn day today / To be able to die on a morning like this, yes, that makes me happy", "Should a funeral take place, I ask that it be as quiet as possible / Only as many flowers as possible should be laid out / Flowers as they bloom in the mountains and in the fields / As I wasn't able to admire the chrysanthemums here in the courtyard / There are so many things I still want to write / But they're already waiting for me / So I do

apologize / Goodbye / I'm leaving now / Goodbye". Others among the arrested also composed multiple poems and books for their martyred friends and about the experience.

- **January 23, 1925** – Bombing of the Office of the Protector of Chinese in Kuala Lumpur (in Malaya, then under British rule), injures the Protector, another European official, and the bomber, a young Chinese anarchist named Wong So Ying. She commits suicide in prison. A previous attempt earlier that month by anarchists in Penang against the British Governor Laurence Guille-mard had failed.

- **May 24, 1925** – Another shot is fired at Fukuda Masatarō through the window of the Tokyo restaurant he's eating at. It misses and the shooter escapes on foot.

- **October 31, 1926** – Anteo Zamboni, a 15-year-old anarchist, tries to assassinate Benito Mussolini in Bologna, by shooting at him during the parade celebrating the March on Rome. Zamboni, whose shot missed Mussolini, was immediately attacked and killed by nearby squadristi (fascist squads).

- **September 11, 1926** – A bomb is thrown at Benito Mussolini's car as he drives to his office by Italian anarchist and anti-fascist Gino Lucetti, slightly injuring eight people while leaving Mussolini unharmed. This was the same day Lucetti was supposed to be at court for his trial for shooting a fascist during a gunfight he was also injured in the year before. Lucetti was sentenced to 30 years but was freed or escaped in 1943, and died the same year during a German bombardment.

- **1926** – A bomb destroys the house of Samuel Johnson, who called the police the night of Sacco and Vanzetti's arrest.

- **1926–1928** – Several bombings in Argentina organized by the Italian anarchist Severino Di Giovanni, in the frame of the international campaign avenging Sacco and Vanzetti and against Fascist Italy's interests in Argentina. Bombings of the US embassy, of the Buenos Aires offices of City Bank of New York and Bank of Boston, a tobacco company which printed 'Sacco and Vanzetti' brand cigarettes, and of the Italian consulate. In December 1928, Di Giovanni and others failed in an attempt to bomb the train in which President-elect Herbert Hoover was traveling during his visit to Argentina.

- **1928** – Bombs explode in the New York City subway, a Philadelphia church, at the home of the mayor of Baltimore, and at the home of another juror who convicted Sacco and Vanzetti. Bomb destroys the front porch of the New York home of the executioner of Sacco and Vanzetti, Robert Elliott.

- **May, 1931** – Allegedly in retaliation for overhearing the former Monarchist national anthem playing on a record player, supporters of the Second Spanish Republic (including anarchists) launch systematic and nationwide arson attacks against the Catholic Church in Spain, which leave more than one hundred churches, Catholic schools, monasteries, and convents completely destroyed.

- **September 27, 1932** – Bomb left by Galleanists destroys Judge Webster Thayer's home in Worcester, Massachusetts, injuring his wife and a housekeeper. Judge Thayer had presided over the trials of Sacco and Vanzetti. Afterward, Thayer lived under 24-hour guard until his natural death the next year.

- **February 15, 1933** – Giuseppe Zangara attempts to kill US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

# Early History of Nihilism, Egoism, and Illegalism

## **‘Russian nihilist movement’, Wikipedia:**

Russian nihilism (Philosophical, cultural, and revolutionary movement in Russia from roughly 1855-1881 – Editor) saw all the morality, philosophy, religion, aesthetics, and social institutions which were in place as worthless and meaningless but did not necessarily see meaninglessness in all ethics, knowledge, and human life. It did however, incorporate theories of hard determinism, atheism, materialism, positivism, and egoism in an aim to assimilate and distinctively recontextualize core elements of the Age of Enlightenment into Russia while dropping the Westernizer approach of the previous generation. Russian nihilism developed an atmosphere of extreme moral scepticism, at times praising outright selfishness and championing those who held themselves exempt from all moral authority. In its most complete forms it also denied the possibility of common ideals, instead favouring a relativist and individualistic outlook. (It was also a subcultural phenomenon rejecting society’s values by favoring utilitarian clothing, an unwashed, dirty appearance, rude and outspoken behavior, preaching a spiritual hedonism while living in ascetic material conditions, communal living with others of the same age, non-institutional intellectualism, immersion in poverty, polyamory, and women’s liberation – Editor)...

Although most commonly associated with revolutionary activism, most nihilists were in fact not political and instead discarded politics as an outdated stage of humanity. They held that until a destructive programme had overcome the current conditions no constructive programme could be properly formulated, and although some nihilists did begin to develop communal principles their formulations in this regard remained vague... Contemporary scholarship has challenged the equating of Russian nihilism with mere skepticism, instead identifying it with the fundamentally Promethean character of the nihilist movement. In fact, the nihilists sought to liberate the Promethean might of the Russian people which they saw embodied in a class of prototypical individuals, or new types in their own words...

## **‘Narodnaya Volya’, Wikipedia:**

Based upon an underground apparatus of local, semi-independent cells coordinated by a self-selecting Executive Committee, Narodnaya Volya (‘People’s Will’, nihilist armed group resulting from split in previous group *Zemlya i Volya* aka Land and Liberty – Editor) espoused acts of political violence in an attempt to spur mass revolt against Tsarism, culminating in the successful assassination



of Tsar Alexander II in March 1881—the event for which the group is best remembered.

It favored the use of secret society violent direct action as a method to destabilize the Russian Empire and provide a focus for popular discontent against it for an insurrection, justified "as a means of exerting pressure on the government for reform, as the spark that would ignite a vast peasant uprising, and as the inevitable response to the regime's use of violence against the revolutionaries"...

An extensive program was drawn up in St. Petersburg in 1876 calling for the break up of the nations of the Russian Empire, granting of all land to the "agricultural working class", and transfer of all social functions to the village communes. This program warned "Our demands can be brought about only by means of violent revolution", and it prescribed "agitation...both by word and above all by deed—aimed at organizing the revolutionary forces and developing revolutionary feelings" as the vehicle for "disorganization of the state" and victory.

These ideas were borrowed directly from Mikhail Bakunin, a radicalized émigré nobleman from Tver guberniia regarded as the father of collectivist anarchism...

Narodnaya Volya continued the trend towards secret organization and centralized direction that had begun with Zemlya i Volya—principles held to tightly in the face of growing government repression of participants in the organization. Democratic control of the party apparatus was deemed impossible under existing political conditions and the organization was centrally directed by its self-selecting Executive Committee...

**Catechism of a Revolutionary:  
by Sergey Nechayev, 1869. Excerpted.**

“The revolutionary is a doomed man. He has no private interests, no affairs, sentiments, ties, property nor even a name of his own. His entire being is devoured by one purpose, one thought, one passion - the revolution. Heart and soul, not merely by word but by deed, he has severed every link with the social order and with the entire civilized world; with the laws, good manners, conventions, and morality of that world. He is its merciless enemy and continues to inhabit it with only one purpose – to destroy it...

We must unite with the adventurous tribes of brigands, who are the only genuine revolutionaries in Russia.”

**An Enduring Passion for Criminality:**

by Tom Nomad and Gallus Stanig Mag, 2017, in *Hostis*, Issue 1, *Cruelty Excerpted*.

... the Tsarist state was in crisis on almost every front, (including military strikes, workers barricades, peasants killing landowners and non-Russian ethno-nationalists attempting to cede from the Russian state) it was exceptionally difficult for the state to administer order. Furthering this crisis was the near ubiquitous nature of bomb making materials; making the task of preventing terrorist “outrages” a Sisyphean task. The prevalence of bombs as an assassins tool was so common that the Russian lexicon began to reflect it, for example the adage that “luck is like a bomb – it can strike one man today, another tomorrow” or the joke that the Minister of Finance had “decided to replace gold currency with dynamite, since dynamite is streaming into Russia while gold is streaming out.” The scale of violence against state functionaries was almost unimaginable, in 1905 alone, 3,611 government officials of all ranks were killed. It is probably without irony that one official remarked “one is surprised they have not yet killed all of us” given the near daily assassinations. One of the reasons that violence became so effective, however, is directly traceable to the avowed amorality of figureheads like Nechayev, specifically assassins no longer solely targeted high profile and particularly odious members of the regime; rather all public officials were considered acceptable targets as were their families... The Nihilists, as a tendency rather than a uniform movement, were able to practice their ideology only because of the conditions in Russia, however their wanton attacks on government officials (including acts as small scale as walking about with sulfuric acid and throwing it into the face of the first policeman they encountered and as large scale as grenade attacks on highly ranked government Ministers) helped exacerbate the conditions which allowed them to practice their ideology in the first place. (This violent period mainly involved the Left Social-Revolutionaries, who were influenced by the earlier nihilists but are generally considered a separate group – Editor)

**The Bonnot Gang:**

by Richard Parry, 1987. *Excerpted*.

As Victor Serge... recalled: "One of the peculiar features of working class Paris at this time (Around 1908 - Editor) was that it bordered extensively on the underworld, that is on the vast world of fly-by-nights, outcasts, paupers and criminals. There were few essential differences between the young worker or artisan from the old central districts and the ponce from the alleys around Les Halles. A chauffeur or mechanic with any wits about him would pilfer all he could from the boss as a matter of course, out of class-consciousness..."

In fact there were neighbourhoods in Paris more or less recognized as ‘criminal’, with their own traditions and way of life — principally the northern outskirts of the city; Pantin, St-Ouen, Aubervilliers and Clichy. A large number of Parisian criminals made their living from the thousands of tourists who, in the wake of the Great Exhibition of 1900, flocked to see the glittering capital of European civilization. There were plenty of professional beggars and pick-pockets, as well as thousands of part-time prostitutes on the boulevards and in the brasseries — working class women forced to service ‘gentlemen’ in or-

der to make ends meet. There were also professional loan sharks, confidence tricksters, forgers, counterfeiters, and even some specializing in dog or bicycle theft.

Parisian workers, if not part of this 'underworld', were usually sympathetic to it and naturally hostile to the police, and not averse to a bit of thieving themselves; the public in general had an almost ambivalent attitude to crime.

The anarchist viewpoint that was sympathetic to crime was probably received more favourably by working class people than Jean Grave's moral sermonizing that all crime was essentially bourgeois. One of the most popular working class heroes of the time was the anarchist Ravachol, who had declared that, "To die of hunger is cowardly and degrading. I preferred to turn thief, counterfeiter, murderer...". If working class people were sympathetic to such a figure it was because they understood where he was coming from.

The hostility of employers to workers who expressed unsound opinions, or who were denounced to them by the police as 'anarchists' or 'troublemakers', meant that many hundreds of workers found it extremely difficult to find work, and were virtually forced into criminality..

The cross-over in Paris between the working class, the underworld and revolutionary politics, was a similar sort of phenomenon to the situation in Czarist Russia, but there, politics was much more firmly rooted in illegality. Paris, long a haven for Russian refugees, sheltered upwards of twenty-five thousand exiles, of whom the police estimated that no less than fifteen hundred were 'terrorists' and five hundred and fifty of them anarchists or maximalists...

The Social-Revolutionary 'Maximalists' were well known for their advocacy of a wider application of 'terrorism' including the incendiarism and pillage of estates, as well as individual assassinations. They also carried out expropriations at home and abroad: one, discussed in rue St Jacques by Divinogorsky and a comrade, was planned for a branch of the Crédit Lyonnais in Paris, but was rejected in favour of an attack on a bank in Montreux in Switzerland. In this bungled operation in 1907 four people were killed and both revolutionaries arrested...

Also around this time, members of the Polish Socialist Party, led by Pilsudski, were conducting raids on tax offices, ambushing Treasury vans, and assassinating Governors and policemen. The experience, often violent and clandestine, of the Russian revolutionaries was communicated by refugees to those western revolutionaries who were most sympathetic to both ideas and action — the anarchists above all.

But if the Bolsheviks, for instance, engaged in expropriations, this was far from illegalism; such expropriations were done for 'the Cause' (in this case the Party) and the comrades responsible only received fifty kopeks a day to live on. Bolshevik illegality was simply a necessary tactic at the time for building the Party.

Nevertheless, the effect of armed expropriations, assassinations (the head of the Russian Secret Service, the Okhrana, was executed in a Paris hotel room in 1908) and bomb explosions (usually accidental, as in the Bois de Vincennes in 1906 and the Bois de Boulogne in 1908) provided anarchists with inspiration, and something to admire and sympathize with. Above all, the Russian Revolution of 1905 sent revolutionaries into a state of great excitement...

As the anarchist desire for the abolition of the State was translated onto an immediate, practical level through individual acts of assassination and bombing, so the wish for the 'expropriation of the expropriators' was reduced to individual acts of 're-appropriation' of bourgeois property. This was the theory of *la reprise individuelle*, whose most celebrated practitioners were Clément Duval and Marius Jacob; the infamous Ravachol, who went to the guillotine in 1894 singing the scandalous anticlerical song *Père Duchesne*, was known more for his bombings than his burglaries.

Clément Duval, twice wounded in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, spent four of the following ten years in hospital, and was rendered permanently unfit for his trade as an iron worker. He was imprisoned for a year after having been caught stealing eighty francs from his employer, in order to buy desperately-needed food and medicine for his family. On his release he threw in his lot with the hardened working class anarchists of 'The Panther of Batignolles' and began a short-lived life of crime. In October 1886 he set fire to the mansion of a wealthy Parisian socialite, having first burgled it of fifteen thousand francs, but he was caught two weeks later, despite wounding a policeman in the course of the arrest. In court, the Judge refused to allow him to read his written defence, so he posted it to *Révolte*: "Theft exists only through the exploitation of man by man, that is to say in the existence of all those who parasitically live off the productive class... when Society refuses you the right to exist, you must take it... the policeman arrested me in the name of the Law, I struck him in the name of Liberty". The death sentence was later commuted to hard labour for life on Devil's Island, French Guiana. (Editor's Note: After 20 escape attempts, Duval finally escaped to New York City and lived the rest of his life free, remaining an anarchist).

If Duval worked alone, the next anarchist burglars of note were leaders of gangs which got successively larger until the veritable federation of burglars organized by Marius Jacob. Vittorio Pini, an anarchist shoemaker on the run from the Italian authorities, began a series of burglaries with four other comrades in and around Paris that netted over half a million francs. They stole almost exclusively to support hard-up comrades or prisoners and to subsidize the anarchist press in France and Italy.

Ortiz ostensibly dropped out of anarchist politics in order to begin a career as a professional burglar, with a gang of ten others. He too donated funds to the cause, but not as strictly as Pini had done. He and his men were the only ones convicted at the notorious 'Trial of the Thirty' in 1894; the nineteen anarchist propagandists went free.

Alexandre Marius Jacob was really in a class of his own. At thirteen he was working on a pirate ship in the Indian Ocean. At sixteen he was a known anarchist in prison for manufacturing explosives. At seventeen he pulled off a remarkable theft from a jewellers by posing as a policeman. And by the age of twenty he was successfully burgling churches, aristocratic residences and bourgeois mansions all along the south coast of France. In 1900, aged twenty-one, he escaped from prison after feigning madness, and went into hiding in Sète. Here, he concluded that his previous criminal efforts had been amateur, and decided to set up a properly organized anarchist gang to finance both the movement and themselves; they adopted the name of 'Les Travailleurs de la

Nuit' (The Night Workers).

Uniforms were acquired for the purpose of disguise, and research done into safe-breaking techniques, in order that the correct special tools and equipment be obtained. A list of potential targets was drawn up from 'Who's Who'-type books which gave the names and addresses of the rich. Then they set to work. They had no particular base, their field of operations being France itself; some of their more lucrative burglaries were the cathedral at Tours, an Admiral's mansion in Cherbourg, a Judge's house at Le Mans and a jewellery factory in rue Quincampoix, Paris. Jacob checked out the cathedral of Notre Dame and the home of the Bayeaux Tapestry, but decided to cross them off his list. He left notes signed 'Attila' condemning owners for their excessive wealth, and occasionally set fire to mansions that he'd burgled. As the group expanded from its original dozen members, some comrades went off to form autonomous gangs, so that a sort of federation was set up involving anything up to a hundred members, but the composition became less and less anarchist.

Jacob escaped arrest in Orleans by shooting a policeman, but they caught up with him again at Abbéville. He was taken into custody after a brief shoot-out which left one policeman dead and another wounded. Under pressure, one man informed on the whole gang, in such detail that investigations took two years to complete, and the charges ran to a hundred and sixty-one pages. At the Assizes of Amiens in 1905, he was accused of no less than a hundred and fifty-six burglaries; outside, an infantry battalion surrounded the court, and some jurors, afraid of anarchist reprisals, didn't turn up. He was sentenced to forced labour for life and packed off to Devil's Island, where the Governor labelled him as the most dangerous prisoner ever. (Editor's Note: After at least 17 escape attempts, and the alleged murder of a fellow inmate, Jacob's sentence was commuted and he was released in 1927. He never renounced his anarchism, and would later be involved in the *maquis* sabotage squads fighting the Nazi occupiers in WWII)

All these leading anarchist burglars donated sums to the cause and defended their actions by saying that they had a 'right' to steal; it was a question not of gain or profit, but of principle. The 'natural right' to a free existence was denied to workers through the bourgeoisie's monopoly ownership of the means of production; as the workers continued to create wealth, so the bourgeoisie continued to appropriate this wealth, a state of affairs maintained ultimately only by force, but legitimized. It was the immoral bourgeois who was the real thief, both in history and in the present; the anarchist 're-appropriation' was 'superior in morality', it was part of a rightful restitution of wealth robbed from the working class, done with moral conviction and good intent to further 'The Cause'. As *La Révolte* commented: "Pini never conducted himself as a professional thief. He was a man of very few needs, living simply, poorly even, with austerity; that Pini stole for propaganda purposes has been denied by no-one"...

A new generation of anarchists, spurred on by the 'individualist' ideas of Max Stirner, were to take as their point of departure exactly what... (the theoreticians of public, open individual reclamation – Editor) had objected to, that the rebel who secretly stole was no more than an ordinary thief. The developing theory of 'illegalism' had no moral basis, recognizing only the reality of 'might' in place of a theory of 'right'. Illegal acts were to be done simply to satisfy one's desires, not for the greater glory of some external 'ideal'. The illegalists were to make a

theory of theft without the embarrassment of theoretical justifications...

In the fad for all things German, Friedrich Nietzsche was the most fashionable of the writers-cum-philosophers. He railed against the prevailing culture and ethos of his time, and especially against attitudes of conformity, resignation or resentment; he willed the creation of the 'Superman', who would break through the constraints of bourgeois morality and the artificiality of social conventions towards a rediscovered humanity of more primitive virtues. For the record, he was neither a nationalist nor an anti-semitic. Nietzsche regarded Stirner as one of the unrecognized seminal minds of the nineteenth century, a recommendation which, coupled with the aforementioned vogue for German philosophy, resulted in fin de siècle publication of extracts of his work in *Le Mercure*, and in the symbolists' 'organ of literary anarchism', *Entretiens politiques et littéraires*. In 1900, the year of Nietzsche's death, the libertarian publisher, Stock, printed the first complete French translation of Stirner's work, entitled *L'Unique et sa Propriete*.

Young anarchists, in particular, quickly developed a fascination for the book, and it rapidly became the 'Bible' of anarcho-individualism. Stirner's polemic was much more extreme than the well-worn ideas that had until then made up the stuff of revolutionary ideology. Anarchist thinkers had tended, like Proudhon, to conceive of some absolute moral criterion to which people must subordinate their desires, in the name of 'Reason' or 'Justice'; or, like Kropotkin, they had assumed some innate urge which, once Authority was overthrown, would induce people to cooperate naturally in a society governed by invisible laws of mutual aid. The 'anarchism' of Tolstoy and Godwin was also thoroughly grounded in moralism, a throw-back to their Christian backgrounds of, respectively, Russian Orthodoxy and English Dissent. Even anarcho-syndicalists such as Jean Grave had a 'revolutionary morality' which viewed the class struggle as a 'Just War'.

Stirner saw all 'morality' as an ideological justification for the repression of individuals; he opposed those revolutionaries who wished to set up a new morality in place of the old, as this 'would still result in the triumph of the collectivity over the individual and lay the basis for another despotic State. He denied that there was any real existence in concepts such as 'Natural Law', 'Common Humanity', 'Reason', 'Justice' or 'The People'; more than being simply absurd platitudes (which he derisively labelled 'sacred concepts'), they were some of a whole gamut of abstract ideas which unfortunately dominated the thinking of most individuals: "Every higher essence, such as 'Truth', 'Mankind' and so on, is an essence OVER us". Stirner perceived the repressive nature of ideologies, even so-called 'revolutionary' ones; he believed that all these 'sacred concepts' manufactured by the intellect actually resulted in practical despotism.

For Stirner the real force of life resided in the will of each individual, and this 'Ego', "the unbridled I", could not come to real self-fulfillment and self-realization so long as the State continued to exist. Each individual was unique, with a uniqueness that should be cultivated: the Egoist's own needs and desires provided the sole rule of conduct. Differences with other individuals were to be recognized and accepted, and conscious egoists could combine with others into "unions of egoists", free to unite or separate as they pleased, rather than being held together in a Party under the weight of some ideological discipline. Certain conflicts of the will might have to be settled by force, as they were

already in present society, but these should be done without the need for moral justification...

In the struggle against the State, which every conscious egoist would be forced to engage in, Stirner distinguished between a 'Revolution', which aimed at setting up an immutable new social order, and 'rebellion' or insurrection, a continuous state of permanent revolution, which set "no glittering hopes on 'institutions'". Stirner's rebellion was not so much a political or social act, but an egoistic one.

Furthermore, in this battle with the State, Stirner felt that, "an ego who is his own cannot desist from being a criminal", but this did not mean that a moral justification for crime was necessary. Discussing Proudhon's famous dictum "Property is theft", he asks why, "put the fault on others as if they were robbing us, while we ourselves do bear the fault in leaving the others unrobbed? The poor are to blame for there being rich men."... He summed up: "To what property am I entitled? To every property to which I empower myself... I do not demand any 'Right', therefore I need not recognize any either. What I can get by force, I get by force, and what I can not get by force I have no right to, nor do I give myself airs or consolations with my imprescriptable 'Right'... Liberty belongs to him who takes it"...

*The Ego and Its Own* was a startling work, written from a point of view that might be called 'radical subjectivity', a work of an all-consuming passion best summed up in the egoist's battlecry: "Take hold and take what you require! With this the war of all against all is declared. I alone decide what I will have!".

If socialists continually ignored the question of individual desires and the subjective element of revolt, then it must be said that Stirner made little effort to direct his attention to basic socio-economic questions and the need for a collective struggle of the dispossessed, which would realize each individual's desires. He saw 'the masses' as "full of police sentiments through and through"... Still, he had at last made it possible for rebels to admit that their revolt was being made primarily for their own self-realization... Stirner stripped away the dead weight of ideology and located the revolution where it always had been — in the hearts and minds of individuals.

... The long association of French anarchism with theoretical voluntarism and practical illegality, sympathy for working class criminality, and hostility to bourgeois morals and socialist politics, meant that Stirner's ideas were easily accessible to many anarchists...

### **Overview of the Bonnot Gang:**

'The Bonnot Gang' was one group of this new breed of egoist illegalists, coming together in France, with many members having links to Belgium and other countries. Named after the oldest 'member', Jules Bonnot, a thirty-one year-old mechanic and professional criminal who had recently arrived from Lyon. Most of the other members were in their very early twenties, and included burglars, forgers, disillusioned ex-socialists, ex-prisoners, deserters, deportees, and many involved with individualist anarchist newspapers, such as *Le Révolté* and *l'Anarchie*. Their upbringings ranged from abject poverty, to the aristocracy. All of the main members were vegetarians, who only drank water, did not smoke, were enthusiastic about fitness, and engaged in passionate love affairs with

other anarchists or, in more than a few cases, with married people. Many had lived together at a rural commune, running a printing press, receiving anarchist tramps, and raising their children communally. Some like Garnier were noted as particularly kind towards old people and children for example (although he was also perhaps the quickest to resort to murder during their jobs), or for buying caged birds just to release them, while Bonnot was less social. The gang was frequently noted as being very well-dressed and groomed, out of pride as well as to allay suspicion. Some of those involved were Octave Garnier, Raymond Callemin, Anna Dondon, Marie Vuillemin, René Valet, Étienne Monier, Victor Serge, Rirette Maîtrejean, and André Soudy. Many more people were charged for the gang's crimes, but it's hard to say what degree of participation they really engaged in, as much of the trials were blatantly punitive towards the surrounding anarchist movement.

On the 21st of December 1911 the gang robbed a bank messenger of 5,000 francs and over 130,000 francs worth of securities and bonds (the struggle to pass these off would end up sowing many of the seeds of their downfall). Octave shot the messenger twice after he refused to let go of the case (the messenger was badly wounded but did not die) and they escaped in a stolen sports car. This was the very first time a car was used in an armed robbery in France, with the press giving them the moniker of the "auto bandits". A few days later they broke into a gun shop and stole many guns including nine repeating rifles. On the 2nd of January 1912, they broke into a rich man's house, killing him and his maid in the process and stealing 30,000 francs. January 23rd, they break into a doctor's garage in Ghent, Belgium and then sell his luxury car in Amsterdam for 8,000 francs, on their way home to Paris they successfully burglar an old rich man's house in Northern France. Some days later, they returned to Ghent and bludgeoned a chauffeur to death with a log during a failed car theft after he refused to start the cars, a night-watchman who challenged them was shot down but survived. On their way back to Paris, they stole another car, and on February 15th, a Peugeot limousine from an industrialist. On February 26th they stole another luxury car, worth 20,000 francs, and the next day, killed a cop who tried to stop their reckless driving, shooting him three times. February 29th, they shoot and wound two bystanders who intervened during a failed burglary, and then burn their expensive stolen getaway car after escaping. After several arrests of their comrades and associates, including some who snitched, Octave writes a letter to the press taking responsibility for the crimes and declaring innocent one of the arrested, threatening the snitch, and including a full inking of his fingerprints and insults and threats to the police. Days later, Octave, with a Browning semi-automatic pistol in each hand, confronts a snitch and shoots him twice in the legs. Another gang member, Charles Bill, shoots his former boss to death for snitching on his comrades, before escaping to Germany, never to be caught. Bonnot, not to be out-done, walked into a mainstream newspaper office complaining to a journalist about one of the stories they'd run about the gang, setting his Browning on the table and warning, "We'll burn off our last round against the cops, and if they don't care to come, we'll certainly know how to find them." A few nights later, they attempt to steal a car from a fancy house in a small village to the West of Paris, but the chauffeur draws a gun and they exchange fire before escaping unharmed, but unsuccessful. March 25, 1912 they



shoot dead one chauffeur after he pulls a gun and wound another in an ambush while hijacking their luxury limousine, which they use to rob a bank, killing two cashiers and wounding several others in the process. The getaway driver waited outside firing off rifle potshots over the heads of any bystanders that approached the commotion. They make off with 47,555 francs. While on the run after this latest outrage, Bonnot shot dead the vice-chief of the French police who tried to arrest him, and wounded another, before escaping for the time being. Bonnot, Garnier, Valet, and their mechanic associate Dubois were killed in two separate shootouts when their hideouts were put under siege with large detachments of police, soldiers, explosives, and machine guns. All go out shooting to the very end, wounding multiple cops, with Bonnot, Garnier, and Valet fighting on, laying down wrapped in mattresses for protection, even after taking repeated gunshot wounds. Dubois died instantly from a shot to the back of the neck. Garnier and Valet light 10,000 stolen francs on fire before dying during the six-hour siege. 21 others were tried for involvement, with Callemin, Monier, and Soudy guillotined and others imprisoned for varying periods. Monier's young lover died two months later from the shock of his execution, one of the imprisoned was shot dead by a former detective after being released, others escaped, and Victor Serge would go to Russia and ally with the Bolsheviks after his release, only to be exiled and deported.

#### **Illegalist Dispersions:**

These same Stirnerite, Nietzschean tendencies played a large role in developing anarchist practices of free love, nudism, defense of birth control, anarcha-feminism, and LGBT liberation. In their proto-insurrectionary, illegalist form, they resonated through many regions of the world including among Jews, Ukrainians, and Poles in the Southwest of what was then Russia as well as Moscow, and in Argentina, Colombia, Belgium, Switzerland, Spain, and Italy. In Italy, these currents influenced many individualist anarchists involved in the artistic and social movement of futurism and the *Biennio Rosso* revolutionary period following the carnage of WWI, an economic crisis, and intense fascist, communist, and bourgeois agitation. Contrary to the tech-worship and fascism of many futurists and Nietzschean/decadent revolutionaries in Italy at this time; some illegalist anarchists, such as Renzo Novatore and Bruno Filippi turned against civilization, progress, and technology. At the same time, the avant-garde (anti-)art movement of Dada was taking form in similar circles, rejecting reason, meaning, logic and aesthetics as part of the bourgeois, capitalist, conformist world that caused the industrial devastation of WWI. Dada would later be an important influence on movements like situationism and surrealism.

#### **The Collected Writings of Renzo Novatore:**

**Translation and Biographical Note by Wolfi Landstreicher. 2012.**

**Biographical Note** Renzo Novatore was the penname of Abele Rizieri Ferrari who was born in Arcola, Italy (a village of La Spezia) on May 12, 1890 to a poor peasant family. Unwilling to adapt to scholastic discipline, he only attended a few months of the first grade of grammar school and then left school forever. Though his father forced him to work on the farm, his strong will

and thirst for knowledge led him to become a self-taught poet and philosopher (“When his father wanted him to plow the fields he would flee, stealing fruit and chickens to sell so that he could buy books to read under a tree in the forest. In this way he educated himself and quickly developed a taste for non-conformist writers.” - Enzo Martucci) Exploring these matters outside the limits imposed by the educational system, as a youth he read Stirner, Nietzsche, Wilde, Ibsen, Baudelaire, Schopenhauer and many others with a critical mind.

From 1908 on, he considered himself an anarchist. In 1910, he was charged with the burning of a local church and spent three months in prison. A year later, he went on the lam for several months because the police wanted him for theft and robbery. On September 30, 1911, the police arrested him for vandalism. In 1914, he began to write for anarchist papers. He was drafted during the first World War. He deserted his regiment on April 26, 1918 and was sentenced to death by a military tribunal for desertion and high treason on October 31. He left his village and went on the lam, propagating armed uprisings against the state.

On June 30, 1919, a farmer sold him to the police after an uprising in La Spezia. He was sentenced to ten years in prison, but was released in a general amnesty a few months later. He rejoined the anarchist movement and took part in various insurrectionary endeavors. In 1920, the police arrested him again for an armed assault on an arms depository at the naval barracks in Val di Fornola. Several months later, he was free, and participated in another insurrectionary endeavor that failed because of a snitch. (In 1921, Novatore also was active in the newly established ‘Arditi del Popolo’ anti-fascist front. In 1922, Novatore and Pollastro’s band robbed a bank cashier of a sack of gold, fatally shooting him in the heart – Editor)

In the summer of 1922, three trucks full of fascists stopped in front of his home, where he lived with his wife and two sons. The fascists surrounded the house, but Novatore used home-made grenades against them and was able to escape. He went underground one more time.

On November 29, 1922, Novatore and his comrade, Sante Pollastro, went into a tavern in Teglia. Three carabinieri (Italian military police) followed them inside. When the two anarchists tried to leave, the carabinieri began shooting. The warrant officer killed Novatore, but was then killed by Pollastro. One carabinieri ran away, and the last begged Pollastro for mercy. The anarchist escaped without shooting him...

### **My Iconoclastic Individualism (1920)**

You are waiting for the revolution! Very well! My own began a long time ago! When you are ready – God, what an endless wait! – it won’t nauseate me to go along the road awhile with you!

But when you stop, I will continue on my mad and triumphant march toward the great and sublime conquest of Nothing!

Every society you build will have its fringes, and on the fringes of every society, heroic and restless vagabonds will wander, with their wild and virgin thoughts, only able to live by preparing ever new and terrible outbreaks of rebellion!...

“Already the foreboding sky grows dark and silent!”

### **I Am Also a Nihilist (1920)**

... Mine is an enthusiastic and dionysian pessimism, like a flame that sets my vital exuberance ablaze, that mocks at any theoretical, scientific, or moral prison.

And if I call myself an individualist anarchist, an iconoclast, and a nihilist, it is precisely because I believe that in these adjectives there is the highest and most complete expression of my willful and reckless individuality that, like an overflowing river, wants to expand, impetuously sweeping away dikes and hedges, until it crashes into a granite boulder, shattering and breaking up in its turn. I do not renounce life.

I exalt and sing it...

Life is a reality, and the reality of life is war. For one who is a born warrior, life is a fountain of joy, for others it is only a fountain of humiliation and sorrow. I no longer demand carefree joy from life. It couldn't give it to me, and I would no longer know what to do with it now that my adolescence is past....

Instead I demand that it give me the perverse joy of battle that gives me the sorrowful spasms of defeat and the voluptuous thrills of victory.

Defeated in the mud or victorious in the sun, I sing life and I love it!

There is no rest for my rebel spirit except in war, just as there is no greater happiness for my vagabond, negating mind than the uninhibited affirmation of my capacity to life and to rejoice. My every defeat serves me only as symphonic prelude to a new victory.

### **Toward the Creative Nothing (1917)**

... laughing, we remember, with supreme gravity, to be the legitimate offspring and the worthy heirs of a great libertarian aristocracy that transmitted to us satanic outbursts of mad heroism in the blood, and waves of poetry, of solos, of songs in the flesh!

Our brain is a sparkling pyre, where the crackling fire of thought burns in joyful torments.

Our mind is a solitary oasis, always flowering and cheerful, where a secret music sings the complicated melody of our winged mystery.

And in our brain all the winds of the mountains cry to us; in our flesh all the tempests of the sea shout to us; all the Nymphs of Evil; our dreams are actual heavens inhabited by thrilling virgin muses.

We are the true demons of Life...

But today the twilight is red....

The sunset is covered with blood....

We are close to the tragic celebration of the great social dusk.

Already, on the bells of history, time has struck the first predawn strokes of a new day.

Enough, enough, enough!

It is the hour of the social tragedy!

We will destroy laughing.

We will set fires laughing.

We will kill laughing.

We will expropriate laughing.

And society will fall.

The fatherland will fall.

The family will fall.

All will fall after the free man is born.

After the one who has learned the Dionysian art of joy and laughter through tears and sorrow is born. The hour has come to drown the enemy in blood...  
The hour has come to wash our minds in blood...

### Unknown Source

My soul is a sacrilegious temple in which the bells of sin and crime, voluptuous and perverse, loudly ring out revolt and despair...

### My Maxims (1920)

... **MAN:** A filthy paste of servitude and tyranny, fetishism and fear, vanity and ignorance.

The greatest offence one could commit against an ass is to call it a man.

**WOMAN:** The most brutal of all enslaved beasts. The greatest victim that crawls on the earth. But the most to blame—after man and dog, deserving of all her woes. I'd be truly curious to know what she thinks of me when I kiss her.

Oh, cynical prostitute, daring female expropriator, you raise yourself above the putridity in which the world is immersed and you cause it to grow pale under the perverse light of your great deep eyes.

You are the most beautiful star that the sun now kisses. You are of another breed. And your mind is a song, your life a dream.

You unhinge the world, oh free prostitute, oh daring female expropriator.  
I will sing for you. The rest is mud.

### The Dream of My Adolescence (1921)

– written by Novatore under the pseudonym Sibiliana Vane

... Someone told me: “You will be a woman, then a wife, then a mother!...”

I answered like this, with a question: What do woman, wife, and mother mean? I won't tell you what they said in response. I only know that when I think about it, I laugh, yes, I still laugh. Love understood as a mission!? The woman as wife and mother? No, no, no! I will not be a wife; I will not be a mother! My revolt cannot stop halfway or make mistakes. My revolt even casts its darts—beyond the family—against nature. I don't want to be a wife; I don't want to be a mother.

No, no, no!

Yesterday, I stripped naked before the mirror and looked at myself for a long time. I saw my body of flesh wrapped in a shadow of light that quivered slightly. I don't quite know why, but I adored myself. . . .

The turgid breasts rose proudly from the chest, a treasure of creamy whiteness. My smooth, round belly gave me the impression that it was something that had been shaped from the finest ivory by the miraculous hands of a godlike artist. I had loosened the blonde ringlets of my hair over the curved smoothness of my shoulders and lightly circled my moist-lidded eyes with violet and black. The down that crowned the lower concavity of my belly looked like a golden

wing on the sacred spine of heavenly angels. My red mouth appeared to be a ripe pomegranate opened to the yellow caress of the sun.

I approached the mirror and voluptuously kissed my reflected lips.

I don't know if I have ever in my life desired anything with more intensity than, yesterday evening, when I desired to be a man so that I myself could lay the white virgin body, which the mystery in the clear mirror had shown me, down on the bed...

Mother... What does it all mean? Giving children to the species, more slaves to society, more derelicts to sorrow.

.... Mother.... Wife....

Are these then the aims of love?

Ah, the old sorcery of morality, the old lies of this old humanity.

No, I will never be anyone's wife; I will never give any children to the species. Never!

Life is pain. Humanity is a lie. Anyone who accepts perpetuating the species is an enemy of pure beauty.

Humanity is a race that must FADE AWAY!...

Come on, you who have discovered yourselves, let's make the world a feast. Let's make life a twilight orgy of love. For those that come from the depths of the social lie where cling the roots of human pain, joy must be an end and the end the highest aim...

I don't want to have a family that constrains my freedom. I don't want an insipid, jealous, and brutal husband who, as payment for a piece of bread, prevents the lyrical flights of the spirit through the most divine and wicked follies of lust and voluptuousness that multiple love affairs give to the flesh.

I don't love husbands and perhaps not even lovers.

I love pleasure and love.

But love is a flower that germinates on men's lips.

When I approach their lips to gather the perverse flower of love, I will do it for my love alone.

Loving the other is always needless and sometimes stupid.

It is enough to love oneself. It is enough to know how to love oneself. And I will know how to love myself so much, oh so much!

I will love myself naked in front of the mirror in the evening. I will adore myself naked in the bathtub in the morning. I will intoxicate myself naked in the arms of lovers.

Humanity walks the paths of pain in order to perpetuate itself. I walk the paths of pleasure because I seek the end...

I want to walk over the paths of the world gathering the flowers of love, joy and freedom.

I love black and flesh-colored stockings. White or red silk panties. Shoes of rubber and refined material. Baths in scented vinegar water, perfume from Cotty and bouquets of roses.

I want to walk over the paths of the world gathering the flowers of love, joy, and freedom.

I will break off the fronds of lime trees; I will gather hydrangea sprays, wisteria clusters, and oleander flowers to prepare the perfumed bed of my love.

And I will be the lover of vagabonds and thieves. And I will be the ideal of poets.

Because I don't want to give anything to the fatherland, to the species, and to humanity.

I want to get drunk at the fountain of pleasure, lust, and voluptuousness. I want to be completely consumed on love's pyre.

I don't want to be a mother; I don't want to be a wife. No, no, no!

Perfumed beds, lover's kisses, and the music of mad violins. Song and dance.

I know. You will call me a madwoman and a pervert. You will call me a wh....

But these are old and powerless names that no longer affect me.

A life of beauty and strength, a life of art and love, surging with godlike sin, gushing in the sacred oasis of voluptuousness.

Enough now with epileptic frenzies of the spirit.

Nothing belongs to pagan beauty more than my young body.

Oh, love flies off with me. . .

### **The Anarchist Temperament in the Maelstrom of History (1920)**

... We need to go back, barefoot and naked, among the living stones of the mythical, legendary forest and nourish ourselves, like our distant ancestors, on lion's marrow and on wild nature.

Only in this way—like Maria Vesta—will we be able to say to the first Hero who stoically and calmly knew how to offer his flesh to the red flames of a grim, crackling hostile blaze: Now we too, like you, can sing under torture.

The Life that society offers us is not a full, free and joyful life. It is a crushed, mutilated, humiliated life.

We must refuse it...

### **Il Me Faut Vivre Ma Vie (1916-1918)**

by Bruno Filippi. (Trans. "It is necessary that I live my life" a quote from Jules Bonnot). From *The rebel's dark laughter: the writings of Bruno Filippi*, compiled, translated, and biographical introduction by Wolfi Landstreicher, 2008.

#### ***From the introduction:***

"Little is known about Bruno Filippi. He was born in 1900 in Livorno, Italy, the first of six brothers, and his father was a typographer. His family moved to Milan when he was still a child. In 1915, he was already known to the police who described him as a "dangerous element". That same year, he was arrested during an anti-militarist demonstration; he had a warm gun without bullets. He spent some time in prison. After the war, in 1919, social unrest broke out throughout the country. In Milan, there were often clashes with the police and Filippi was among the rebels. In the summer, several young anarchists, including Filippi, began to attack their enemies. A bomb exploded at the Hall of Justice; there was an

attempt to injure one of the most powerful Italian capitalists, Giovanni Breda, with sulfuric acid and a bomb exploded at his house; another bomb exploded at the home of a rich senator.

On September 7, 1919, Bruno Filippi was climbing the steps of the building where the “club of nobles” was located. He was carrying a bomb, hoping to destroy this meeting place for the richest people of the city. Suddenly, the bomb exploded, killing the young anarchist.

Bruno Filippi was a regular contributor to the individualist anarchist paper *Iconoclasta!*” (along with Renzo Novatore)

... One prays, one implores, one curses, but one does not dare. Cowardice, caressed by christianity, creates *morality*, and this justifies baseness and begets renunciation.

But this desire to live, this *will*, only desires to develop freely. The christian takes a good look around to see if anyone is watching him and, trembling, commits a sin. Desire: sin; love: sin. This is the *inversion*.

“Harlot, everybody’s female, you have no shame in the world. You are frank and sincere. You offer yourself to anyone who pays, never giving or taking illusions.”

“Society, on the other hand, modest and clean in appearance, but horribly infected with gangrene throughout its body, makes me vomit, fills me with horror and loathing, kills me.”

\* \* \*

I envy the savages. And I will cry to them in a loud voice: “Save yourselves, civilization is coming.”

Of course: our dear civilization of which we are so proud. We have abandoned the free and happy life of the forests for this horrendous moral and material slavery. And we are maniacs, neurasthenics, suicides.

Why should I care that civilization has given humanity wings to fly so that it can bomb cities, why should I care if I know every star in the sky or every river on earth?

In the past, it is true, there were no legal codes, and it would seem that justice was done summarily.

Barbarous times! Today, instead, people are killed in the electric chair unless the philanthropy of Beccaria [aristocrat prison reformer] only torments them in the penitentiary for the rest of their lives.

... I don’t give a damn for their progress; I want to live and enjoy...

# The Sun Still Rises

Conspiracy of Cells of Fire Imprisoned Members Cell, 2011. Translated from Greek by Boubouras / Act for Freedom Now. Chronology from Dark Matter Publications. Excerpted.

## Chronology of Attacks by the First Wave Conspiracy Cells of Fire

... in Greece, anarchists have constituted themselves as a social force through their continued aggression against domination, with a practice of carrying out attacks that has forged strong revolutionary individuals, agile affinity-based groups and a combative presence. Unlike many parts of the world, Greek comrades have thrived not on liberal and leftist activism, or subcultural identity politics and academic navel-gazing, but on continual conflict with the State and Capitalism, creating a genuine *anarchist movement*. The decision to go on the attack against domination is not what is unique about the **Conspiracy of Cells of Fire** and the new nihilist urban guerrillas. Unlike most Greek anarchists, the comrades of *Synomosia Pyrinon tis Fotias (Conspiracy of Cells of Fire)*, claimed actions under the same group name, with the aim of creating a consistency of action and discourse as well as organisational continuity. Whilst bearing in mind the differences in perspective, they were similar to other Greek anarchist armed groups like *Epanastatikos Agonas (Revolutionary Struggle)* and *Secta ton Epanastaton (Sect of Revolutionaries)* in this aspect, in that they each created a distinct visible revolutionary entity.

The CCF promote urban guerrilla warfare and revolutionary terror against the oppressors, and view themselves as part of a third pole in Greek anarchism – anti-social, individualist and nihilistic – rather than either leftist or social insurrectionist. In this they are among many of the new generation of revolutionary Greek youth, the generation of the December uprising of 2008.

A huge storm of revolt raged through the streets of Greece in December 2008. After the 15 year-old **Alexis Grigoropoulos** was murdered in cold blood by a cop, riots spread throughout the whole country for several weeks. Hundreds of corporate and government targets were attacked, plundered and set on fire. Although it was anarchists and anti-authoritarians who took the lead in this storm during the first week after the murder, it spread itself fast and many people got involved in this revolt against miserable living conditions, against the authorities and against the hopelessness offered by this world to the exploited and oppressed. But the revolt didn't cease at the end of 2008, neither did it start on the day of the murder. The attacks against the structures of State and Capital went on and spread to several smaller towns in Greece.



Between September 2009 and March 2011 numerous individuals from the anarchist movement in Greece were arrested in connection with the campaign of insurrectionary attacks carried out by the CCF against the dominator system. Nine individuals amongst the arrested have taken responsibility for being members of the **Conspiracy of Cells of Fire** and continue to form an active group in struggle inside prison: **Gerasimos Tsakalos, Panayiotis Argyrou, Haris Hatzimichelakis, Michalis Nikolopoulos, Giorgos Nikolopoulos, Olga Economidou, Damiano Bolano, Christos Tsakalos, and Giorgos Polydoros.**

In May 2011 the imprisoned members of the **Conspiracy of Cells of Fire** released *'The Sun Still Rises'* which outlines their trajectory and their active proposal for a revolutionary war, a violent flux of insurrectionary transformation in which the individual can permanently break out of Society's suffocating passivity, an existential struggle in which the revolutionary minority creates new values in the ashes of present mediocrity. Writing from prison, following his arrest on 1 November (2011), *Gerasimos Tsakalos* said of the general population: *"Of this total mass, we must through our speech and our action strike at the characteristics of submission that dominate it, so as to create the minorities that will deny the values of the dominant culture through Revolutionary Conscience and Ethics. Only through dignity, pride and honour can we reach the theoretical rigour in choices of action. Self-organisation, solidarity and rage arm our desires. The practical theory of the destruction of the existent in all its forms, should become the means that will unite minority subgroups towards a Revolutionary perspective. [...] we do not seek the diffusion of our words and our actions using as a spearhead only the ugliness of the economic situation, something that could be simply a transitional phase of capitalism itself, but we emphasize the ongoing existential poverty, which is a permanent consequence of this world. We promote a transition to a more total critique and attack on the poverty of communication, artificial feelings, the lack of dignity, the small and big expressions of dominating social relations, the lack of desire to risk seeking and the fear of rupture for a freer life. [...] Regardless of whether or not there is a prospect of direct mass conflict within the system, we live and act for now. For the satisfaction of our Ego and for the individual materialisation of our desires that are collectivised through the infrastructures of diffused revolutionary guerrilla war."*

The **Conspiracy of Cells of Fire**, inside and out of prison, used the State's trials as flash points from which to renew and launch a world-wide insurrectionary project – the **Informal Anarchist Federation / International Revolutionary Front**. Numerous individuals around the world responded to the CCF's call and fire signals went up from Mexico to Italy, Russia to the UK, Chile to Indonesia. A new international of anarchist action *"becomes flesh by bleeding and drawing blood"*, as the FAI cell **'Sisters in Arms of the Mauricio Morales Nucleus'** put it in a March 2011 communique for the letter bomb which seriously injured **Lieutenant colonel Alessandro Albamonte**, chief of general staff of the Ruspoli barracks (Livorno, Italy) of the **Parachutist Brigade Comando** (which serves in Afghanistan). Amongst the many actions which gave flesh to this new black international were the following: a parcel bomb to the Greek Embassy in Rome, Italy, by a FAI cell, which was defused on 27 December (2010); the 30 December bombing of the Greek Embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina; an arson barrage between 12 and 13 January (2011) in Thessaloniki, Greece, by

**'Informal Anarchist Federation – Cell of Revolutionary Solidarity'** targeting a politician's office, offices of the union of retired police, two cop cars and a car of the diplomatic corps; the 15 and 16 January arson barrage in Athens of a bank, local PASOK (Greek political party) offices, security vehicles, a cops personal motorbike by **'Wolves of Solidarity'**; the arson by **'International Revolutionary Network – Deviant Behaviors for the Spread of Revolutionary Terrorism – Cell of Anarchic Action'** of vehicles of the National Electricity Company, UPS delivery company, police and a military equipment firm; the arson of construction vehicles and equipment by the **Earth Liberation Front** in Coacalco and the bombing of a HSBC bank in Ecatepec, 15 January, Mexico; the arson of a security vehicle in Bristol, UK on 15 January; the petrol bomb attack on a power company offices by **'Informal Cells of Insurrection'** and an attack with fireworks on the facade of a shopping centre by **'Öfke (Anger)**, on 16 January, in Istanbul, Turkey; the arson attack on a Barclays Bank in London and the arson of two vehicles of British Telecom in Bristol, on 17 January; the arson of the Federal Criminal Court in Bellinzona, Switzerland on 17 January; graffiti on the KB Bank in Slask, Poland, on 17 January; the pair of explosive letters to the Chilean embassy in Mexico City from the **'Autonomous Cells of the Immediate Revolution – Praxedis G. Guererro'** that led to its evacuation on 23 January; the arson of an armoured money transfer vehicle in Hania, Crete, on 23 January; the attack with stun bombs on the prefecture of the military police in Puerto Montt, Chile, on 29 January; the bombing with a device made from butane gas canisters and petrol of a police station in Coacalco, Mexico, on 5 February by **'Earth Liberation Front – Informal Anarchist Federation/Global Network'**; the bombings of the BBVA, BCI and BancoEstado banks in Chile on 11 February by **'December 8 Commando, Supporters of the Informal Anarchist Federation's call for International Coordination'**; the arson of bulldozers in Khimki Forest, Russia on 19 February; the arson of the skyscraper of Rabobank in Utrecht, Netherlands, by the **'Conspiracy Cells of Fire: Dutch Cell'** (There was also several other office tower arsons in Utrecht and a cyberattack against Rabobank – Editor).

As expected, the State's judicial puppetry sentenced the proud young members of the **Conspiracy of Cells of Fire** to many decades in prison. The struggle, of course, was far from over. On the evening of 12 December, 2011 five members of the CCF and imprisoned underground figure **P. Vlastos** attempted to escape from Korydallos prison. The jail break failed but the comrades took several guards hostage and used the opportunity to make a statement (which **Giorgos Nikolopoulos** read out over telephone to the media in a live broadcast) that declared they would not negotiate with the police, but wanted to publicize the horrible conditions in Korydallos prison. In a statement they released later, the imprisoned members of the Conspiracy of Cells of Fire declared: *"If the work of jailers and judges is to lock the prisons' doors, ours is to unlock and violate them. Even though we failed to release our bodies, we released our existence even for a few moments, occupying a space in prison. This sense is unique, and we do not regret anything."*

The fight goes on. Below is a chronology of actions between early 2008 and early 2011 carried out by individuals who used the name **'Conspiracy of Cells of Fire'** to bring consistency and memory to their insurrectionary project.

**January 21, 2008:** The **Conspiracy of Cells of Fire** announce themselves with a barrage of attacks on 12 targets in Athens and Thessaloniki. Banks, car dealerships and **PPC**, a state-run power company, are some of the targets hit by the incendiary devices made from camping gas canisters. *“We selected to strike the bank subsidiaries because they constitute the symbols – tools of exploitation and of the economic empire. In parallel, the banks are the modern day corporations that accredit with loaned dreams, the consumers, so that they would glamourise voluntarily their misery and their economic state of captivity. We attacked the PPC corporation as a response to the dozens of assassinations of workers that died in its workplace-prisons because of the lack of security measures, as well as for the deadly effects (such as cancer) that appear at the zones around its power plants. We set on fire the dealerships of luxurious cars that form prestigious symbols of authority inside the commodity fetishist frenzy that has taken over the metropolis. We do not respect the law-abiding citizens’ wet dreams for a fast car in expense of the slow suicide offered by the modern life style. The revolutionary character of an economic-capitalist targets arson isn’t found only in its physical destruction but also in the illegality of the action itself. In the decision to attack. In this combatant situation, there are also losses. Accordingly, we dedicate last night’s attacks in Thessaloniki and Athens to the imprisoned anarchist **V. Botzatzis** who is accused for three arson attacks against three targets, as well as to the three fugitive comrades accused under the same case, and that chose the way of a proud escape, rather than to give themselves in. We don’t forget any imprisoned comrade. We will be back soon...”*

**February 21, 2008:** The CCF make their second appearance with a barrage of attacks on 15 targets (including eight banks) in Athens, Thessaloniki and consolidate their presence now as a stable and coherent collective that promotes the destruction of power and society. Among its targets is the political office of former **Associate Justice Minister Papaligouras**. An unknown person phone called a TV station claiming the gas canister arson attack on Papaligouras’ office was in solidarity to the anti-authoritarian **Giorgos Voutsis-Vogiatzis**, in pre-trial imprisonment since the armed bank robbery at Gizi, and promised the attacks will continue. *“Every day the same landscape, tired faces, eyes dejected, anxious time and our dignity checking its time-card in the bosses clock. That’s why we arm the old ways and invent new ones in order to escape the captivity of work. We propose a total attack against the existence and the morality of work. Looting of commodities and money from the temples of consumption and profit, torching economic targets, sabotaging the normal circulation of production, self-organised workplace ruptures and attacks...”*



**Photo of incendiary barrage of February 21.**

**March 18-20, 2008:** The CCF hold a series of arson attacks in Athens-

Thessaloniki which they call a 3-day festival of fire. At least 10 targets including banks, private security companies, police vans and banks are delivered to the flames. *“The police state constitutes an irrefutable reality. Mobilizing the dogma of security (insecurity) it intensifies its repressive action, penetrating every level of the social tissue and tearing it into pieces. The Panopticon is utilized in every expression of the older and the new forms of surveillance and the industry of fear is set for good. Cameras, cops, juries, municipal cops and security patrols safeguard this new complex net of captivity.”*



**Destruction from the 'festival of fire'.**

**April 4, 2008:** The CCF hits Italian interests in Athens-Thessaloniki including the **Italian delegations** cars and branches of **Benetton** in solidarity to the persecuted and imprisoned anarchists in Italy in the case of **FAI (Informal Anarchist Federation)**. *“The Italian comrades of F.A.I. form a federation through its offensive actions, as the one of 21/12/2003 setting of explosive devices outside the house of the president of E.U. at the time -- **Romano Prodi**, or of the 3/3/2005,*

*with their triple bomb attack outside Carabinieri (Paramilitary Police) barracks, at Genoa and Milan, claiming: ‘...We consider it essential that every person that isn’t tamed by the fake prosperity that democracy provides, must express his/her rage with his/her action and by every means, we will keep on intruding your dreams, your economic interests and your peace. It won’t take you much time to understand the consequences of your indifference.’ (abstract of a F.A.I. communique) In this tough route they selected, there were also losses. Arrest warrants, imprisonments, judicial farces. In the last few years, the Italian state has attacked brutally the insurrectional part of the Italian anarchists. Apart from perennial captivities, certain other comrades such as **Massari, Rosa, Fantazzini**, aren’t accompanying us anymore in this dangerous route to the wild rebellion, since they were murdered by the Italian state. But neither is death able to erase the rage from the eyes of the insurgents. The cells of F.A.I. and not only them, strike back and attempt to create a condition of omnipresent conflict, where there is no place for compromise. In its declaration, F.A.I. mentions: ‘Strike and destroy the responsible for the repression and exploitation. Strike and destroy the prisons, the banks, the court-houses, the barracks...’ Accomplices in the crime of direct revolutionary action, we seek, through our attacks, to form a range of dislocation of the uneventful social peace. To commit the crime of ending the silence, to overcome the postponements and the hesitations, to live beyond the laws that enslave and the conventions that shoot in the back. And the only precise way to achieve this, is to participate in the revolutionary war, declared since the beginning.”*

**May 30, 2008:** The CCF makes a barrage of 11 attacks in Athens and Thessaloniki, hitting targets such as banks, car dealerships and political party offices. They released a communiqué entitled ‘Why We Set Your Night on Fire’: “We are

those that cannot fit in your shiny building's world, with its neon lights, the disgusting social conformity, fast cars, commercial centers, surveillance and control cameras, police forces of occupation in the metropolis. But, above all, we cannot fit in the blankness of this void life where even the thoughts, the emotions and the gestures follow the rules of this devious guidance and submission of our (or the market's) desires. This also explains why you want to suite us in the prisons you build, to punish all those that defy your commands. We cannot fit in there either..." Claimed in solidarity with imprisoned anarchist combatants **M. Tsourapas, Ch. Kontorevithakis, and V. Botzatzis.**

**June 12, 2008:** The CCF carry out nine attacks on various sponsors of the **Greek National Team**, seizing the opportunity offered by current events (EURO 2008) to organize attacks against both these commercialists and against society's falsified ideal of patriotism. *"The tame crowds are more than willing to overlook the misery of their everyday life and turn for a few days into a mixture of phony smiles, and getting into goofy celebrations. The mass stupefaction media bombard us with thousands of advertisements promoting a national sheep conscience alongside mass consumption - the necessary parameter of every commodity fiesta. The role of multinational corporation sponsors is more than obvious, both in promoting their own merchandise as much as national unity, creating a harmony of capitalist profiteering and implantation/revival of our hateful national identity. This is why we attacked you, we did it in the past, and we'll be doing it in the future. Your fiesta is full of bright lights and numerous smiles, national rag-flags, torpor spectacle and diffused nonsense. Our own celebrations are during the night, when the shiny lights give their place to the thick darkness of delinquency and become the gasoline for the fire, the movement, the destruction. Because national unity is for the frightened, we shall never compromise with any state and any nation. Our only country is the Revolution, Violent and Subversive in its steps, bound to annihilate your old world."*

**July 1, 2008: Conspiracy Cells of Fire – 'Night-time Patrols'** attack the police escort of the President of the Republic.

**9-10 July, 2008:** Autonomous cells of the CCF **'Night-time Patrols'** and **'Chaotic Action'** destroy police vehicles and diplomatic cars of the Moroccan embassy. *"We dedicate this hit to the Anarchist Comrades **M. Tsourapas** and **Chr. Kontorevithakis** who are since Friday 11/7 facing a jury for the attack against a Municipal Police car, claiming responsibility for their choices."*

**15 July, 2008:** The CCF initiative called **'Convention for the memory of Emil Henry'** ignites the Thessaloniki offices of the local branch of **Nea Dimokratia** (New Democracy, the centre-right party then in power). The claim expresses solidarity with imprisoned anarchists **G. Voutsis-Vogiatzis, G. Dimitrakis, V. Botzatzis, M. Tsourapas, Ch. Kontorevithakis** and the six clandestine anarchists on the run from Greek police. *"The offensive actions do not come to play the game of politic currents, reminding the dominants the political cost of keeping revolutionaries in captivity. The offensive actions ARE THE BET WE WAGE for the transport of the revolutionary life to HERE and NOW, our date with history, the restless sleep of those responsible (through their neutrality as well) for the colonization of our lives. We have begun. And we will keep looking for partners in crime..."*

**9 August, 2008:** The cell **'Breath of Terror'** ignites the National Electricity

Company offices in Peristeri, Athens. *“We set the moments, the time, we shape the conditions, throwing the dice of Nihilism eradicating the established ‘values’ of this rotten world, celebrating their inversion.”*

**4 September, 2008:** After the arrests of anarchists **P. Georgiadis**, **V. Hrisohoidis** and **V. Paleokostas** for the kidnapping of the industrialist **G. Mylonas**, the CCF cell **‘Asymmetric Threat’** places an incendiary device at the entrance of his company offices on the 7th floor of an apartment building in Thessaloniki. *“Negators of a mediocre society and a miserable life we are offered, we take the first step to the offensive. We make it clear for **Mylonas**, and those like him, that everyone that maintains this world of servants and their bosses that are the keystones of the empire, despite their apparent fortification, remain fragile.”*



**Photo from the 13 September attack on Dimokratias square police station.**

**13 September, 2008:** **‘Asymmetric Threat’** attack police cruisers with Molotov cocktails and gas canister bombs at the **Dimokratias square police station**, torching vehicles and machinery of the Police and causing damage to the police station. *“The days pass so indifferently. They seem like rings of an endless chain of burden and compromise. Work-home, home-work. We live constantly kept hostage. Hostages of the law, the employers, slave to the lowered eyes and the submissive*

*affirmations. We don’t want to be forgotten working a whole life for the bosses. We don’t care for workers rights and unpaid over-work. We don’t stand for better slavery conditions. We are determined to escape from work camps at any cost. Better to live an hour as a wolf than a life as a sheep. Too often what we say resounds like an echo in a total void. But there are some rare moments of beauty and rebellion when some comrades together with disobedient wolves, send us back a rebellious signal. Two months ago, an armed companionship kidnapped the president of the northern Greek industrialists, **G. Mylonas**, demanding ransom to let him ‘free’. The reasons were pretty apparent. Every day in our work, our time is kidnapped, our mood, our creativity, our desire, our freedom too. Some people decided to strike back and become active instead of being victims. Thus, a gang of disobedients chose to ‘kidnap’ a real kidnapper. The selection of the industrialist **G. Mylonas** couldn’t be random. President of NGI, a millionaire with a modern profile and bad aesthetics. [...] On the decision we took to attack every law, order, silence and neutrality we chose last night to set afire the police station of Dodekanisou street., sending fraternal salutations to the comrade revolutionary **P. Georgiadis** and a signal of solidarity to his comrades and friends **V. Hrisohoidis**, **V. Paleokostas** and **G. Haralambidis**. Nothing has ended yet, and you know we are serious. You’ll soon hear more of us.”*

**25-26 September, 2008:**

The CCF hits nine targets in Athens and a tax office in Thessaloniki is delivered to the flames. "We set ourselves practically on the side of those that decided to take their fate into their own hands and select their lives. Those that without second thought, dug out the axe of war and with rage grabbed everything that belongs to them. Those that decided to get out of the waiting lounge of their lives and



Photo from 25-26 September arsons

dared to act. We are on the side of everyone that selects their escape from the barracks of existential poverty and mere survival. Insurrection finds a base only in individual choice and consciousness, in the determination to no longer wait for anyone and for anything, to attack here and now everything that represses us. There is no other way besides the revolution, the violent rupture, to destroy the universal chains of exploitation and repression. And only through the hurricanes of this revolutionary war, will we seek our accomplices to come out of the shadows of apathy, the revolutionaries that arise from the masses of exploitation and repression. [...] The coordinated attacks against nine targets in Athens and a tax office in Thessaloniki was realised as one more sign of Solidarity to the comrade **Polykarpus Georgiadis** and to **Vaggelis Hrisohoidis**, **Vassilis Paleokostas** and **Giorgos Haralambidis**, accused for the case of the industrialist **Mylonas**' kidnapping in June. Finally, we dedicate this yesterday's attack to the prisoner-in-struggle **Vaggelis Pallis**, as a minimum response of our offensive mood against the generalised world of prisons."

**27 September, 2008:** Strip clubs are set on fire by the cell of CCF '**Anarchist Individuals**' in broad daylight: "the trading of naked human flesh, sex is reduced to a commodity. [...] In a world that destroys our every pleasure, the only real pleasure lies in the destruction of this old world."

**29 September, 2008:** '**Anarchist Individuals**' attack **The National Bank** in Athens with an incendiary device. "Oppression is often connected to the cop's club and the prison bars. A part of these less obvious mechanisms of democracy is responsible for safeguarding social peace with an even stronger ally of oppression, but less visible, - the consent of the exploited. The banks could be burnt, cops could be beaten, bosses kidnapped... But how can we attack this consent? Surely not by preaching to the exploited with a complex analysis on the capitalist system and dominion, since to understand your role and open space to think further on it, a primal rebellion is inevitable and necessary. Encouraging this rebellion, making clear in actions that dominion-authority doesn't rest on theoretical terms found only in academic debates, but is constituted of structures and people whom you can attack everywhere and always, is the only possibility to break apart consent and destroy this social cemetery that is called society." Action dedicated to **G. Voutsis-Vogiatzis** "Who had his pre-trial imprisonment prolonged the previous week."

**7 October, 2008:** Two cells each burn two ATMs respectively at branches of the **National Bank** in Thessaloniki. These are the '**Knights of the Flaming Bank**' and '**Coalition of Raging Egos**'! The following communiqué discusses the refusal of work as a revolutionary option, and is claimed in solidarity with **Giorgos Voutsis-Vogiatzis** arrested after the armed robbery of a bank in that area three years previously. *"By robbing a bank, gaining back your time from the frustrating timetables, setting everyday life free of temporal and economic blackmail, you re-appropriate in essence, your own life. In spite of all this, a battle doesn't win a war, a robbery doesn't bring down the economy and an arson doesn't magically erase all the banks of the world, and quite similarly a comrade's arrest doesn't end the revolutionary struggle..."*

**29 October, 2008:** The cell '**Revolutionary Army**' places an incendiary device inside the **Military Court** of Rouf, opening a hole in the barbed wire fence under the noses of the army. It is only the prelude to a comprehensive attack against the army. According to '*Eleftherotipia*' newspaper the '**Conspiracy of Cells of Fire - Revolutionary Army**' phoned the paper and claimed responsibility for the attack in solidarity with anarchist **Giannis Dimitrakis**, who was facing a military court on October 13.

**2-4 November 2008:** The CCF carry out a barrage of nine arson attacks in Athens and Thessaloniki, aimed at navy jeeps and vans, associations of retired officers, companies which work with the army and the political office of then **Defense Minister Vangelis Meimarakis**. *"From the NATO bases on European ground, to the 'pacification' interventions in the Middle East, the army has the role of an essential force to maintain and expand the economic interests of the Western states. To feed the machinery of war and the war industry it is needed to keep social peace inside the metropolises of the Western states. War and peace, two different faces, two different expressions of the capitalist dominion."*

**3 December, 2008:** The cell '**International Solidarity**' puts an incendiary device at the **Agence France-Presse** in Athens in solidarity to those arrested in the French village of **Tarnac** accused of sabotage of rail lines. *"... We send our revolutionary greetings to the French comrades that selected to attack the network of the high speed trains, sabotaging the routes of everyday hurry and anxiety, of a determined pre-set life imposed by bio-authority on its subjects."*

**New Years 2009:** The CCF hits 14 targets in Athens and Thessaloniki dedicated to anarchist **Alexandros Grigoropoulos** murdered on December 6 by uniformed pig **Epaminondas Korkoneas**. The murder of 15-year old Alexi in the anarchist stronghold of the Athens neighbourhood Exarcheia sparked wide-spread insurrection through-out Greece, with large-scale rioting lasting for weeks, which authorities called the worst rioting seen in the country since the transition from the Junta to democracy in 1974. The murder and the uprising also was a catalyst for increased anarchist direct action and self-organisation around the world, with anarchists and anti-authoritarians in many parts of the globe carrying out solidarity attacks and organising combative demonstrations which clashed with local police. *"Instead of dirges, the monologue, we have begun to hear everywhere: Revenge, Assault, War."*

**11-12 February, 2009:** The CCF carry out 17 arsons of targets all related to the case of the urban guerrilla group **November 17** in Athens and Thessaloniki. Some targets were political, law and counter-terrorist offices.



**9 April, 2009:** Incendiary devices with timers are placed in the **Metropolis** in Athens, **Aghia Triada Cathedral** in Piraeus, the church of **Hagia Sophia** in Thessaloniki, and the church of **St. Demetrios**, the patron church of Thessaloniki. These attacks, on Easter, are a social challenge to Christianity, an attack on religion itself and what it represents. It is also a new level of sophistication of the organization to try new techniques and methods of action. *“Religion is a mechanism of power that plays a particularly devious role in subjugating people.”*

**14-19 May, 2009:** At least five conspiratorial groups in Thessaloniki, Kavala, and Athens form a coordinated initiative called **“Cooperation of Arsonists – Operation Safety”** and target anything related to the institution, doctrine and structure of the security forces. Cops personal vehicles, security shops, partnerships with the police, are all delivered to fire. The CCF participates in the **“Cooperative of Arsonists”** by placing explosive devices at police stations in Athens and Thessaloniki. A big bet has been won through the successful coordination of the attacks and their diffusion to such an extent, and in their communiqué the CCF call for an escalated urban guerrilla war.

**10 July, 2009:** The CCF puts a bomb in the back of the house of former **Deputy of the Interior Panagiotis Chinofotis**, under the nose of a guard unit.

**22 July, 2009:** The CCF puts an explosive device at the **Chilean consulate**, but it is neutralized by cops. The action is done in solidarity with Chilean anarchist prisoners and in honour to **Mauricio Morales**, a anarchist combatant in Chile who died on May 22, 2009 during an operation. *“Every attack from Chile to Greece and from Italy to Argentina is an act of memory...”*

**2 September, 2009:** The CCF place an explosive device at the rear of the **Ministry of Macedonia-Thrace** in Thessaloniki.

**23 September, 2009:** The CCF blow up the house of a candidate, then **PASOK MP Loucka Katseli** in Kolonaki.



**Photo from attack on election rally**

**2 October, 2009:** A device explodes in the street 50 meters from the platform where the then Greek **Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis** was to do his election speech. The communiqué from the **“Conspiracy Cells of Fire –**

**Nihilist Faction**’ declares solidarity with **Alfredo M. Bonanno** and **Christos Stratigopoulos**, then imprisoned and charged with a bank robbery in Trikala, and also four arrested comrades in Halandri, Athens, who were captured on 24 September 2009 by the anti-terrorist unit. These four comrades are charged with “membership of the **Conspiracy of Cells of Fire**”, “possession of explosives” and “terrorism” – the “Halandri” case that would result in arrest warrants being put out for many of those whose fingerprints were found in the supposed “terrorist safe house”, but which was in reality the family home of comrade **Haris Hatzimichelakis** (who would later declare with pride to be a member of the CCF). *“After the last events took place, the comrades who hit Loucka Katseli proposed reconsidering the action plan. Because we believe that the reality of prison which surrounds us is not the result of a unitarian and compact leadership which delegates orders and runs the institutions; but that it is a social factory of behaviours, culture, tradition and customs, we want to attack every domain of this factory which produces everything we hate. At this moment we consider the plan to attack the houses of five or six politicians to be quite poor. It did not have the dynamic that we wanted to develop. We wanted to do something which could break the supposed limits and the alibi of the ‘innocent’ society which denies its responsibility by attributing to itself the role of the eternal victim. But victims do not cheer to their murderers, they don’t press charges against those who resist against tyrants, they don’t support their oppressors, they don’t pine away in their fake cells. Because victims simply don’t have a choice. But the people of the current society, they do have choices and by consequence responsibilities. Maybe we are all living – ourselves and the society – the same shit, but let’s not forget that the prisoners and guards who live in the same prison are not allies. We feel the same way about this society in which nothing sparkles and the disgusting cowardliness reigns. So it didn’t take long for this idea to be born. We chose to hit an election meeting, a meeting where the dull mass of garbage-on-feet hurries to get out on the street and cheer their leaders. The choice for a meeting of Nea Demokratia was purely aesthetic. We couldn’t stand the spectacle of the fat idiot **Karamanlis** boasting about a non-existent success against revolutionary terrorism. We want to remind him that a big mouth serves no-one.”*

**End of October 2009:** The CCF places a bomb targeting former **Education Minister Marietta Giannakou**. The communiqué supported some recent student protests in the form of squatting and vandalism of school buildings.

**13 November, 2009:** One day after the examination by investigators of those accused of being members of the **Conspiracy of Cells of Fire**, the organization places an explosive device at the entrance of the house of Left-wing intellectual **Mimis Androulakis**. The intellectual had been amongst those media commentators, after the arrests in Halandri, whose bullshit public opinions and taunting had angered the CCF. *“Those who speak of unjustifiable revolutionary violence are those who justify the violence in detention centers, prisons, jobs, schools and the army. They are those who explicitly declare every time that ‘things used to be different in the past’... The ease that left-wing intellectuals talk about the old ‘fair’ violence during the period of Resistance [WWII] and the anti-dictatorship struggle is due to the fact that only they have the privilege of democracy to have their voices heard. The reason is simple. They are the same people that renounce all kinds of revolutionary violence today, while they have the profile of a fake ‘militant’*

past.”

**Mid December 2009:** The CCF puts a powerful explosive device on the ground floor offices of the **National Bank** causing major damage. The action is claimed in solidarity with anarchist prisoner **Gabriel Pombo da Silva** in Germany



**Aftermath of the bombing of the National Bank**



**The gutted interior of the Golden Dawn offices**

**Early January 2010:** The CCF bombs the courtyard of the **Greek Parliament**. Damage is caused to the famous statue of the ‘Unknown Soldier’ and the windows of the Parliament

**20-22 March 2010:** A bombing campaign hits over a period of 30 hours three objectives: the offices of **Golden Dawn** (a Greek fascist party) who were on the fifth floor of an apartment building behind Omonia Square, the **detention facility at Petrou Ralli**, and the home of Pakistani immigrant “community leader” **Ikmpol Anwar**. In the first two cases powerful explosives were placed, and the third used on black powder because it was a populated area. The communiqué laid out the CCF’s view on the issue of migrants, and fascist paramilitary organizations, and the role of immigrants in Greek society. Also it

emphasised looking at an individual's conscience and action, rather than ethnicity or nationality (like fascists do) or based on class (like the Left).

**Mid May 2010:** Two powerful explosions in Athens (one outside **Korydallos prison**) and Thessaloniki (the **Law Court**, which is flushed out after a warning before the bomb shatters almost the entire building). The **CCF** claims responsibility for the two attacks with a communiqué explaining the choice of targets, and also with a text examining the burning of the Marfin bank in central Athens during a demonstration in which three bank workers were killed, calling for a non-vanguardist “revolutionary militarism” and the careful organisation of any attack undertaken, to avoid unintended casualties.



Defused parcel-bomb sent as part of campaign

**November, 2010:** A major campaign of international revolutionary solidarity is initiated by the **CCF** sending incendiary packages to foreign embassies in Greece, but also to foreign leaders abroad, causing chaos and turmoil in international law enforcement authorities. On November 1 anarchist comrades **Gerasimos Tsakalos** and **Panayiotis Argyrou** are arrested in Athens while attempting to mail letter bombs to embassies. Over a two and a half week period, the **CCF** is responsible for more letter-bombs with a manifesto (25/11/10) for militant anarchy and a rebellious new urban guerrilla struggle of the anti-social tendency and which also addresses the cohesion of society, the economic crisis and social polarization, anarcho-nihilism and revolutionary terrorism, political responsibility, and finally solidarity and support for rebel groups and rebel prisoners at the international level. The 14 letter-bombs went to the following recipients: the embassies of **Belgium, Mexico, Chile, Germany, France, Switzerland, Bulgaria, Russia** and German Chancellor **Angela Merkel**, the **Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi**, the **French President Nicolas Sarkozy**, the **European court**, the **Director of Euro-just**, and the head of **Europol**. Also, the communiqué is accompanied by a call out for international solidarity around the January 17, 2011 trial of **CCF** members, stating: *“In our decision to promote a battle to the end, WE CALL in Greece, Europe, Chile, Argentina, Mexico and to the whole world to the comrades and guerrilla formations to send their attacking signals to the judges and the Greek authorities, as well as a greeting of solidarity to the hostages of the new urban guerrilla warfare. Let this trial become another reason for action in the Revolutionary War.”*



**Fuck the law: a photo of the Athens Law Court**

**30 December, 2010:** A powerful explosive device blasts the **Athens Law Court**, turning the region into a war-shattered landscape. The bomb was placed on a motorcycle, which is placed near the front of the building. The communiqué, coming a short while before the first trials of those accused of being members of the CCF, contains a direct warning to judges that their lives will be put in risk. *“Wanting to coordinate theory with practice, and to send our Respect, Faith and Friendship to our brothers P. Argirou, G. Tsakalos and H. Hadjimihelakis of the prisoners cell of C.C.F., to anarchist revolutionary P. Massouras, anarchist K. Karakatsani, the anti-authoritarian-arsonist G. Skouloudis and the four wanted comrades who are prosecuted for the same case, the honest and authentic anarchist fighter G. Dimitrakis, the dignified P. Giannou and to the brilliant criminal minority who do not bow their heads and walk with dignity as their guide, we chose and decided to strike the Administrative Courthouse of the judicial mafia.”*

**2 February, 2011:** Greek police defused a letter bomb addressed to the **Minister of Justice, Harris Kastanidis**. A claim by **Informal Anarchist Federation / Conspiracy of Cells of Fire** states: *“The real defeat in a war is not captivity in the hands of the enemy, but capitulation, loss of conscience, surrender, penitence, statements of loyalty. Because that is where the game of power is played, in the moral decline and depreciation of its dissident opponents. It wants to force rebels to bend, to kneel, to conciliate to make clear that ‘every struggle is lost, all resistance is useless’. However the only fight that is lost is the one that never began. [...] As a minimal expression of solidarity to the struggle of the imprisoned members of Conspiracy of Cells of Fire and the dignified comrades we sent an incendiary package to Justice Minister Harris Kastanidis who is responsible for the refusal of one of the two requirements of our comrades for the recording of the transcript of the trial. [...] Finally we declare that from now the **Illegal Sector of the Conspiracy of Cells of Fire will also participate in the International Revolutionary Front – Informal Anarchist Federation**. The explosive expression of solidarity at international level for the trial of C.C.F. and also the publications that put organizations such as the **FLT-FLA (Mexico)** and **Praxedis G. Guerrero** in their texts,*

we consider that they initiate powerful bases for the opening of a revolutionary dialogue through action, but also proposals of co-ordination. We send therefore the most powerful **revolutionary greeting** to the comrades revolutionaries in all the world with the belief that our voices and action can meet and coordinate our total attack against power. **The sabotages in Turkey and the attacks of the informal cells of insurrection, the attacks in Chile, the letters with bullets in Madrid and Barcelona, the paint bombs on the Greek embassy in Austria, the arson of courts in Switzerland, the acts of solidarity in Poland, in Bristol, in London, but also in other places- heart of the capitalistic civilization - (sources of counter-information culmine, viva la anarquia, act for freedom, 325, saf.a.espiv e.t.c.) fill us with strength and courage in order to continue. And not only, but also in order to commit through our participation in the **Informal Anarchist Federation – International Revolutionary Front** that the quiet days are over for ever.”**

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*Nothing is over, everything continues!*

## **The Sun Still Rises**

*“Knowledge chooses its project, each project is new and chooses its moments, each moment is new, but simultaneously emerges from the memory of all the moments that existed before”*

— **The Interior of the Absolute**

### **1. The Beginning**

The **Conspiracy of Cells of Fire Revolutionary Organization** didn't begin its activity from out of nowhere. It wasn't as if a straight line had cut through space and time. It was a future crying out from the past. **The Conspiracy comprised a collective synthesis, connecting the backgrounds and viewpoints of all who participated in it and drawing valuable conclusions from past experiences of subversive projects and attacks we took part in.**

It represented our desire to take a step further, not to climb some ladder of informal hierarchy that fetishizes violence and its methods, but to simply advance, move forward, and explore new perspectives, making the shift from a “bunch of friends” to an organization, from the sporadic to the consistent, from the spontaneous to the strategic.

Along the way, we assumed a critical stance toward the past, but we never went out of our way to be hostile. We are anarchy's misfits, born from its potent moments and gaping voids. Additionally, the goal of critique and self-critique is not to put an end to something, but just the opposite: it's an aspiration to evolve something. The fact that we're not going to elaborate a corresponding critical review right now doesn't mean we're afraid to recognize our mistakes. Rather, it's because that kind of examination is better served by distance and cool nerves than by impulse.

During no phase of our brief, intense history did we lose our collective memory of the anarchist milieu we come from. We also feel we discovered something we have in common with comrades who began the struggle before us, engaged

in their own battles, were arrested and imprisoned, but never lowered their heads. We discovered the unrepentant passion for revolution that connects histories and realities of struggle from different decades in a shared context of individual and collective liberation.

**In that context**, we forged our own alphabet. Speaking the language of direct action, we openly raised the issue of creating organized infrastructure. As anarchists, we often distance ourselves from the concept of organization because we equate it with hierarchy, roles, specialization, “you must,” and obligations. However, words acquire the meanings given by the people who use them. **As the Conspiracy of Cells of Fire, we stormed into battle over the meaning of revolutionary anarchist organization.**

## **2. The Path from Spark to Flame**

From the very beginning, we rejected the idea of a centralist model and chose to start from the basis of individual initiatives that wanted to collectivize. **What emerged during organizational meetings were issues of coherence, consistency, individual and collective responsibility, and direct action as a means of transforming our words into deeds.** At group meetings, each comrade had the opportunity to propose a plan of attack, thereby opening up a debate on planning, timing, political analysis, and operational problems posed by a given target’s location. During these discussions, there was no guarantee that we would reach agreement. Opposing arguments sometimes developed into a powerful dialectic, especially regarding the **strategy and prioritization of timing**, and quite often there was more than one proposal, so we then had to choose which we were going to select and which we were going to keep in “storage” to be refined in the future. It was a process that allowed us to open our minds; broaden our horizons; learn from one another’s different experiences; vigorously defend our opinions; figure out how to recognize our mistakes; understand the concept of shaping something together; become conscious of the need for strategy; and — most important of all — **create relationships not in the name of some “professional” revolutionary goal, but based on friendship, true comradeship, and real solidarity.**

We love what we do because it contains our entire essence. **Therefore, the “Conspiracy” isn’t just all of us together, it’s also each one of us apart.** Even in cases when there wasn’t collective agreement on a particular action, we didn’t resort to “begging” from the prevailing democratic majority. Instead, the minority of comrades who insisted on carrying out the attack took the autonomous initiative to move forward with their choice. That happened in parallel with the rest of the collective, which supported them at specific times if necessary, naturally playing a part in our overall organization.

That’s why a number of communiqués were signed by groups (Nihilist Faction, Breath of Terror Commando, Terrorist Guerrilla Unit) that arose out of each separate initiative. During the second phase, after reaching agreement, whether as the entire collective or as a separate initiative, we planned the attack. Each one of us contributed our knowledge; information was culled from newspapers, magazines, and the Internet; the area where the action was to take place was reconnoitered and mapped; the approach to and withdrawal from

the target was laid out (avoiding cameras and police checkpoints), including alternate routes in case something unexpected happened, and of course keeping in mind the eventuality of a confrontation with the pigs. There were also support groups, “hideouts,” ways of asking for help, etc. (In a future manual, we will analyze and explain our experiences, which are related to how we perceive what is going on while an attack is being carried out.)

During the third phase (which was never far removed from the initial proposal about target selection), we worked on the text of the communiqué. When a topic was suggested (for example, attacking the police), the comrade who made the proposal argued for its content. Then a discussion began, during which each person fleshed out the concept, expressed disagreements, pointed out problems, and offered other ways to approach the topic. As soon as the debate finished, no matter how many meetings were needed to finish it, the collective brought together the central themes of all the meetings and shaped the main axes around which the communiqué would be written. The writing of a communiqué on a specific topic was usually shared out among those who wanted the responsibility, and after it was written, we got together to read it and make corrections, additions, and final touches. If the communiqué was connected to a separate initiative, then the comrades involved in that separate initiative were responsible for writing it.

The same process held for our Thessaloniki comrades, and when we collaborated as the Athens-Thessaloniki Fire Cells Conspiracy, comrades from both cities coordinated those actions based on principles of mutual aid and comradeship.

### 3. “Everyone Does Everything”

Of course, we’re well aware of the dangers lurking within each collective project that aspires to call itself antiauthoritarian — the appearance of informal hegemony and the reproduction of corrupt behavior, of which we are enemies. We feel that the purpose of power is to divide. **To eliminate the possibility of the emergence of any informal hierarchy within our group, we struck directly at the heart of specialization and roles as soon as they surfaced. We said: “Everyone does everything.” Everyone can learn and devise ways to steal cars and motorcycles, fabricate license plates, forge ID cards and official documents, expropriate goods and money, target-shoot, and use firearms and explosives.**

Therefore, it was and continues to be important to us that the means and methods we use for our actions be straightforward and relatively simple to obtain and prepare, allowing them to spread and be used by anyone who decides to move toward the new urban guerrilla warfare. **These include gasoline, jerry cans, camping gas canisters, and candles that can easily be obtained at a supermarket, but also improvised timing mechanisms that — after the appropriate “research” in technical manuals and guides available on the Internet, plus a little innovative imagination — anyone is capable of fabricating.**

We certainly aren’t forgetting that, while “everyone does everything,” each person also has their own separate abilities and personal inclinations, and it



would be a mistake to gloss over those differences. With desire and mutual understanding as our guide, each of us undertook to do what we felt most capable of. For example, if someone was a good driver or a skillful thief, or perhaps had a knack for writing, that didn't mean their creative abilities would be suppressed in the name of some false collective homogeneity. **It was up to each comrade to offer their abilities and methodologies to the other comrades without making a "sacrifice" of their own participation**, and it was even better if that happened in the broadest possible way, going beyond the narrow context of the collective and facilitating access by the entirety of the antiauthoritarian current — for example, through the publication of practical guides like those released by some German comrades, which contain a number of different ways to make explosive devices.

**Additionally, our actions never involved fixed, immutable roles. Without resorting to the cyclical rotation of tasks, which recall compulsory work hours, all the comrades took advantage of a common foundation that allowed them to be able to execute any task at any time during an attack.** The process of improving your ability to use materials and techniques is naturally a continual process of self-education. Along those lines, we want to emphasize how crucial it is to simultaneously develop a group's operational capacity as well as its revolutionary viewpoint. At no point should the level of sterile operational capacity intensify without a corresponding intensification of thought and discourse, and the same obviously holds true for the converse. **We had no central committee to designate roles. There were only particular tasks within a specific plan — positions that changed according to the desires of the comrades who took part.**

#### 4. Guerrillas for Life

We've always felt that an organization doesn't necessarily have to be exclusive to the comrades who are part of it. Our action neither begins nor ends within the context of the group. The group is the means to revolution, not an end in itself. Because when the means become their own *raison d'être*, "diseases" begin to appear, like **vanguardism**, the **armed party**, and **exclusive orthodox truth**. Through the **Conspiracy of Cells of Fire**, we say what we believe in, who we are, and what tendency we represent, but in no way do we say that someone has to precisely follow some so-called correct line or participate in our group in order to be recognized as a comrade.

Thus, we ourselves have also taken part in processes apart from the **Conspiracy**, like joining **coordinated action networks**, attending assemblies, participating in marches and demonstrations, supporting attacks and acts of sabotage, putting up posters, and painting slogans. But we never thought one thing was superior to another. **That's because the polymorphism of revolutionary war consists of an open and permanent commitment that has nothing to do with fetishized spectacle (embracing armed struggle as the only thing that matters) or accusatory fixations (insisting on the quantitative characteristic of "massiveness" as the criterion for revolutionary authenticity).** On the contrary, we position ourselves as enemies directly against the "polymorphism" of café gossip, speeches in university auditoriums, leadership roles, followers,

and all those conservative fossils of dogmatism and habit that act as parasites within the anarchist milieu, wanting only to control young comrades, sabotage them, and prevent them from creating their own autonomous evolutionary path through the revolutionary process.

We believe that the concept of the **anarchist urban guerrilla** isn't a separate identity one assumes only while engaging in armed attack. Rather, we feel it's a matter of **merging each person's private and public life** in the context of total liberation. **We aren't anarchists only when we throw a Molotov at a riot police van, carry out expropriations, or plant an explosive device. We're also anarchists when we talk to our friends, take care of our comrades, have fun, and fall in love.**

**We aren't enlisted soldiers whose duty is revolution. We are guerrillas of pleasure who view the connection between rebellion and life as a prerequisite for taking action.** We don't believe in any "correct line" to follow. During the past two years, for example, new urban guerrilla groups frequently posed the issue of robberies and expropriations from the banking machinery as yet another attack on the system. Their communiqués and claims of responsibility are powerful propaganda for **the rejection of work via holdups and robberies directed at the belly of the capitalist beast — the banks — with the goal being individual liberation from the eight-hour blackmail of wage-slavery on the one hand, and collective appropriation of and direct access to money for infrastructural needs and revolutionary projects on the other.**

We are exiting the scene of urban guerrilla warfare's past ethical fixations, which rarely took a public position on the issue of revolutionary bank robbery. We feel that there is now plenty of new urban guerrilla discourse and practice that opposes — in a clearly attacking way — the bosses' work ethic as well as the predatory banking machinery, **proposing armed expropriation as a liberatory act, and obviously not as a way to get rich.**

Nevertheless, we don't consider the expropriation of banks to be a prerequisite for someone's participation in the new guerrilla war. **There is one revolution, but there are thousands of ways in which one can take revolutionary action.** Other comrades might choose to carry out collective expropriations from the temples of consumerism (supermarkets, shopping malls) in order to individually recover what's been "stolen" and use those things to meet each person's material needs, thereby avoiding having to say "good morning" to a boss or take orders from some superior. Still others might participate in grassroots unions, keeping their conscience honed — like a sharp knife — for the war that finally abolishes every form of work that enriches the bosses while impoverishing our dignity.

We feel the same way about **voluntarily "disappearing" to go underground.** The fetishization of illegalism doesn't inspire us. We want everyone to act in accordance with their needs and desires. Each choice naturally has its own qualities and virtues as well as its disadvantages. It's true that when a group voluntarily chooses to go underground ("disappearance" from the environment of family and friends, false papers, etc.), that certainly shields them from the eyes of the enemy. But at the same time, their social connection to the wider radical milieu is cut, and to a certain point they lose a sense of interaction. Of course, the same doesn't apply when there are objective reasons for going

underground (arrest warrants, a price on one's head), in which case **clandestinity is the attacking refuge** of those caught in the crosshairs of the law. This creates a parallel need for the existence of **support infrastructure**, both among guerrilla groups themselves as well as within the wider antiauthoritarian milieu, that will **"cover" the tracks of wanted comrades**. Prerequisites would be a certain **complicity and discretion**, which concepts are frequently seen as "outdated" but in our opinion should once again be launched piercingly into battle. If comrades from a guerrilla group engage in regular above-ground interaction — participating in movement meetings and processes, taking part in debates, and creating projects with others that address shared concerns — then **the hermetic nature of the guerrilla group** should clearly be protected from open ears and big mouths. **Therefore, it's general attitude also must be one of discretion in order to circumvent the deafening exaggerations that can turn it into a "magnet" for bastards from antiterrorist squads and the police.** Taking a page from our own self-critique, we must mention the fact that many of us behaved completely opposite to the above, which — along with the viciousness of certain conduct originating within the anarchist milieu — "guided" a number of police operations right to us. In any case, self-critique lays down solid ground from which to develop oneself and offer explanations, but the current text isn't appropriate for that. We'll return to it in the future.

## **5. The First Phase of the Conspiracy and the Proposal for the "New Conspiracy"**

**The guerrilla has finally escaped the pages of books dealing with decades past and taken to the streets with ferocity. Because the urban guerrilla doesn't offer utopian freedom. She allows access to immediate freedom.** Accordingly, each person begins to define herself and liberate herself from **society's passivity**.

There is now noise everywhere — the marvelous noise of widespread destruction — as well as the requisite revolutionary discourse to follow bombings against targets that serve domination. A determined armada of anarchist groups is setting fire to tranquility in the middle of the night, groups with names that reflect the "menu" they offer the system (in Athens: Deviant Behavior for the Spread of Revolutionary Terrorism, Warriors from the Abyss/Terrorist Complicity, Revolutionary Conscience Combatants, Lambros Fountas Guerrilla Formation; in Thessaloniki: Chaos Warriors, Attacking Solidarity Cell, Arson Attack Cell, Schemers for Nighttime Disorder, Fire to the Borders Cell, Combative Conscience Cell, Revolutionary Solidarity Cell, etc.). Many of these groups are also experimenting with **a new international liberatory project** as accomplices in the alliance known as the **International Revolutionary Front / Informal Anarchist Federation**.

Those of us who have taken responsibility as members of the Fire Cells Conspiracy are not intimidated by the dozens of years in prison the courts have in store for us. To begin with, we are creating an **active collective inside prison**.

**We know that, for us, the opening phase of the struggle has been completed. However, we also know that nothing is over. The Conspiracy will not remain disarmed. It will continue to be a valid commitment in prison,**

as well as an open proposal to the antagonistic sector of the metropolis.

The **Conspiracy of Cells of Fire** proved itself as a **network of cells**, just like its name suggests. Right now, we're not attempting to go over its operational record. We simply want to clarify its political perspective.

We feel that **committing to a new Conspiracy** most closely approaches the essence of the word, **so we are opening up that possibility by making a proposal** for a new Conspiracy comprising a diffuse, invisible network of cells that have no reason to meet in person, yet through their actions and discourse recognize one another as comrades in the same **political crime: the subversion of Law and Order**. This Conspiracy would consist of individuals and cells that take action, whether autonomous or coordinated (through call-outs and communiqués), without needing to agree on every single position and specific reference point (e.g., nihilism, individualism). Instead, they would connect on the basis of mutual aid focused on three key points.

The first point we are proposing in this informal debate is **agreement on the choice of direct action using any means capable of damaging enemy infrastructure**. Without any hierarchization of methods of violence, comrades can choose from rocks to Kalashnikovs. However, direct action on its own is just another entry on the police blotter, so it should be accompanied by a **corresponding communiqué** from the given cell or individual claiming responsibility and explaining the reasons behind the attack, thus spreading revolutionary discourse. The pen and the pistol are made from the same metal. **Here, let's note that the Conspiracy of the period that is now over never dismissed any incendiary method in its arsenal**. It would be disingenuous of us if some young comrade thought that using the name of a new "**Conspiracy**" was conditioned by the use of supposedly superior methods (e.g., explosives). **The new urban guerrilla warfare depends much less on operational methods than it does on our decision to attack power**.

The second key point of agreement is to **wage war against the state while simultaneously engaging in a pointed critique of society**. Since we are revolutionary anarchists, we don't just talk about the misfortune caused by power and the ruling oligarchy. We also exercise a more comprehensive critique of the way in which the oppressed accept and propagate the promises of happiness and consumerism offered by their bosses.

The fact that we engage in **struggle against the state** doesn't mean we blind ourselves to the diffuse complex of power that administers contemporary interpersonal relationships. Antiauthoritarian discourse frequently alters and generalizes a concept like the state, relieving the rest of the people who constitute society of their responsibility. In doing so, it creates a sterilized viewpoint that treats entire social sectors as revolutionary subjects, whether called proletariat or oppressed, without revealing the individual responsibility each one of us assumes in the enslavement of our lives.

*The state is not a fortress. You won't find any door that leads you to some kind of machine or engine that can be turned off by throwing a switch. The state is not a monster you can kill with a stake through the heart. It's something quite different. We could compare it to a system: a network comprising thousands of machines and switches.*

*This network doesn't impose itself on society from above. It spreads throughout society from within. It even extends to the sphere of private life, reaching into and touching our emotions at a cellular level. It molds conscience and is molded by it. It connects and unites society, which in turn nourishes and sanctifies it in a continuous exchange of values and standards. In this game, there are no spectators. Each one of us plays an active role. — Costas Pappas, No Going Back*

The enemy can be found in every mouth that speaks the language of domination. It is not exclusive to one or another race or social class. **It doesn't just consist of rulers and the whole potbellied suit-and-tie dictatorship. It is also the proletarian who aspires to be a boss, the oppressed whose mouth spits nationalist poison, the immigrant who glorifies life in western civilization but behaves like a little dictator among his own people, the prisoner who rats out others to the guards, every mentality that welcomes power, and every conscience that tolerates it.**

We don't believe in an ideology of victimization in which the state takes all the blame. The great empires weren't just built on oppression. They were also built on the consent of the applauding masses in the timeless Roman arenas of every dictator. To us, the revolutionary subject is each one who liberates herself from the obligations of the present, questions the dominant order of things, and takes part in the criminal quest for freedom.

As the **first phase of the Conspiracy**, we have no interest in representing anyone, and we don't take action in the name of any class or as defenders of "oppressed society." The subject is us, because each rebel is a revolutionary subject in a revolution that always speaks in the first person to ultimately build a genuine collective "we."

**The third key point of agreement in our proposal regarding the formation of a new Conspiracy is international revolutionary solidarity.** In truth, our desire to apply all of ourselves to creating moments of attack on the world order may cost some of us our lives, with many of us winding up in prison. "We" doesn't refer to the Conspiracy or any other organization. It refers to every insurgent, whether they are part of a guerrilla group or taking action individually on their path to freedom. As the first phase of the Conspiracy, our desire and our proposal to every new cell is that the full force of revolutionary solidarity be expressed — a solidarity that cries out through texts, armed actions, attacks, and sabotage to reach the ears of persecuted and imprisoned comrades, no matter how far away they may be.

**The solidarity we're talking about doesn't require those showing solidarity to express absolute political identification with the accused. It is simply a shared acknowledgment that we are on the same side of the barricades** and that we recognize one another in the struggle, like another knife stuck in power's gut. We therefore also propose support for the **Informal Anarchist Federation / International Revolutionary Front**, so that it can function — as demonstrated by the **Italian FAI comrades** — as an engine of propulsion.

From this point on, any comrade who agrees (obviously without having to identify herself) with these three key points of the **informal agreement** we are proposing **can — if she wants — use the name Fire Cells Conspiracy in connection with the autonomous cell she is part of.** Just like the **Dutch com-**

**rades** who, without us knowing one another personally but within the framework of consistency between discourse and practice, attacked the infrastructure of domination (arson and cyber attacks against Rabobank) and claimed responsibility as the **Conspiracy of Cells of Fire (Dutch Cell)**.

We feel that a **network of such cells, devoid of centralized structure**, will be capable of far exceeding the limits of individual plans while exploring the real possibilities of **revolutionary coordination among autonomous minority structures**. These structures — without knowing one another personally — will in turn be able to organize **arson and bombing campaigns throughout Greece, but also on an international level, communicating through their claims of responsibility**.

Since we live in suspicious times, we should clarify something. Actions claimed using the Conspiracy of Cells of Fire name that aren't consistent with any of the points we've laid out and don't take the necessary precautions to prevent "damage" to anything other than the target of the sabotage will definitely arouse our suspicion, given the likelihood that they will have been hatched by the state.

Returning to our proposal, "anonymity" with regard to personal contact will reinforce the closed nature of the autonomous cells, making it more difficult for the police to "compromise" them. Even the arrest of one entire cell that forms part of the new Conspiracy wouldn't lead the persecuting authorities to the other cells, thereby avoiding the well-known domino effects that took place in our time.

In the past, the fact that that we **first-phase comrades** may not have been involved in certain incidents never stopped us from publicly expressing our support or our critique, and the same applies to the present if new comrades choose to use the organization's name. Without needing to know one another, through the communiqués that accompany attacks we can begin an open debate on reflections and problems that, even if viewed through different lenses, are certainly focused on the same direction: revolution.

**Consequently, we first-phase comrades are now assuming responsibility for the discourse we generate inside prison by signing as the Fire Cells Conspiracy, followed by our names.**

The new "Conspiracy" will maintain and safeguard its customary independence, writing its own history of struggle. This significant continuation will surely connect the dots on the map of rebellion, sweeping them toward the final destination of revolution.

## **6. The Epilogue Has Yet to Be Written**

Through our actions, we are propagating a revolution that touches us directly, while also contributing to the destruction of this bourgeois society. The goal is not just to tear down the idols of power, but to completely overturn current ideas about material pleasure and the hopes behind it.



**The offices of Rabobank burning in Utrecht after an attack by the Conspiracy of Cells of Fire (Dutch Cell), July 2010 (above). In the photo below a Wal-Mart shopping centre burns in Veracruz as part of a wide-spread inter-metropolitan arson barrage by the Conspiracy Cells of Fire – Mexico / Informal Anarchist Federation, 26 October 2011. "To spread the Conspiracy of Cells of Fire, you only need gasoline, matches, and the desire to fight for total liberation."**



We know our quest connects us to many other people around the world, and via this pamphlet we want to send them our warmest regards: the **Conspiracy of Cells of Fire in the Netherlands**; the **FAI in Italy**; the **Práxedis G. Guerrero Autonomous Cells for Immediate Revolution** and the **ELF/ALF in Mexico**; the **ELF in Russia**; the **anarchists in Bristol, Argentina, and Turkey**; the **Autonome Gruppen in Germany**; the **September 8 Vengeance Commando in Chile**; the **comrades in Switzerland, Poland, Spain, and London**; and **everyone we've left out**, wherever the rejection of this world is in bloom.

This text has no epilogue, because praxis will always continue to nourish

and transform itself. We're just making a quick stop, concluding with a few words someone once said:

*“It’s an astonishing moment when the attack on the world order is set in motion. Even at the very beginning — which was almost imperceptible — we already knew that very soon, no matter what happened, nothing would be the same as before. It’s a charge that starts slowly, quickens its pace, passes the point of no return, and irrevocably detonates what once seemed impregnable — so solid and protected, yet nevertheless destined to fall, demolished by strife and disorder... On this path of ours, many were killed or arrested, and some are still in enemy hands. Others strayed from the battle or were wounded, never to appear again. Still others lacked courage and retreated. **But I must say that our group never wavered, even when it had to face the very heart of destruction.**”*

- **Conspiracy of Cells of Fire :**

**Gerasimos Tsakalos**

**Olga Economidou**

**Haris Hatzimichelakis**

**Christos Tsakalos**

**Giorgos Nikolopoulos**

**Michalis Nikolopoulos**

**Damiano Bolano**

**Panayiotis Argyrou**

**Giorgos Polydoros**





# Historical Overview & Timeline of Some Contemporary Insurrectionary Attacks

*Note:* This timeline is focused on especially escalatory and historically influential attacks, groups and events. If casualties aren't mentioned, none have been reported. Many riots and more 'everyday', less spectacular, non-armed actions, as well as unclaimed ones and long gradual shifts in historical and social conditions are behind this surface and have been left out. This is not to diminish the importance whatsoever of these facts. The critiques of spectacular, symbolic actions, named and claimed groups and attacks, etc. do apply to many of these actions (as well as those of linear history), however in order to counter the sense of inactivity, impossibility, and obscurity, as well as avoid past mistakes, I feel it's necessary to collect some of this history in one place. A future publication from Reeking Thickets Press will provide a more in-depth and broader historical overview of contemporary insurrectionary anarchism, its sisters, contemporary anti-civilization thought, competing conceptions of the common ontological body-politic, and how these parallel and diverge from more animist-informed critiques.

## ***First, a brief overview, focusing on arguably contemporary insurrectionary anarchism's primary birthplace, Italy:***

In 1952 a bank robbery is carried out in Turin, Italy by anarchists among the local affinity groups who had dissociated themselves from both the synthesist, bureaucratic 'Italian Anarchist Federation' (FAI), and the platformist, vanguardist 'Anarchist Groups of Proletarian Action' (GAAP). The robbery is assisted by Josep Lluís Facerias, a Catalan anarcho-syndicalist guerrilla and anti-Franco fighter in exile, who in frustration at the infiltration and inaction of the official CNT organization (the major Spanish anarchist union and organization, which had been a primary faction in the Spanish Civil War), had been acting and organizing informally, among several other renegade *maquis* fighters, for several years in direct opposition to their directives to not engage in combative actions. Another bank robbery in 1957 in Monferrato was connected to Facerias and Goliardo Fiaschi, an Italian anarchist and former anti-fascist partisan who was involved in the anti-Franco struggle via the Spanish refugee committee.

In '60s and '70s Italy, the influence of situationism, *operaismo*, and autonomism further shaped this burgeoning conflictual approach.

Situationism was a relatively libertarian Marxist social and artistic theoretical international avant-garde movement and revolutionary organization, originating in Paris, officially founded as the Situationist International in 1957, with

roots in the Lettrist movement dating back to the mid '40s. Situationists (or 'pro-situs' as they preferred to be called) criticized the increasing expression and mediation of social relations through images, and proposed the intentional creation of situations allowing authentic desire, experience, and adventure to liberate everyday life. They emphasized the rupturing psychic revolution of/through subjectivity, identity, pleasure, and desire, against the spectacle of commodity fetishism, manipulative narrativization, and the ever-present controlling alienation of us from ourselves and in the physical and cultural environment. Proposing the rejection of work or self-management by workers councils, criticizing socialist states as well as capitalist ones, and affectively oriented toward joy, humor, irony, and raw authenticity, it was a welcome balm in a deeply stale political environment. The official organization however did often have overly bureaucratic and controlling aspects, and alternately tended towards conventionally objectivist political materialism or recuperated artistic spiritualism.

*Operaismo* was an Italian development of workerism, a Marxist current focused on studying the subjective experience of the working class, and promoting Marxists being personally present in the factories. They held that the development of proletarians, not capital, propels capitalism and could cause socialism also. Influenced by the US Johnson-Forest Tendency, who produced studies of Detroit auto workers, and emphasized the way black workers' struggles could ignite the entire revolutionary situation, as well as the French group Socialisme ou Barbarie, who supported workers councils as revolutionary organization and developed an anti-bureaucratic critique of the new stage of 'managerial capitalism'.

Autonomism was a subsequent (beginning in earnest around 1975, with important preceding waves in the early '70s, originating in small germinal forms in the late '60s) Marxist-influenced and libertarian left-wing social and 'political' (though some strains importantly expressed core positions against politics) tendency focusing on how the everyday actions of working-class people reproduce or resist capital, the exploitation of social and non-strictly 'economic' labor, and the direct, unmediated participatory organization of people in local struggles and in shaping their lives and worlds. *Autonomia* proper developed in Italy, before autonomism was adopted with varied characteristics elsewhere, becoming particularly influential in West Germany, the Netherlands, and France – places where it was the basis for much of the beginnings of contemporary antifa, squatting, infoshop, black bloc, alternative media, and pirate radio culture.

This period in Italy in general was one of simmering upheaval and revolutionary undercurrents which appeared poised to tear the very fabric of social life and physical organization apart, in the bloody birth of something completely different. The backdrop of the Italian late '60s was one of huge industrial and students struggles largely outpacing the antiquated, clunky, and often parliamentarian, bureaucratic, or moderate official Left and anarchist organizations. The rebellions in factories led to a crisis in industry as whole swathes of economic sectors were brought to their knees by wildcat strikes, sabotage, absenteeism, intentional inefficiency, and fiercely conflictual workplace struggle, to the point of armed and masked workers holding marches inside factories threatening scabs and foremen and setting fire to offices and machines. Workers at factories collectively took over the buildings and held their bosses hostage on

multiple occasions. Waves of intense prison riots and uprisings led to a radicalizing dialectic between the growing numbers of 'common criminals', social bandits, and imprisoned revolutionary agitators and workers. Farmers, fishermen, and the poor and marginalized of the less centralized, traditionally conservative South rose up as well, with whole communities erupting in barricades and insurrection (though often with politically ambiguous localist motives and frequent hijacking by fascists and organized crime), and neighborhood councils taking back control of their own welfare.

Explicit fascism and communism were both ideologies with huge popular support and parliamentary representation, and conflict between the two, and the rest of society, was strong in the country which only recently had – supposedly – left behind the fascism of Mussolini's state. Anti-fascist partisan armed struggle during WW2 had been bloody and chaotically brought together communists, anarchists, syndicalists and socialists along with Christians, republicans, conservatives, liberals, presidentialists, opportunistic fascists jumping ship before defeat, and more aristocratic or populist fascists opposed to Mussolini, leaving a contested legacy as founding myth for the new Republic. Black marketeering had been a frequent means of survival in the deprivation of the war and fascist rule, and only increased with the opportunities afforded by US occupation in the post-war years. Industrial and infrastructural development and international investment had surged along with corruption and organized crime, leaving the populace largely behind, still shattered in many ways by fascist rule and the war, as production, consumption, and the lived environment itself rapidly became more sinisterly instrumentalizing and alienated. Steady flows of migrants traveled from the historically disadvantaged and internally oppressed, rustic, rural South to the industrial North, where they often found the opportunities sparser and harsher than they'd imagined, amidst discrimination, exploitation, social dislocation, and abject conditions in the poverty of the urban periphery.

The moment was one in which much of the radical younger generation, both anarchist and Marxist, felt that the traditional opposition between their tendencies could be overcome, with the major organizations on both sides irredeemably calcified and bureaucratic. The Left avant-garde currents of Marxism and situationism were appealing to the anarchists (Italian anarchists having organized with the councilists of Gramsci in the factory struggles of the '20s) while the anarchists' prominence was increased by their participation in May '68, and thus the Marxists also began to reassess the history of anarchism, looking favorably on Durruti, Bakunin, and the IWW. New syntheses of the traditionally disparate currents were percolating left and right, and some of these Marxists' idiosyncratic (and arguably more analytically faithful) interpretations of Marx, mixed with other influences, would soon theorize them arguably out of Marxism entirely. Among the tangled forms they eventually found themselves composed in (a path significantly often passing through or in parallel with the area of so-called 'radical critique' around Giorgio Cesarano, Riccardo d'Este, and others – more on this scene to be included in the future project) would be much of the contemporary insurrectionary anarchist milieu, as well as the more noxious elements of post-modern, pseudo-revolutionary, alterglobal, participatory democracy, and neo-Blanquist, self-styled 'ultra-leftist' and Tiqqunist currents.

Chief among the political and social trends from abroad influencing these youths were situationism and the May '68 events in Paris, the explosive riots of the Long Hot Summer and the black struggle in the United States and the developing counterculture there, traditional forms of rural banditry once endemic in Italy as well as urban outlaw practices more specific to the modern era, Bordigism, and council communism.

The events of May '68 in Paris were broadly influential, where spontaneous university student and workers struggles had linked up with high-schoolers and delinquents to create a huge wildcat general strike (supposedly the first in history, with 22% of France striking – 11 million people), massive street conflict with the authorities, and barricades aimed at the interruption of daily life and reappropriation of space and time in all domains from the increasingly rigid, antiquated forces of order. A network of self-organized occupation councils horizontally coordinated the struggle alongside workers delegates on a large scale, and the uprising came very close to a successful social and economic revolution before the influence of Stalinists and union bureaucrats managed to sabotage the autonomy of the assemblies by taking advantage of their democratic nature, and the threat of massive repression and offer of substantial wage hikes finally restored normality a month later. Ultimately, the workers and general population were largely not actively determining events and the workers did not generally form their own councils or revolutionary dialogues with each other or the students in an effective manner. The nature of academic and political thought however was directly implicated by the upheaval and a profound disjunction and reorganization of theory and society on a historical level (in a recuperatory as well as possibilizing fashion) would ultimately result from these disturbances. Anarchists had been a notable presence there, and many scholars now believe May '68 was critically influenced and escalated by the situationists – whose notions had become commonplace in the build up to and course of the uprising – even though only one or two dozen official members are believed to have actively participated across several cities.

Likewise, Bordigism was influential both as model and cautionary example. Named after Italian communist Amadeo Bordiga, who had been prominent in the '20s as a leader of the newly formed PCI (the Italian Communist Party, a highly popular but parliamentary and largely counter-revolutionary organization by the '60s), the tendency had become the marginal, out of touch, loyal opposition within the Party in Italy, but retained relevance in France, where it was an influential component in the Left Communist groupings ascendant in the build-up to May '68 (which also included situationism). Highly traditional in many ways, supporting a tightly defined, programmatic vanguard party acting in a delineated political sphere, stage-based revolution, the statist dictatorship of the proletariat, and the unchanging dogmatic truth of Marx, Bordiga's influence nonetheless led to important deviations from the communist mainstream. Seeing the Soviet Union, Mao's China, and other previously established communist states as bourgeois degenerations, he also made harsh critiques of democracy, describing it as an illusion presented by the bourgeois to disguise the real condition of domination and emptying-out of the masses, and rejecting any participation in parliamentarism or societal role for money or market economics (including in 'self-managed' form) in transitional stages of social-

ism. Seeing the role of the party as the 'social brain' of the proletariat, distilling and systematizing the insights of the working class in order to work toward the armed establishment of dictatorship on behalf of the authentic human community or re-appropriated common body politic of social meaning and production alienated from us by Capital (the *Gemeinwesen* of Marx), with the party being simultaneously anti-individual and bound to the human community, as well as necessarily separated from the masses in order to critically apprehend its theory and in rejection of alienated, democratic ideals. Bordigism found renewed relevance among these countercultural Italian misfits through the French journal *Invariance*, edited by Bordiga's former disciple Jacques Camatte, which had split from the French section of the International Communist Party based on *Invariance's* contention that theoretical consistency should be privileged above the party as organization furthered for its own sake.

In this same spirit, and faced with the bureaucratic demobilization of other Bordigist currents, *Invariance* also opened towards a reinterpretation of council communism. Councilism was a prominent tendency in the early 20th century as well, in the German revolution of 1919 with Rosa Luxemburg, and as the other prominent, competing current in Italian communism at the time of Bordiga, represented by Gramsci. Councilism viewed itself as anti-authoritarian, and came to see the Soviets and existing communist states as actually capitalist, proposing spontaneously organized workers councils in the factories as revolutionary form, opposing parliamentarism, coalition with socialist-democrats, or any external union or party control, with workers implementing communism by a non-vanguardist, mass-based seizure of the economy, with the new communist government and economy being run by a democracy of federated, recallable workplace delegates. Like the Bordigists, the councilists in Italy had been politically defanged and incorporated into an ineffectual party structure by the efforts of Stalinists pushing for a coalition with the democratic-socialists as part of their rejection of world-revolution, and by these Left opposition groups' unwillingness to enter actual hostility with these centrists as opponents, instead remaining in tacit alliance in doomed attempts to influence or convince them.

In many ways representative of the broader proto-insurrectionary-adjacent theories, *Invariance* after May '68 and the death of Bordiga began to express what were seen by some as less and less conventionally Marxist positions, looking with appreciation on what they saw as the fundamentally negating, destructive nature of black rioters praxis in the United States (whole sections of dozens of cities across the country had been burned down with widespread sniping at authorities in the then contemporary uprisings, with mass, often seemingly spontaneous participation from some of the most educated and politically conscious as well as non-self-consciously political sub-proletarians or the so-called lumpenproletariat – a genuinely escalatory level of conflictual intensity in the imperial core) and the 'irrational', 'anti-social' lashing out of the prisoner, madman, or drug addict in the face of a total invasion of every-day existence by Capital. Capital was now seen as carrying out a 'proletarianization' of the new middle classes, whose daily lives were becoming just as alienated as the poor worker, with the struggle no longer just contained between working class and rich but between Capital and the very character of human community itself. Capital was carrying out a total transformation of humans and the whole envi-

ronment into mere implements at its service, partly as a result of automation, with no formal organization within this social world structured by Capital being a valid 'revolutionary' project.

Over time in Italy, massacres carried out by the far-right (beginning most dramatically with the Piazza Fontana bombing killing 16 in Milan in 1969, and culminating in the Bologna bombing of 1980, which killed 85 and wounded over 200) progressively scarred the psychic landscape (along with later blunders by leftist armed struggle groups). These were at times carried out in collaboration with elements of domestic and foreign intelligence agencies and reactionary or presidentialist coup plotters, as part of a 'strategy of tension' to provoke popular chaos and fear which in their mind would help enable and justify an authoritarian anti-communist takeover, sometimes involving false flag attacks intended to frame the left or anarchists (such as with Piazza Fontana which involved sections of Italian military intelligence and was immediately blamed on anarchists) or the purported enabling, infiltration, or protection by the state or fascists of actual far-left attacks. For some in power, the aim of the strategy of tension was also to foster a destructive war of far-right and far-left with each other, neutralizing both as threats to the system while manipulating them into functioning on the system's behalf to incapacitate popular mass revolution. Adding another layer of complexity however, these accusations of leftist complicity with fascists or the reactionary state as part of a strategy of tension were, and still are, themselves often deployed by parliamentary or non-conflictual communists and 'progressive' centrists (who actually *are* structurally complicit with fascists and the reactionary state) to discredit armed or conflictual actions. At other times (or from other perspectives) the strategy was part of a cynical 'Nazi-Maoist' 'Third Position' ideology (later influential to Russian 'Eurasianist' far-right organizer Aleksandr Dugin and affiliated factions of Putin's Kremlin, and consciously or not to nodes of the international 'Red-Brown alliances' between campist anti-imperialist communists and the authoritarian anti-Western Blocs of imperialist states and movements, notably including the Party for Socialism and Liberation aka PSL and much of the rest of the 'tankie' scene in the US), favoring a uniting of the forces of far-right and far-left in a popular effort to bring about the disintegration of the decadent, modern, capitalist, globalized, imperialist system to allow for a return to glory of an esoteric and aristocratic, deeply patriarchal conquest spiritualism, potentially federated into supposedly pluralist national groupings. These overtures to the left and anarchists were alternately intended as genuine, if unrealistic, and at other times as attempts to subvert and infiltrate their enemies and parasitize the effective capacity of their base, tactics, and libidinal drives.

Economic restructuring, concessions, and recuperation was leaving the factory behind as viable revolutionary center by 1970, and struggles in the receding of this revolutionary cycle around 1972-1973, and the next – which picked up around 1975 and fell back between 1977 and the beginning of the '80s – tended to slide into either organizationally pre-determined, orchestrating sects (whether militarized or movementist) divorced from reality, narcotic or psychotic self-destruction, defanged cultural spirals of passive inefficacy prefiguring yuppie society, and reformist or exhausted reintegration into, and (post-?)structural revamping of the reigning political, economic, and social regime.

That may be how it seemed to many at least, though in truth many worthwhile openings did emerge from these threads, and the failures that did take place were also the results, in some cases, of chance, tactical failures, and contextual particularities. Many understandably remembered the period as one of overwhelming violence, trauma, joylessness, futility, and despair, and the penitent renunciation by many former militants for their actions and expressions of guilt were common. Others however remembered these years not solely as the 'years of lead' (the expression was actually a later German description of the period), but as an overall joyous time, where rich new social and cultural possibilities burst into being, and real participation in life and struggle expanded greatly.

The years of lead, generally considered as 1968 or '69 to the early '80s, with a trickle of attacks continuing through that decade, describes the extensive terror campaigns and what some have argued amounted to a low-grade revolutionary civil war between leftists, fascists, and state forces. Some estimates put the number of Italian armed 'acronym' groups during this period at over 650, with thousands of active participants in armed groups, total attacks at over 14,500, with over 400 people killed during 'terrorist' attacks, hundreds more killed by police during demonstrations or by rival factions in street warfare, thousands more wounded, and an estimated 4,000 political prisoners in 1980. To give an idea of the general climate, there were 174 reported kidnappings in and around Turin in 1974 alone.

The decreased centrality of industrial struggle alongside reactionary crisis following the Piazza Fontana massacre led to the elevation of specialized armed struggle groups, further accelerating in the second half of the '70s. Specializing in arson attacks, shootings or bombings, sabotage, bank robberies and other expropriations, kidnapping, kneecappings, and assassinations, many groups existed totally underground, shuttered away in safehouses with no connection to their previous identities, social world, jobs, or family, often seeing themselves as professionals and issuing wordy and lengthy communiques after each action. These included the GAP, the October XXII Group, the Red Brigades – who famously kidnapped and killed former prime minister Aldo Moro in 1978 after a 'people's trial', structures linked to Lotta Continua and Potere Operaio, and later groups in the 'second' cycle such as Prima Linea, PAC (Armed Proletarians for Communism), and the NAP (Armed Proletarian Nuclei). This was part of a networked trend and transnational archipelago of loosely connected leftist urban guerrilla groups operating across Europe, including the Red Army Faction in Germany, Action Directe in France, the MIL in Spain, and 17 November in Greece, primarily composed of Marxist-Leninist or Maoist groups, but with some anarchist and later autonomist groups as well. There was also a similar proliferation of internationally connected fascist armed groups carrying out attacks, including in Italy: Ordine Nuovo (perpetrators of the Piazza Fontana massacre), Ordine Nero, the NAR (Armed Revolutionary Nuclei), MAR (Popular Revolutionary Movement), and Avanguardia Nazionale.

Coming from an understanding of the real need for armed capacity and immediate destruction, combined with a growing blindspot for the clunky and reductive nature of pre-determined strategy and formal groups, they attempted to put ever more power behind the messages their attacks were meant to transmit and lost sight of the reality of the conflict at the same time as they ob-

sessed over a materialist view of it. This dynamic was also one in competition with the institutional forces attempting to control and co-opt popular conflict. Making up for the decreased centrality of industrial organizing, many of these leftist groups pushed the ideas of an interior or exterior vanguard of the working class, which had animated operaism, even further through the specialized logic of armed struggle. This was in tandem with Maoist ideas of the seizure of power through protracted people's war fought by an armed party, and Fo-choist, Guevarist ideas of a guerrilla army acting as the focal point for igniting and directing popular discontent. Shallow readings of situationism, or backlash against the excesses of its more flowery proponents ironically encouraged the over-valuing of symbolic interventions (either self-consciously, or where what was being symbolized was how literal and non-symbolic the revolutionary was) without much understanding of how to avoid recuperation. This was at the same time that the media, government, and fascists were actively working to spectacularize the conflict as much as possible, and were also framing themselves as actors who could carefully orchestrate reality and popular opinion from behind the scenes to seize control via precisely planned outrages. Perhaps the most infamous group, the Red Brigades, sought to seize state power as the vanguard of a strictly hierarchical Stalinist armed party acting on behalf of the industrial workers, by a strategy of 'armed propaganda' and the 'attack on the heart of the state'. They were fairly unpopular among the rest of the Left for their cult-like authoritarianism and unstrategic elitism, and became highly isolated in clandestinity. Damaging in many ways the capacity for diffused conflictual self-organization and acting as oppressive authoritarians themselves, these groups' attacks killed and injured bystanders and uninvolved people on multiple occasions (though often by accident and on a much smaller scale than the many fascist attacks explicitly intended to kill as many random people as possible), including targeting the families of members who'd snitched. Their actions often had a counter-productive effect in terms of the broader strategic possibilities for armed insurrection. Many members would eventually end up snitching or fabricating evidence on others for reduced sentencing, regaining social and financial capital by publicly disavowing the revolution and armed struggle, going into exile or retirement abroad, switching sides and becoming fascists, giving up on revolution to focus solely on robberies, drug trafficking or other criminal enterprises, or simply retreating into private, conventional life. Having held to a historically determinist view of revolution, where it seemed inevitable or like the one singular opportunity, many proclaimed it was no longer possible and there was no longer any point in attacking since the revolutionary moment had passed and they had failed. Later, more autonomist groups tended to be somewhat more grounded and directly motivated in their attacks, and were often ostensibly horizontal, sometimes with an affinity or cell structure. They were less overt in claiming any vanguardist role for themselves, and were influential in prefiguring later forms of more informal organization, but often still ended up carrying out pre-planned roles and formulas for revolt, acting as organizers of struggle where quantitative military and organizational logic became a self-defeating end in itself.

At the same time however, a more diffuse, uncontrolled tendency also developed, with the participation of anarchists (including those who traveled from



other countries across Europe). The same structural and social conditions that had led to the militarized armed struggle sects, and the conscious divergence of others from their paradigms, encouraged a simultaneous explosion of revolutionary activity out of the factory and formal vanguardist organizations and into the neighborhood. Feminism was crucially important in spreading a critique of how society and family life upheld capitalism, and of the oppressive behavior and functions of 'revolutionary' leaders and organizations. Fights in the deeply Catholic nation against the prohibition of divorce, abortion, for gay liberation, and against misogynist violence were fierce, with militant night-time mass marches of women under the rallying cry 'Take Back the Night' and organized networks of illegal abortion providers. Sex workers banded together against abuse, criminalization, and regulations meant to keep them from working in the streets and force them into less visible, economically and legally integrated brothels. Struggles for housing broadened, with extensive squatting of whole apartment buildings by both countercultural, political types as well as regular families, and entire neighborhoods attacking cops attempting evictions. Students who weren't able to get a spot in the overcrowded dormitories of the elite institutions which had suddenly been opened onto the growing masses built encampments and reappropriated public space for an alternative way of life. As in the late '60s, they occupied school buildings and clashed in vicious brawls with fascists and cops, disrupted classes or simply didn't attend, and rebelled against the social conservatism and imperialism of the state, capital, and broader culture. Homeless people and youth gangs in the suburban sprawl also confronted the authorities as they took back space outside against the mores of society and logic of the urban planners. Inmates in mental hospitals and prisons organized themselves in direct struggle, rejecting the roles assigned them and the tidy compartmentalization and management of disorder. Alternative culture grew, with rebellious hippie fashions for long hair and dirty, ripped clothes (punk would also become prominent in the late '70s), free-love, rock music, communal living, the spread of LSD and hashish, as well as pirate radio, street theatre, alternative newspapers and publishing. The Dutch Provos and the Beats were important reference points. Vibrant new countercultures exploded in the late '70s, influenced by post-structuralist philosophy, especially in Bologna, with playful and subversive forms of ironic, intentionally nonsensical, stream of consciousness communication and media expressing the disintegration of meaning, history, and the *socius* as well as the opportunities for new forms of becoming on the other side of rationality.

Militant, popular anti-fascist actions accelerated in the second half of the '70s, turning increasingly deadly, often in bitter cycles of trauma and revenge (starting with knives, iron bars, and monkey wrenches, pistols soon became everyday tools of self defense for many leftists and fascists, even escalating to submachine guns, rifles, and hand grenades), and riots intensified, with crowds looting armories and gun-stores and turning the weapons on the authorities. Spontaneous and planned molotovings, arsons (with so-called 'Nights of Fire' – diffusely coordinated attacks throughout whole cities and regions in quick succession to overwhelm authorities), the widespread brandishing and shooting of pistols during protests and marches (a three finger gun salute became popular among autonomists in 1977, the so-called 'year of the P38'), moped drive-

by shootings, kneecappings, violent invasions of fascists' offices or apartments, ambushes, and bombings of fascists, cops, and reactionaries (including more than a few pro-order communists and leftists) in high schools (with weapons caches hidden inside classrooms for clashes with fascists or cops), universities, and the street, and against capitalists, drug dealers, courts, and prisons became frequent. Extensive squatting, looting, graffiti, robberies and thefts, counterfeiting for money and documents, networks of hostel-like safehouses, the rejection of work, nomadism, hedonism, prison uprisings, jailbreaks and escapes, work-place strikes and struggles fighting directly against the unions and communists, as well as informal commando style attacks both claimed and unclaimed, all rose.

An anti-tech, anti-society struggle blossomed, with extensive electric pylon sabotages by sawing down, burning or bombing (roughly 1,200 of these attacks were estimated to have occurred from 1977-1989 in Italy alone), attacks on phone and TV antennas, railway sabotage, and sabotage against power stations. These often relatively easy practices generalized to a significant degree, with influential insurrectionary anarchist Alfredo Bonanno serving time in prison for translating a German how-to pamphlet on the subject. As the cost of living rose alongside fought-for wage increases, people 'self-reduced' prices, refusing to pay the higher costs, or refused to pay at all, en masse or individually, with wide practices of shoplifting (sometimes in the form of so-called 'proletarian shopping' – large groups would burst in and announce that everything in the store is free for the next ten or so minutes, refusing to pay and blocking the check-out lanes until the managers allowed everyone to leave with their goods, or the cops showed up), fare evasion, dine-and-dashing, refusing to pay one's bills or utilities (sometimes enabled by radical workers who'd turn people's electricity or gas back on after it was cut off), and invading cinemas or music festivals.

Similar and cross-pollinated – though of course unique – currents were also taking shape during intense struggles in these years in France (where councilist, situationist, delinquent, post-structuralist and *Invariance*-influenced remnants of May '68 had remained active and in touch with the Italian experience), Germany, and Switzerland, picking up there as unrest receded in Italy in the '80s, by then having slowly diffused (often alongside the spread of punk, radical environmentalism and antimilitarism, squatting and student movements, and alternative DIY culture and media) to Britain, Greece (with its own influential experience of intense popular and armed struggle of leftists, workers, and students against the military dictatorship there from 1967-1974, similarly counter-revolutionary successor governments, Capital, and for radical social and cultural change), Canada, and the United States (where some more explicitly anti-technology, anti-civilization elements had already congealed alongside early insurrectionary anarchist theory in Detroit in the mid '70s around the Fifth Estate periodical and the Black and Red press of Fredy and Lorraine Perlman). These influences had spread to Spain, Mexico and South America (one of the few regions where the more classical, 'official' anarchist mass organizations had still engaged in conflictual revolutionary activity into the second half of the 20th century) by the '90s, where in many places intense and unique trajectories of popular and armed struggle had also prefigured and informed these currents. The character of insurrectionary anarchism however was often quite different

in these new locales. In Greece, France, Germany, Switzerland, Spain, and the UK there had been prominent anarchist urban guerrilla groups (though without as intense of a real popular revolutionary possibility) which had avoided some of the more odiously authoritarian practices of the Red Brigades, and, perhaps as a consequence, the more subtly controlling and determinist nature of these kinds of groups was less apparent to many than had been the case in Italy. In some contexts in the '90s, like with the anti-globalization demonstrations, the rapid assimilation of what was an entire corpus of theory and practice developed amid years of specific context sometimes meant the loss of depth and nuance in exchange for uncritical adoption of superficial aesthetic or dogmatic ideals, initially developed for totally different socio-historical conditions. Others have pointed out how Canadian anarchists or anti-civilization theorists in the US have skillfully adopted Italian insurrectionary insights to local contexts.

### Timeline

**1977-2023:** In 1977, Sicilian anarchist Alfredo Bonanno, often considered a primary theorist in the development of contemporary insurrectionary anarchy, published his book *Armed Joy* (which a judge ordered banned, with all copies to be burnt, and for which he spent a year and a half in prison) calling for immediate attack without waiting for perfect social conditions, the affirmation of joy, the negation of work, and warning against the specialization, vanguardism, and privileging of armed struggle as a superior form of struggle, instead regarding armed action as absolutely necessary, but not sufficient or inherently elevated. As he put it, his aim in the book was, "To show how a practice of liberation and destruction can come forth from a joyful logic of struggle, not a mortifying, schematic rigidity within the pre-established canons of a directing group". At least 3,000 copies of *Armed Joy* were sold or given away in Bologna alone. He also publishes a book on the egoist Max Stirner this year. *Armed Joy* is often, and rightly, considered a foundational text of contemporary insurrectionary anarchy, but it emerged as part of a continuous anarchist development, in tandem with, and in reaction to, other currents of its extremely tumultuous time.

Bonanno had been born in 1937 in Catania, Sicily, to a fairly well-off family and had worked as an executive in industry, at the Bank of Sicily, and as the head of a pharmaceutical company. In the second half of the 1950's he studied existentialism and began writing and publishing essays, becoming more involved in anarchism in the '60s. In 1969 he traveled to Greece for armed resistance against the far-right junta there (many fascists had traveled there to fight on the other side, and Greek leftists received refuge and counterfeit documents in Italy) and was also present at the funeral of Giuseppe Pinelli in Italy (an influential anarchist whose suspicious death caused great uproar, having fallen from a police station window after being falsely accused along with many other anarchists in the deadly Piazza Fontana bombing). In 1972 he was tortured by Mossad agents while in the Levant engaged in guerrilla warfare against the Israeli state. He also seems to have traveled for a period of guerrilla activity in the Irish national liberation struggle. In 1972, after the unclaimed assassination of Luigi Calabresi – the cop seen as Giuseppe Pinelli's killer, itself only a few days after the anarchist Franco Serrantini was beaten to death by police at a demonstration, Bonanno published an essay in the magazine 'Sinistra

Libertaria', which he was an editor of, with the provocative title "I know who killed chief superintendent Luigi Calabresi" (His conclusion being that it had been the desirably excessive, vengeful will to dignity of all those oppressed by the same enemies as Pinelli had been), for which he was sentenced to two years in prison for apology of a crime. Bonanno continued his highly prolific writing and agitating after his release, starting the journal *Anarchismo* in 1975.

In 1977, the Northern Italian anarchist armed group Azione Rivoluzionaria (Revolutionary Action) merged some proto-insurrectionary ideas with a more specialist organizational style and carried out targeted shooting attacks, bombings, and an attempted kidnapping. In communiques they explicitly privilege the clandestine, professional nature of their struggle, going against the current represented by Bonanno, while also criticizing authoritarian groups like the Red Brigades. They incorporated feminism prominently into their writings and wrote that "Women, black people, prostitutes, homosexuals, proletarians and prisoners are our political allies". Members were believed to include some Germans, French, Swiss, and Chileans, with links to anti-Franco groups in exile such as GARI and MIL as well as older anarchists who were veterans of anti-fascist partisan war against Mussolini. Bonanno was arrested along with many other uninvolved as well as involved revolutionaries for these attacks (Ignoring the fact that Azione Rivoluzionaria had engaged in a heated polemic back and forth with Bonanno's side of the issue in *Anarchismo* as well as in the Bologna periodical *Insurrezione*). At trial, some of the defendants declare the organization officially dissolved, and Bonanno beats the charges. Some members of Azione Rivoluzionaria end up snitching in prison, while others joined up with the Leninist group Prima Linea or other similar formations. In 1978, lifelong Italian anarchist and anti-fascist of action Belgrado Pedrini reprinted the writings of illegalist Bruno Filippi under the title *L'Iconoclasta*. The same year, Bonanno received a cease-and-desist (the legal threats contained never followed through on) by Jean-Paul Sartre's lawyer for reprinting violent, inflammatory tracts by the 19th century anarchist Joseph Dejacques, with Sartre credited as the author. In 1979, Bonanno returned to prison for *Armed Joy*, as well as for reprinting Johann Most's 'The Religious Menace'.

Some practices of informal organization and insurrectionary involvement in intermediate, popular struggles that Bonanno helped popularize were elaborated in the Autonomous Movement of Railroad Workers of Turin (aka MAB, the Movimento Autonomo di Base) and in the 1981-1983 resistance to the construction of a US nuclear missile base at Comiso, Sicily. At Comiso insurrectionary anarchists participated in 'self-managed leagues' (aka 'autonomous base nuclei') alongside non-anarchists, with these leagues being based on permanent conflictuality, unmediated autonomy, and explicitly temporary organization between affinity groups on the sole basis of destroying the missile base project. The emphasis was on networked, informal, and directly self-organized insurrectionary forms immediately fighting concretely in and against everyday life without engaging in or tolerating representation or delegation. This was similar to earlier experiments in these organizational styles, often inspired by the models of the CUB (Unitary Committees of the Base) and Worker-Student Leagues (two similar and influential forms of self-organized worker and student struggle bodies, which however hadn't aimed as far as the later goals of total destruction of work,

the state, and the tyranny of the existent) of the late '60s, such as the Sinistra Libertaria anarchist network across Italy (and associated publication) Bonanno had helped start in 1972 and which was abandoned after the broader workers autonomy area it was adjacent to lost its connection with insurrectionary critique and was absorbed into movementist, crypto-organizationalist or massified groups like Avanguardia Operaia (which had also been formed around the CUB). Another example was the scene primarily based in Milan, Turin, and Genoa surrounding the heterogenous area of 'radical critique', which included anarchists (veterans of which later dispersed to become important parts of Azione Rivoluzionaria, and *Insurrezione* magazine, with some also associating with *Anarchismo*, and a handful opting half-heartedly for the more traditional urban guerrilla groups) and the autonomous Milanese anarchist group Azione Libertaria, which was established in 1970 and dissolved itself in 1972, opting to abandon self-conscious organization altogether in favor of the 'organic' workers movement.

In 1980, Bonanno was arrested at his home in Sicily along with another comrade and the Scottish anarchist Jean Weir. She had been translating the works published by his *Anarchismo* project into English since at least 1976 and printing the Scottish insurrectionary anarchist *Bratach Dubh* pamphlets she was an editor of, starting the hugely influential Elephant Editions publishing house with *Insurrection* magazine in 1982 (not to be confused with *Insurrezione*). They're accused of six armed robberies in the Bologna area, for subversive association for printing the journal *Anarchismo*, and other associates are arrested for dynamite and bullets found in searches. In the early 80's, Bonanno was present at the Brixton uprising in the UK, where mainly black youth rebelled in response to police brutality, harassment, and a weak government response to a suspicious fire which killed 13 black, impoverished teenagers and young people. 279 cops were injured in the uprising, 56 cop cars destroyed, and 28 buildings burned down, with widespread looting. In 1989 Bonanno is arrested along with another anarchist for an attempted armed robbery of a jewelry store in Bergamo, (they had grabbed 10 kilos of gold and some cash after pistol-whipping the jeweler with a .357 magnum, but a cop car happened to be right outside when they left) and released two years later without charges being filed. After his release he traveled to Spain and in 1993 publishes in a Sardinian insurrectionary anarchist paper a call for an 'Anti-Authoritarian Insurrectionist International' to coordinate anarchist insurrectionaries throughout the Mediterranean after the fall of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, in order to take advantage of the historical moment and counter the influence of capitalist, communist, and Islamist reaction. That year he also spoke at two conferences in Athens and Thessaloniki in Greece about insurrectionary anarchy. In 1994 Jean Weir was arrested with the other anarchists Antonio Budini, Christos Stratigopoulos, Eva Tziutzia and Carlo Tesseri for a bank robbery in Northern Italy, beginning a wave of repression against anarchists lasting until 2004, known as the Marini trials, with dozens of anarchists arrested and some sentenced after a very extended series of proceedings. Weir was released after several years. Bonanno was in jail from 1996-1997 on bogus charges of 'belonging to an armed gang', imprisoned for 18 months in 1998 for writing 'The Anarchist Tension', and in 2003 was sentenced to six years for armed robbery and other crimes. In October 2009, at 72 years

old, he was arrested with Christos Stratigopoulos for an armed bank robbery in central Greece. In 2013, Bonanno was denied entry to Chile where he had planned to participate in a series of anarchist conferences. He died in 2023.

**1980-2023:** In 1980, 13 year old Gabriel Pombo da Silva escapes from juvenile hall in Germany after being sentenced for a fight, and travels to the town of Vigo in his home country of Spain. There he participated in the worker and student revolts and street rioting, robbing food trucks to distribute among the poor. Using stolen guns, him and his companions moved on to robbing banks when he was 15 in order to support prisoners in struggle and their families. Imprisoned at 17 years old in 1984 for a robbery he didn't commit, he was systematically tortured in prison and took part in autonomous, conflictual anti-prison struggles there as part of the group 'APRE' (Association of Prisoners in Special Regime). Mistakenly released in 1989, he helped form an armed organization supporting prisoners from the outside, helping at least one comrade escape and attempting to break out others. They carried out at least 12 bank robberies, robbed and killed a mafioso who was a pimp and drug/weapons dealer, and shot a heroin dealer in the leg. In 1990, Gabriel and three other men and three women were arrested, and Gabriel took responsibility for all of their actions. He was also charged with possession of 60 grams of hashish on him at the time of his arrest. In prison he learns more about politics and becomes an anarchist, participating in the struggle against the FIES disciplinary prison regime and writing for publications on the outside. After at least 13 escape attempts, as well as hunger strikes, Gabriel finally escapes at the end of 2003. Determined to break out a comrade from prison, he carries out another bank robbery with an escapee he met through anarchist contacts, and takes part in several meetings while on the run with internationalist anarchists. 10 months later, he is arrested along with three anarchists and his apolitical sister after a shootout with police at the border of Germany and the Netherlands. Released in 2016, warrants from Spain, Italy, and an international warrant are put out on the basis that his release was in error and charging him with arms trafficking on the word of a snitch weapons trafficker he may have done business with in the '80s, as well as membership in the FAI/IRF for having spoken of wanting to tattoo their insignia on his chest. After a period in clandestinity, he was arrested in 2020, and finally released in July 2023. He remains a committed and active anarchist.

**October 9, 1981:** Fugitive Spanish anarchist and bricklayer Lucio Urtubia Jiménez is arrested in Paris for a massive fraud scheme where he successfully forged and circulated some \$20 million worth of Citibank travelers checks. These were cashed worldwide to fund revolutionary groups from Europe, Latin America, and the United States, as well as "ordinary decent criminals", and caused Citibank's stock to plummet, and eventually forced them to ban all checks over \$10. The French government decided a trial would be 'detrimental' to the state, and told Citibank to negotiate a deal directly with Urtubia, who demanded payment in order to stop the scheme. Citibank paid him the equivalent of around \$7.36 million for his printing plates and checks, and Urtubia served only six months for forgery. Born in 1931, Urtubia was a smuggler at 17, and after being conscripted became a black-marketeer of stolen army goods before deserting and heading to France where he became an anarchist. He robbed banks in the '50s and '60s to fund anti-Franco anarchist struggle, and claimed

to have robbed on a few occasions with the famous Spanish anarchist guerilla Francisco Sabaté 'El Quico'. Finding love in a riot during May '68, him and his new wife began a counterfeiting operation producing fake documents for revolutionaries and common criminals, while always keeping his bricklaying job. In 1977, he organized the escape of radical theatre director Albert Boadella from Spanish authorities. He was also (supposedly) involved in the capture of the nazi Klaus Barbie, helping fugitive Black Panthers escape the US, and was targeted by the CIA. After his release from prison, he went back to bricklaying, and in 1996 renovated a derelict building in Paris and opened it as an anarchist and anti-establishment social center. He died in 2020.

**November 5, 1991:** Swiss eco-anarchist Marco Camenisch is arrested by Italian Carabinieri along with a fellow anarchist after them being stopped by police leads to a shootout, wounding one of the cops and Camenisch. Two guns and six bombs are found where he was staying. Along with the shooting he is charged with a number of bomb attacks on Italian power lines between 1989 and 1991. He had been previously arrested in 1980 for a 1979 bomb attack against a Swiss power station. In 1981 Camenisch escaped along with five other prisoners, during the melée a prison guard was shot and killed and another seriously injured, although Camenisch maintains he wasn't part of the group that was armed. He was later charged with the 1989 killing of a Swiss Border Guard during the period he was in clandestinity. At trial he vouched that he would never shoot a "helpless, unarmed man" (the guard however was actually armed). Camenisch was released in 2017 and remains a committed, active anarchist.

**1992:** The Earth Liberation Front (aka ELF or the Elves) is founded in Brighton at the first British national gathering of radical environmental group 'Earth First!', in order to maintain separation of Earth First! from overtly illegal direct action. The name and basic structure were based off of the Animal Liberation Front, founded in England in 1976, a group organized in small autonomous cells which carried out illegal non-violent direct action to rescue animals from cruelty and exploitation and sabotage the infrastructure of those responsible. The three principles, similar to the ALF were: "To inflict maximum economic damage on those profiting from the destruction and exploitation of the natural environment, to reveal and educate the public about the atrocities committed against the earth and all species that populate it, and to take all necessary precautions against harming any animal – human and nonhuman". Any direct action taken to halt ecological destruction whilst keeping to the preceding guidelines could, if claimed as such, be considered an ELF action. On April 1st, 1992 the first claimed action takes place when the ELF destroys multiple machines of a peat company destroying peat bogs, sending a communique to *Green Anarchist* magazine. By 1994 local groups are carrying out actions in the Netherlands, Germany, Russia, Scandinavia, New Zealand, Italy, Ireland, Poland, Spain, France and Finland.

**January 1, 1993:** Nazi skinhead and lead singer of one of the United States' most popular white power bands is killed by a gunshot to the head in Portland, Oregon. 10 shots were fired from an intermediate cartridge, semiautomatic SKS rifle by SHARP (Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice) member Jon Bair after the car of anti-racist skinheads he was in followed by a car of nazi skinheads.

After pulling over and getting out for a fight, the nazis rammed their car into Bair's friend and pinned him against their car. Bair claimed to have been trying to shoot the trunk of the nazis car, not the occupants. He turned himself in after false news reports that the driver who was rammed was the shooter led the driver, Peter Moen, to snitch on Bair. Bair was sentenced to five years in prison, and remains an anti-fascist, although now largely disavows violence.

**May 28, 1996:** A bomb explodes at the Greek headquarters of IBM in Athens, causing extensive structural damage but no injuries. It's claimed by the Greek anarchist group Nihilist Faction, who had carried out other attacks earlier that year, planting bombs at a Supreme Court prosecutor's apartment and a shopping mall in downtown Athens.

**December 4, 1996:** Masked anarchists with guns break into the Italian consulate in Malaga, Spain, where they destroy office equipment, steal some passports and money and leave messages of solidarity with insurrectionary anarchists being prosecuted in Italy in the so-called Marini case (including Bonanno). About two weeks later, four people attempted to rob a bank in Cordoba, Spain. The robbery ended up in a car chase and shootout in which two policewomen were shot to death with a submachine gun before three of the robbers were wounded (only surviving on account of their bulletproof vests), and a bank employee they'd taken hostage was left paraplegic after being shot three times by the hail of police gunfire after they caught up to the stolen getaway car. Three of the four arrested robbers were known Italian anarchists, joined by a rebellious Argentinean. The event caused heated division in the Spanish anarchist world, with the powerful CNT anarcho-sindicalist group refusing to support the so-called 'Cordoba 4', while some local divisions argued against this decision, and more rebellious groups of anarchist youth did join in the international expressions of solidarity, marking a significant moment in the dispersion of these insurrectionary strains through Spain. In one incident, a small anarchist crowd gathers outside the courthouse with a solidarity banner signed with the acronyms of the CNT and numerous other mainstream anarchist organizations, leading the CNT to make public statements disavowing the protesters and claiming that none were actual CNT members.

Claudio Lavazza, the alleged shooter and one of the Italian anarchist robbers, was charged in 1999 along with two others arrested at the Cordoba robbery for the Malaga raid. Lavazza was a former member of the PAC (Armed Proletarians for Communism), an autonomist armed struggle group active in Italy in the late 1970's which carried out numerous robberies (some targeting banks), store attacks, shooting at police during mass protests (a cop was killed by the bullet of a member of a different group in a 1979 Milan incident – a not uncommon event in that era, but specifically infamous for the iconic photographs of the demonstrators, including PAC members, taking aim), kneecappings, and four homicides. These killings were of a prison commander and a counter-terrorism officer targeted for repressing them, and of a jeweler and a butcher (who was also a fascist), who were killed on the same day in two different cities for having shot dead proletarian robbers (a bystander was also killed in one of these previous shootings). During the attack on Pier Luigi Torregiani – the jeweler, Torregiani accidentally fired his pistol after being shot by the PAC militants, hitting his own 15 year old son in the spine and rendering him para-



plegic. Claudio Lavazza was arrested in 1979 for membership in the organization but was released after a few months for lack of evidence, going on the run in 1980 after being denounced by a snitch, and joining the COLP (Organized Communists for Proletarian Liberation), a coalition organizing armed jailbreaks of fellow militants, which he helped carry out, and fugitive support. He fled to France in 1982, receiving a long sentence from the Italian courts in absentia for alleged involvement in the PAC killing of the counter-terrorism officer. Moving to anarchism while in clandestinity, he allegedly took part in a robbery in 1986 of the Saint-Nazaire Bank of France, where the robbers made off with the equivalent of over \$11 million in cash after wounding a cashier held hostage who had grabbed for one of their guns (they later sent him DVDs, cigars, and perfume for his wife alongside an apology note while he recovered in the hospital). This was the largest or second largest such robbery in French history since the Resistance. Lavazza spent 24 years in Spanish prisons, 8 of these under the FIES regime which he took part in the struggle against. He published an autobiography titled *My Pestiferous Life* in 2012. He was extradited to France in 2021 for the Saint-Nazaire bank robbery, and exceptionally held in custody, like other anarchists in Europe recently, due to his unrepentant militancy, after being sentenced to 10 years (later reduced to 5) despite the fact that under French law the sentence should have run concurrently to his 25 years already imprisoned, the maximum Spanish term for his accumulated sentences, which is supposed to be respected by other EU member states. In 2021, an Italian court ruled his pending charges in Italy had expired under the statute of limitations. Lavazza's release date was last publicized as being set for 2025.

**1997:** A series of pipe bombs and one firebomb in Sandy, Utah, United States, claimed jointly by the ALF and the ELF in the first major US ELF action destroys four trucks and levels the offices of the Agricultural Fur Breeders Co-Op. Followed by tree spiking in Eugene, Oregon, arson of a medical laboratory under construction at UC Davis, arson of a meat packing plant, and fire at Bureau of Land Management (BLM) wild horse corral releasing over 400 horses. Over \$2.5 million damage is done in these attacks.

**1998:** Simultaneous arson of two USDA wildlife control buildings in Olympia, Washington by ELF cell, failed incendiary attack at Wyoming BLM wild horse corral, and the massive arson of five buildings and four chair lifts at the Vail Mountain ski resort in Colorado, this last attack alone causing around \$27 million in damages. In a communiqué, ELF states the fires were set on behalf of the lynx, whose habitat is threatened by the planned expansion of the resort. Arson also against Medford, Oregon logging headquarters.

**Summer 1998:** Letter bombs in Italy to politicians, journalists, magistrates and police officers, following the deaths of the anarchist squatters Maria Soledad Rosas (originally from Argentina) and Edoardo Massari. The activist couple, known as 'Sun and Flash', died by suicide in Italian custody after being falsely imprisoned for eco-sabotage actions against the development of the TAV high-speed rail (a struggle which continues to the present).

**1999:** Arson of two boats on property of ex mink rancher in Michigan by ELF, destruction by arson of a logging company headquarters in Monmouth, Oregon, and arson of offices at Michigan State University motivated by opposition to genetic engineering research believed to be taking place there.

**October 1999:** Parcel bomb sent to a Milan, Italy police station is defused, while a device placed in a vase in front of the Greek tourist office in Milan did not explode, bombs sent to the Greek Embassy and Chamber of Commerce in Madrid, Spain, and a device is placed in front of the City Bank in Barcelona, Spain. Claimed by 'International Solidarity' in solidarity with Greek anarchist Nikos Maziotis (who would later co-found the group 'Revolutionary Struggle'), who was arrested for planting a bomb in 1997 outside the Athens Ministry of Industry in solidarity with Greek villagers conflictually struggling against construction of a multinational gold metallurgy plant. Maziotis was unrepentant at the trial which included testimony from Alfredo Bonanno, as well as visits from Jean Weir and comrades from Sardinia and France, and with solidarity expressed from groups in Barcelona and the rest of Spain. Greek anarchist groups in the same milieu Maziotis was active in allegedly carried out numerous arson attacks in 1998 in response to the deaths in Italian custody of Maria Soledad Rosas and Edoardo Massari.

**1999-2002:** Greek anarchist group Black Star carries out numerous arson attacks, primarily targeting cars and offices of diplomats, embassies, and international organizations and corporations. Their attacks and communiqués target the imperialism of the US and its allies, and their local capitalist helpers, and express solidarity with Kurdish, Turkish, and Greek prisoners in struggle, and even Mumia Abu Jamal. The Greek prisoners they mention include the anarchists Nikos Maziotis and Simos Seisidis (sometimes transliterated as Simeon or Symeon Seisidis). Simos Seisidis had been charged with car arsons in 1994 and 1995, for participation in the Polytechnic uprising in 1995, and was arrested in the summer of 2000 for an armed bank robbery in an Athens suburb that June. In 2001, after a vigorous and combative solidarity campaign on his and other prisoners in struggle's behalf, he was convicted, given a suspended sentence of 5 years for the bank robbery, and released. Black Star and another group, Anarchist Faction, carried out a combined total of 31 attacks in 2000, and were probably the most prolific Greek anarchist formations that year. There were an average of about two anarchist bomb or arson attacks carried out per week in Greece in 2000, under many different names or left unclaimed, almost always in Athens, with no arrests or fatalities.

**2000:** Six arson attacks carried out by the ELF in Indiana, Colorado, and New York, burning six vacant or under-construction luxury homes, a luxury condominium, and the Monroe County Republican Party Committee headquarters. At least 14 heavy logging or construction machines sabotaged or destroyed in other ELF attacks in the US this year.

**April 24, 2000:** Parcel bomb sent to vice-director of Madrid newspaper and defused. Claimed by International Solidarity in solidarity with the Spanish prisoners under the FIES penal regime. Prisoners in Villanubla, Spain go on a walk strike in solidarity with those who sent the bomb. FIES, (Record of Prisoners Under Special Observation) was created by the Spanish prison system in 1991 in order to further punish and control prisoners who had been carrying out intense revolts in the Spanish jails over the previous decades. Two amnesties were granted following the dictator Franco's death, one in 1976 and one in 1977, but they were systematically denied to a large number of prisoners, the 'social' prisoners, whereas many of those declared or considered 'political' were

released. It was then that revolts started breaking out continuously, not only for the amnesty to be extended to all prisoners but also against the unbearable conditions inside the jails (solitary confinement, torture, beatings, overcrowding, rotten food, no medical attention). Prison infrastructures were smashed and destroyed as a result of the frequent riots that occurred in most Spanish prisons in the years following Franco's death. In spite of the appalling conditions that the FIES prisoners endured, they continued to struggle, gaining the support of comrades and organizations outside the prison. The FIES no longer exists in name, but it is now called PRIC (Programa Recuperacion Internos Conflictivos, Program of Recuperation of Turbulent Prisoners).

**June 2000:** Two devices defused in front of the court of Valencia, Spain. Incendiary device defused in Sant'Ambrogio Basilica in Milan targeting a mass for prison guards during the Catholic Great Jubilee of 2000. Both claimed by International Solidarity.

**December 19, 2000:** Bomb hidden in the steeples of the Cathedral of Milan (the Duomo) set to detonate at 3am is defused. Claimed by International Solidarity.

**December 19, 2001:** Italian-German individualist anarchist Horst Fantazzini attempts his last bank robbery in Bologna, (of a bank he had robbed decades before in one of his first robberies) and is arrested while bicycling from the scene. He dies five days later of an aortic aneurysm possibly caused by gunshot wounds he suffered in a 1973 escape attempt during a shootout in which he wounded three guards and held two others hostage before being attacked by dogs and shot several times, also losing hearing in one ear. Fantazzini was born in 1939 in Nazi Germany, the son of a Bolognese anarchist partisan forced into fugitivity after robbing a bank for the resistance, and a German factory worker. Moving to Italy in 1945 and growing up amid intense poverty and post-war devastation, he carried out his first thefts around 1954, of bicycles, motorcycles, and cars, before robbing a post office with a toy gun and stolen car in 1960, for which he was arrested. Arrested again after an attempted bank robbery, he broke out of prison using tied-together bedsheets after not being allowed to go to his mother's funeral. In 1967, while robbing on the run in Northern Italy he became known as the 'kind bandit' after sending roses to a cashier who had fainted during a robbery. He quickly amassed millions of dollars, living in luxury villas with his girlfriend, driving sports cars and jetting around Europe on first-class flights while writing mocking letters to the Italian police. Imprisoned in 1968 for a bank robbery in Saint-Tropez in Southern France, he mocked his judges and endured years of torture, attempting escape multiple times, once jumping down a five meter wall and fracturing both feet before walking to the nearest church and holding a priest hostage. Having been extradited from France to Italy, in 1975 he smuggled out and had published a book, *Ormai è fatta!* (And now it's done!) which he had written in 48 hours on a small typewriter about his 1973 escape, as well as a collection of poems. His partner at the time Valeria Vecchi was sentenced to seven years for attempting to break him out. Struggling alongside other prisoners against the institution, including members of the Red Brigades, he still never compromised his anarchist individualism. After a brutal police beating in 1978 that almost killed him, he smuggled out a document on the prison uprising he'd took part in there, against

the wishes of the Brigades, to be published by Bonanno's *Anarchismo*. His father died in 1985 and again he was not allowed to attend the funeral, nor the later one in 1993 for his father's subsequent partner and his mentor, the lifelong anarchist and anti-fascist militant Maria Zazzi, who had fought in the Spanish Civil War. Never losing heart nor the will to live, and always standing against snitches and those who renounced their rebellions, he escaped again in 1989, being recaptured after three more robberies while walking his dog in 1991 on the Roman coast. Inside, he wrote some short stories, winning a literary competition, and created works of graphic design, paintings and drawings which were shown in exhibitions in Bologna and other cities. Granted conditional release in 2001 after the release of a film on his life and a campaign for his release by his partner Pralina and his son, his health suffered with the neglect of the prison authorities in charge of his healthcare.

**May 21, 2001:** ELF sets off a firebomb in Seattle that causes \$7 million in damages at the University of Washington's Center for Urban Horticulture.

**July 2001:** Bomb explodes in front of Genoa, Italy police station, seriously injuring a carabinieri who picked it up, parcel bomb addressed to Italian billionaire Gilberto Benetton explodes without injury at his company headquarters, bomb sent to TV anchorman explodes in the hands of his secretary near Milan, pressure-cooker bomb with a kilo of explosives placed in the storage compartment of a booby-trapped bike near Bologna is defused (an anonymous tip had given the bicycle's location, claiming a large quantity of ecstasy was stashed inside), package identical to that sent to Benetton arrives at the Leftist legalized squat Leoncavallo Social Center in Milan except that it only contains dog shit, parcel bomb sent to the prefect of Genoa is defused, parcel bomb sent to the CATAC prison guard union in Barcelona. All are claimed as the first act of 'Cooperative of Hand-Made Fire and Related Items (Occasionally Spectacular)' on the occasion of the G8 Summit in Genoa. In their communique they reference the Greek groups Black Star and Revolutionary Cores, the Mapuche in struggle oppressed by Benetton, and combatant prisoners in Turkey held under a FIES-style regime.

**2002:** The FBI estimates in congressional testimony that the ALF/ELF have committed more than 600 criminal acts in the United States since 1996, resulting in damages in excess of \$43 million. University of Minnesota Microbial and Plant Genomics Research Center soil testing lab and construction trailer burned down by ELF, Northeast Research Station in the Allegheny National Forest burned down in Pennsylvania, the communique stating that, "While innocent life will never be harmed in any action we undertake, where it is necessary, we will no longer hesitate to pick up the gun to implement justice". Multiple mass sabotage attacks across the country against car dealerships, construction/logging equipment, restaurants, tree spikings, animal liberations etc.

**2002-2006:** In 2006, Greek police attribute seven armed bank robberies in Athens going back to 2002 and netting around 700,000 euros to an anarchist gang with the media-coined name of the 'Thieves in Black'. This followed an Athens bank robbery on January 16, 2006, where a security guard gave chase, leading to a shootout between police and the robbers in which three guards were wounded and the anarchist Giannis Dimitrakis was badly injured by three gunshots then pummeled with kicks by police as he lay in the street, being ar-

rested, with three others escaping. Named by authorities, charged in absentia for the robbery with huge fines also issued, and gone underground are Simos Seisidis, his brother Marios Seisidis, and Grigoris Tsironis. Dimitrakis admitted his part in the robbery but denied firing any of the shots that wounded the guards, saying he only shot once in the air during the hold-up, refusing to name any of the other robbers. Dimitrakis was very active in prison struggles and was viciously beaten by guards in 2008, leading to a massive wave of prison uprisings across Greece. Dimitrakis was released in 2012. On May 3rd, 2010, Simos was brutally maimed and arrested along with another person after cops responding to a seemingly unrelated armed robbery at a department store in Athens tried to stop him, he ran, and they shot him multiple times in the back of his leg with a machine-gun. Carrying a Glock pistol and a stun grenade when he was captured, with the other person also carrying a pistol, Simos' leg was so badly injured that it had to be amputated. Submitting a legal motion after for the coroner to forensically examine his amputated leg, the evidence showed the cop had likely fired from a crouched position behind a parked car. After being acquitted of the 2006 robbery, Simos was still held in prison, for the ridiculous charge of attempted murder of the cop who shot him in the leg. Acquitted again and released in 2012, he was briefly rearrested in 2015 for having violated his suspended sentence for the bank robbery in 2000 before receiving a judgement of time served. In 2015, Grigoris Tsironis was arrested with Spyros Christodoulou in a militarized raid during which the other occupant of the safehouse, Spyros Dravilas, committed suicide. Four handguns and three AK-47s were seized in the raid. Dravilas was an unrepentant expropriator and struggler in prison, having violated his furlough in 2006 and been rearrested in 2008, accused of having in 2006 helped break out of jail the notorious bank robber and Robin Hood type figure Vassilis Palaikostas (kidnapped industrialist G. Mylonas in June 2008 and received \$19 million ransom) and his cellmate by hijacking a helicopter with a pistol and hand grenade with an accomplice (apparently Vassilis' brother Nikos, also a prolific bandit and escapee) and forcing the pilot to land in the prison's yard. Recaptured two years later, Vassilis and his cellmate again escaped by helicopter from the same facility in 2009, and Vassilis remains at large. Dravilas had violated his furlough and gone on the run again in 2013. Christodoulou had first been convicted for robbery in 1999 and had been a fugitive since 2007. Tsironis was acquitted of participation in the 2006 robbery. Marios Seisidis, the last of the four accused in the Thieves in Black case, was arrested with the anarchist Kostas Sakkas in 2016 for using forged documents and car registration plates, car theft and disobedience to authorities. Sakkas was also on the run after having been arrested with others in 2010 while leaving a warehouse containing guns and explosives, later being accused of membership in CCF. Sakkas and CCF have both always denied this, with a CCF member saying Sakkas' fingerprints were on a bag with explosive residue from a CCF attack only because they were housemates and the bag was in a common area. Sakkas has not admitted to belonging to any terrorist organization or to any acts previous to this, though he does admit that he's an anarchist and possessed the weapons in this context. Going on a 38 day hunger strike after being held over the legal pre-trial detention limit, Sakkas was finally released on bail in 2014 and went on the run. After the raid, police attempted to

link Tsironis, Christodoulou, and Dravila to Revolutionary Struggle and a series of nine bank robberies supposedly carried out from 2013-2015 alongside the fugitive, prisoner in struggle, and robber Giorgos Petrakakos (also accused of membership in Revolutionary Struggle, which he denies, among other contributions allegedly having stolen cars used by RS members, as well as Palaiokostas). Nikos Maziotis, according to the police narrative, took part with them in one of these bank robberies in 2013. Police even claimed their involvement in a 2008 bank robbery in the Athens suburb Holargos where a policeman illegally moonlighting as a private security officer was shot dead, based on DNA evidence supposedly connecting that robbery to the getaway speedboat used in the most recent robbery for which they were sought. According to police, the gun that killed the cop had been used in a previous robbery to steal a different gun which was found in Palaiokostas' hideout, along with an ID of Petrakakos, and an RPG-7 of the same batch used in a Revolutionary Struggle attack. Sakkas and Marios Seisidis were also tied into the police narrative and accused of involvement with the robberies and Revolutionary Struggle, after their fingerprints and DNA were supposedly found, respectively, on a getaway car used by Petrakakos, and maps and books in the home of Tsironis. Most of the relevant charges in these accusations ended up in acquittals at trial. In 2019, Kostas Sakkas was arrested with Giannis Dimitrakis for an armed robbery of a money transport about to refill an ATM at a university hospital, while disguised as doctor and patient. They were taken into custody at the scene by a counter-terrorism unit already actively surveilling them at that moment, and Sakkas was sentenced to almost eight years and Dimitrakis to 11.5. Dimitrakis was attacked by fellow prisoners in 2021 and hospitalized in a coma (later recovering) after standing firm in his anti-authoritarian values in the face of the hierarchy of the state-enabled prison mafias.

**February 26, 2002:** Bomb explodes outside the Ministry of Interior office in Rome. Claimed as the first act of July 20 Brigade', named in solidarity with anti-globalization protestor Carlo Giuliani, murdered by police on that date during riots in Genoa amid the 2001 G8 summit, which had drawn around 200,000 protesters. In a different act of repression in Genoa during the G8, hundreds of masked cops raided two buildings temporarily housing sleeping protesters (predominantly quite mainstream, nonviolent leftists), alternative journalists including Indymedia, and lawyers, seriously injuring 61, three critically with one left in a coma, subjecting hundreds to brutal beatings, extreme torture and humiliation at the scene and for hours at the jail afterward, leaving the buildings, street outside, and jail covered in pools of blood and excrement, planting evidence, destroying documents, giving fascist salutes and forcing arrestees to sing fascist songs, with portraits of Mussolini hanging on the walls of their station. None of the cops were ever punished with the reason that torture is not a specific crime in Italy, the few that were convicted and sentenced for other charges didn't serve any punishment due to the statute of limitations, and many soon returned to work.

**December 9, 2002:** Two bombs exploded at night in the closed Coco Park of the police headquarters in Genoa, claimed by July 20 Brigade. The blasts were supposedly consecutive and separated by a short delay, possibly to target police responding to the scene.

**December 2002:** Parcel bomb defused at the office of newspaper *El Pais* in Barcelona, three bombs addressed to the Rome, Italy headquarters of the airline Iberia defused, parcel bomb explodes at the headquarters of the Italian national broadcasting company, causing no damage other than smoke. Claimed as the first act of the 'Cells against Capital, its Prisons, its Jailers & its Cells' (aka the Five C's, after the abbreviation of their name in its original Italian) in solidarity with the Spanish prisoners struggle against FIES. In their communique they warn tourists and businessmen that Iberia planes won't be safe from Christmas until New Years Eve. They also call out and threaten a famous motorcyclist to terminate his ad contract with the Spanish oil company Repsol.

**2003:** At least 10 arson attacks in the United States by ELF cells nationwide. Eight luxury houses, a 206 unit condominium (causing damage in excess of \$50 million), and a car dealership warehouse are completely burned. At least 348 cars are damaged or destroyed in these and other ELF attacks in the US this year.

**January 18, 2003:** Arson at ski resort Abetone in Tuscany, Italy completely destroys a ski lift, causing severe economic damage for the whole ski season. Three cell phone towers are burned down two days later, and two more follow in the next couple months. Graffiti at the scenes and a letter claim the actions in solidarity with Marco Camenisch for his 51st birthday. He had recently been extradited from Italy to Switzerland. Among numerous solidarity actions, in September 2002, another cell tower had been burned for him and other prisoners in struggle, and in December 2002 an envelope full of bullets was sent to the Swiss ambassador in Rome with the message "Free Marco, death to the Swiss State and its cops."

**June 17, 2003:** Bomb explodes outside the Cervantes Spanish School in Rome, damaging its gate. Claimed by the Five C's.

**September 5, 2003:** In downtown Athens, two bombs explode 15 minutes apart outside a courthouse with no warning, slightly injuring two police officers responding to the first blast. Claimed as the first act of the group Revolutionary Struggle, it coincides with the trial against members of the Greek Marxist urban guerrilla group 17 November.

**October 8, 2003:** Bomb placed outside Rome headquarters of Iberia defused. Claimed by International Solidarity.

**December 21, 2003:** Two devices explode in front of the house of Romano Prodi, former Italian Prime Minister and President of the European Commission at the time, near Bologna. Claimed by the Cooperative of Hand-Made Fire and Related Items (Occasionally Spectacular), and is the first to also use the name 'Federazione Anarchica Informale' (Informal Anarchist Federation aka FAI).

**December 2003-January 2004:** Seven letter bombs sent from Bologna to European Union representatives, senior officials and institutions. The targets include Romano Prodi (again), the president of the European Central Bank, Europol, Eurojust, the president and the vice-president of the European People's Party, and a British member of the European Parliament. Three go off at their targets without injuries, the rest are defused or intercepted. All mail from the Emilia-Romagna region to EU bodies is halted and examined and a multi-national counter-terror taskforce is set up to identify the attackers. The bombs include leaflets calling the campaign 'Operation Santa Claus' and an-

nouncing the FAI, an umbrella including the Cooperative of Hand-Made Fire and Related Items (from Bologna), the July 20 Brigade (from Genoa), the Five C's (from Rome), and International Solidarity (from Milan) who claim the attack. The same month the FAI release an open letter to the anarchist and anti-authoritarian community attacking the economic and military consolidation of the EU and the international domination and internal and external borders of 'Fortress Europe', as well as Capital, the police, and prisons. They argue in favor of a non-democratic "chaotic and horizontal organization" where anonymous and independent cells who are only militants when they prepare and execute attacks and who engage in dialogue through practice and common communication channels of the movement, in order to avoid the subsumption of life by armed vanguardism and counter the threat of infiltration. They criticize the dominion of men over nature and call for immediate attack without waiting for popular revolution (while working to avoid any collateral damage), while still condemning the oppression of the masses and alluding to the possibility of their revolt. The initials of the acronym are the same as the gradualist, syndicalist Italian Anarchist Federation, Italian Transport Worker's Federation, and the Italian Fund for the Environment, which they sarcastically refer to as a "pure coincidence" and "apologise to the people concerned."

**January 12, 2004:** 24 year old Luca Farris is arrested in Cagliari, Sardinia, after a letter with spent bullet casings and fireworks is sent to Romano Prodi and claimed by 'Anonymous Sardinian Anarchistic Insurrectionists' on December 27th, 2003. ASAI had claimed 20 attacks in the past year and police claimed his involvement in 15, supposedly including the letter attack. Police say material for 12 bombs was found in his bedroom in his family home. He supposedly admits involvement in about 20 attacks including on gasoline distributors and a far-right party's headquarters, while also criticizing the social-democratic mayor. He says he acted alone, however police publicly question this. He later notes that his attacks, somewhat isolated from generalized rupture or close coordination with other anarchists, didn't have their full impact, however he doesn't regret or denounce them at that time.

**March 29, 2004:** Two bombs explode near Genoa police station without injury. Claimed by July 20 Brigade – FAI.

**April 1, 2004:** Two letter bombs sent to officers of the Italian Department of Prison Administration, defused. Claimed by International Solidarity – FAI.

**Fall 2004:** In Milan, all at night: two bombs explode outside temp agency, another explodes outside another temp agency, bomb explodes outside a prison and another explodes inside a trash truck outside the prison. All claimed by a new group 'Metropolitan Cells – FAI'.

**December 2004:** In Rome: Letter bombs sent to prison guard union and national military police offices. Both defused, claimed by International Solidarity – FAI.

**2005:** The FBI describes the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) as the United States' greatest domestic terrorist threat, one responsible for over 1,200 "criminal incidents".

**2005 to 2023:** At least 229 bomb attacks in Chile, mainly in Santiago, claimed under the names of over 80 different mainly anarchist groups and cells. Targets include banks, police stations, army barracks, churches, embassies, the



headquarters of political parties, company offices, courthouses and government buildings. 21 people are injured, none seriously. In 2009, Mauricio Morales dies after a bomb he was carrying prematurely detonated, and in 2014 Sergio Landskron Silva also dies after a bomb he carried detonated prematurely. In 2011, Luciano 'Tortuga' Pitronello's bomb detonates prematurely, blinding him, setting him on fire, and injuring both hands severely. He is condemned as a terrorist by his own sister and abandoned by some former comrades fearful of repression. Yet against all odds, he turns around his unbearable situation, persisting in his physical therapy to recover beyond expectation, overcoming suicidal depression, and defeating legal efforts to prosecute him under an anti-terrorist law. He was sentenced to six years of house arrest, and remains unrepentant and committed to anarchist struggle.

**March 2005:** Bombs explode at two military police barracks in Genoa and two bombs explode at night at military police barracks in Milan. No one is injured, claimed as a joint attack by 20 July Brigade – FAI and Cooperative of Hand-Made Fire and Related Items (Occasionally Spectacular) – FAI. Bomb explodes at night outside courthouse in Rome with no injuries, claimed by new group 'Horst Fantazzini Revolutionary Nucleus – FAI.'

**May 2005:** Letter bomb to Turin, Italy police station slightly injures police-woman, others sent to director of immigrant detention center in Modena, Italy and a police commissioner in Lecce, Italy are defused. Claimed by new group 'Narodna Volja – FAI.'

**November 2005:** Bomb defused near forensic police barracks in Parma, Italy, letter bomb sent to mayor of Bologna defused. Claimed by Cooperative of Hand-Made Fire and Related Items (Occasionally Spectacular) – FAI.

**March 4, 2006:** Two nazi skinheads are hospitalized, one of them stabbed, by anti-racist skinheads at a punk festival in San Bernardino, California. Police use tear gas and helicopters to try to disperse the crowd, who then destroyed two cop cars, injured four cops, set fires, looted, and vandalized over 40 surrounding businesses.

**May 30, 2006:** Greek politician Georgios Voulgarakis survives an attempted assassination claimed by Revolutionary Struggle, who remotely detonate a powerful bomb strapped to a bicycle along a route he's supposed to pass down only moments later. A cop is slightly injured in the blast. They say they targeted Voulgarakis due to his role in two corruption scandals, one for phonetapping and the other for kidnapping Pakistani migrant workers in a racist and unfounded anti-terror operation. Since their first attack in 2003, RS had carried out three bombings in 2004 and two in 2005, against police, government, and bank targets.

**2006-2007:** Two bombs explode at night outside military police school in Fossano, Italy, three bombs placed in trash explode at night in rich neighborhood in Turin, Italy, letter bomb sent to editor-in-chief of Turin newspaper explodes, bomb sent to offices of construction company renovating immigrant detention center defused, bomb sent to mayor of Turin defused. The only injuries are slight ones to the newspaper editor. Claimed by new group 'Anonymous and Terrible Revolt – FAI.'

**January 2007:** Rocket propelled anti-tank grenade fired at American embassy facade in Athens in attack claimed by Revolutionary Struggle.

**April 2007:** Shots fired by Revolutionary Struggle at police station in Athens suburb of Nea Ionia.

**October 2007:** Police officer is killed in Santiago, Chile and another cop is wounded during a bank robbery after a shootout with the robbers breaks out during their escape. One person is arrested that December and sentenced to 3 years, and in March 2008, after a period of fugitivity, Freddy Fuentevilla and Marcelo Villarroel are arrested in Argentina for that robbery as well as a bank robbery in September 2007 in Valparaíso, Chile. Fuentevilla is an ex-militant of the anti-Pinochet communist armed struggle group MIR and Villarroel is an anarchist and ex-militant of the Mapu Lautaro, another anti-Pinochet communist armed struggle group. Juan Aliste Vega, another anarchist and ex-militant of Mapu Lautaro was arrested in 2010 for the two robberies, as well as a third, after having been on the run since 2007. Villarroel and Vega had previously been political prisoners for their anti-Pinochet urban guerrilla actions (Vega having been convicted of shooting a cop to death during an expropriation of condoms and medicines in 1991), and Villarroel faced further charges for old attacks carried out in that period. They faced severe repression while inside and carried out hunger strikes, while combative solidarity actions proliferated on the outside. Fuentevilla was released in 2018, only being convicted of accessory to murder, attempted murder, and one of the robberies, while the others, convicted on more charges remain inside with projected release dates in the 2050s.

**December 27, 2007:** Nazi soccer hooligan stabbed to death in Sofia, Bulgaria. Australian man Jock Palfreeman, then in the British Army, had come across 16 fascists attacking two young Roma boys while on a night out, and attempted to scare them off with a knife but was himself attacked, and defended himself in the fight, wounding another of the nazis with a slash wound in the chest. Palfreeman was convicted of murder despite acting in self-defense, and has been very active in prison struggle, having been beaten by guards multiple times and carrying out hunger strikes against the poor conditions and repression he's faced. Palfreeman has become active since his imprisonment in the broader anti-fascist and anarchist movement, writing in solidarity with groups like CCF.

**2008-2016:** Leaked 2016 confidential report by Mexican CISEN national security and intelligence organization states that 220 'violent direct actions' including bombings, arsons, sabotage, and armed attacks have been claimed in communiques by 46 insurrectionary anarchist groups and cells since 2008. 52 actions are identified from the Earth Liberation Front, 44 from the Animal Liberation Front, 32 from the Práxedes G. Guerrero Autonomous Cells of Immediate Revolution – FAI (CARI-PGG/FAI), and at least 30 from FAI cells not including CARI-PGG or CCF-FAI Mexico.

**August 2008:** Four nazis in Moscow wounded after being stabbed by antifa.

**September 11, 2008:** Carabinero police officer in the Santiago, Chile suburb of San Bernardo is wounded with shotgun pellets to the face during a clash commemorating anti-Pinochet resistance on the anniversary of the coup. The attack is claimed by the Revolutionary Anarchist Front, who say they also shot guns in the air and threw molotovs and stones at the cops throughout the popular riot in which the police were forced to retreat due to the numbers and intensity of those fighting against them. The group carried out several other

attacks over the years, including some very large arsons of political party offices with the officials inside (though no one was killed), subway sabotages, and bombings. Some other groups later accused the group of being a false flag operation due to the sophistication of some of their attacks.

**January 2009:** In response to the killing of Alexandros Grigoropoulos, shots fired by Revolutionary Struggle at police guarding the Ministry of Culture building in Athens, seriously wounding one police officer.

**2009-2011:** 'Revolutionary Cells' anarchist group in Buenos Aires, Argentina robs private security companies and police of their weapons, as well as two banks. Six bomb attacks in 2009 against banks, corporate offices, and police buildings and a Molotov attack on a police station. Seven bomb attacks in 2010 against banks, offices, police buildings, and politicians homes, killing one municipal employee of a police school. In 2010 they also carry out a shooting attack on a police station without injuries, a failed robbery of an armored truck which kills two police officers and injures two, and the next day they steal 60,000 pesos from another truck, killing one and injuring another. In 2011, one member is shot dead by police in a stolen car, and another is wounded and arrested after a shootout between him and another member against the police, which also wounded a police officer.

**2009-2010:** Letter bomb sent to director of immigrant detention center explodes in Gradisca d'Isonzo, bomb partially explodes at night at prestigious Bocconi University in Milan, bomb sent to Northern League party headquarters in Milan explodes. One postal worker is injured in the last attack. Claimed by 'Sisters in Arms – Mauricio Morales Nucleus – FAI'.

**February 2009:** The anarchist group 'Sect of Revolutionaries' first become known with a communique threatening to kill Greek police officers at the police station in Korydallos and claiming responsibility for shots fired at the station as well as a hand-grenade thrown which failed to explode on the 2nd of February, days before the communique was found. The communique was on a CD left atop the grave of Alexis Grigoropoulos, anarchist teenager whose killing by the police triggered the 2008 Greek riots.

**March 2009:** Five bomb attacks throughout Athens by Revolutionary Struggle, on banks, the stock exchange, and a McDonalds and one attack in Thessaloniki. Extensive damage and one person receives mild injuries.

**May 30, 2009:** Queer anarchist march of around 100 participants in Chicago causes pandemonium. As part of 'Bash Back!' convergence, a queer dance party goes off in Chicago subway train car, with making-out, loud singing and chanting, vandalism, and general reclamation of the space as public queer occupation. The participants spill out into the streets of the assimilationist gay neighborhood of Boystown, blocking traffic and spontaneously marching in a joyous atmosphere, "with people dancing wildly and wearing lingerie as masks. Some were completely naked except for their face coverings." Participants attack luxury cars and drag newspaper boxes into the street behind them. Police cars trailing the march repeatedly drive into people's legs, knocking them onto the ground, a participant's foot was intentionally ran over by cops, and the police beat at least 10 marchers with batons. At least five successful de-arrests take place, although four people are arrested and released in the morning, facing trumped-up charges. Liberal/leftist components in the march had dragged

the debris back out of the street and shouted at those who put them there for not being 'non-violent', saying there was no 'consent' for the march to become a 'riot'. They criticize the train party for being disrespectful to poor, black, Chicago locals, and claim the action was racist because the locals 'wouldn't understand', and the queers weren't all locals. These same, mainly white liberals, were apparently conspicuously absent in helping provide jail support to those arrested. This event is a major spark for a schism that would eventually lead to the de-liberal-izing of Bash Back! as more insurrectionary, confrontational elements became dominant.

**June 17, 2009:** Sect of Revolutionaries assassinates an anti-terror police officer whilst he was guarding a witness against a member of Revolutionary Struggle. He was reportedly shot whilst in his car outside the witness' home in the Patissia neighborhood of Athens before the unknown attackers fled by motorcycle.

**September 1, 2009:** Bombs explode at night in Mexico City branch of BBVA bank, as well as a pastry shop, with no injuries. Claimed by 'Black and Green Revolt' in collaboration with 'Subversive Global Liberation Front' in the first major claimed anarchist attack in Mexico during this period. From this point on, there is a bombing or other attack around once a week until the end of the year, when attacks intensify even further, continuing to the present.

**September 8, 2009:** Bombing of Bancomer branch in Mexico City in first claimed attack by 'Práxedes G. Guerrero Autonomous Cells of Immediate Revolution'. They go on to carry out at least 32 claimed attacks, mainly bombings, letter bombs, and arsons, as well as some uncounted robberies, mainly in Mexico State but also coordinating with other cells nationwide, before dissolving in 2013, to carry on action under different names or without claims. Around December 2010 or early 2011, they join the call for an international FAI.

**September 24, 2009:** Queer anarchist black bloc up to 200 strong in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania during anti-G20 riots. At least the fourth instance of rioting in the city that day/night, the Bash Back! associated bloc smashes countless windows, overturns dumpsters in the street, sets fires, vandalizes buildings including a police substation and multiple banks, and throws bricks and rocks. A frat boy homophobe who called the rioters faggots is beaten to the ground with punches, kicks, and pepper-spray, and his homophobic friends are also attacked. After the bloc disperses, riot police initiate a massive show of force including with tear gas against student protestors/rioters in the area, some wearing togas, team jerseys, and high heels, clashing with them even inside their dorms. The police response backfires, with the dense concentration of their units and excessive force causing a generalisation of rioting to the general public and college students and the explosion of conflict across the whole side of the city.

**November 30, 2009:** Fleet of 28 new police trucks destroyed in arson attack in Tijuana, Mexico before they can be delivered to police. First claimed action, in solidarity with anarchist prisoners worldwide, by 'Anonymous Anarchist Action' aka AAA to dispel media narrative that it was simple vandalism or a narco attack.

**November 2009:** Talk by Holocaust denier David Irving at a Chicago restaurant is disrupted after 5-8 masked anti-fascists storm in, flipping tables, throwing paint on his books, as well as throwing chairs and bottles, hospitalizing one

attende.

**January 1, 2010:** Three police vehicles of Tijuana municipal police as well as one private police car are claimed machine-gunned in various parts of the city, with no victims reported. Claimed by Anonymous Anarchist Action who also claim to have committed seven successful robberies of OXXO convenience stores so far, killing a police officer who tried to intervene. The claim is in response to the arrest of two apparently unaffiliated robbers during a different OXXO robbery, who police were trying to blame the other crimes on.

**March 10, 2010:** Two men spotted allegedly breaking into car in Dafni, Greece at 4:40am and possibly fired on the police officers. One of them, Lambros Fountas of Revolutionary Struggle is shot dead, but the other escapes. However, the escapee left forensic evidence which supposedly linked him to previous attacks.

**March 21, 2010:** All four nazis who showed up to a white pride march in Chicago are injured in u-lock beatings by the “clandestine anti-fascists” of Southside ARA. They are arrested minutes later. The ARA escape uninjured with no arrests, and doxx all four.

**March 28, 2010:** A powerful, unclaimed pipe-bomb outside an institute for training public officials in Athens kills a 15yr old Afghan boy, seriously injures his 10yr old sister and slightly injures their 45yr old mother. The family, who lived nearby, had just happened to walk past when the bomb, left in a bag in the trash, exploded around 10:50pm. Police speculate that the bomb was a trap the boy had disturbed, as the family supposedly dumpstered necessities in the neighborhood each night. Media and the authorities speculate, with no evidence, that the perpetrators were anarchists/anti-authoritarians or leftists. CCF release a statement saying that it wasn't them, and that unlike in this attack, they always use two timers in their devices and place warning calls to avoid harm to unintended victims. Only eight days previously, CCF had carried out three bomb attacks related to immigration, destroying the offices of the fascist Golden Dawn party, targeting a repressive Pakistani community leader, and an unoccupied bus shelter outside a police station that had been the setting for numerous instances of racist police beatings.

**2010:** House of a transphobic murderer has its windows smashed and fire thrown inside in Milwaukee after his address is read aloud by a person wearing a mask at a torch-lit march for the transgender woman he killed. Queer anarchists are present and the event is referenced in several publications related to the legacy of Bash Back!

**2010:** Bombs sent to Swiss, Chilean, and Greek embassies in Rome. Two employees are injured; one each at the Swiss and Chilean embassies, bomb sent to the Greek embassy is defused. Claimed by ‘Lambros Fountas Revolutionary Cell – FAI’, referencing the Greek anarchist member of Revolutionary Struggle killed in shootout with police that year.

**2010:** Sardinian anarchist Davide Delogu is arrested and sentenced to 18 years for several thefts, robberies, and attempted homicide allegedly of someone who tried to prevent his escape. He's received additional charges for attempted escape in 2011, prison riots in 2013, and another escape attempt in 2017. He carried out a successful hunger strike to be taken out of solitary confinement, and published a zine about prison struggle titled “A konka arta!” in 2020 as

well as writings in solidarity with other anarchist prisoners. He was released to house arrest in 2023, with pending trials including for attempted escape.

**April 16, 2010:** Nazi is ambushed in Albany, New York while waiting for a crew he mistakenly thought was coming to protest the Albany Pride March with him. He's beaten until the cops show up by "a motley crew of queers, anti-fascists, and anarchists", who escape afterwards with no arrests.

**April 23, 2010:** Three nazis in full SS outfits with swastika tattoos are beaten in Philadelphia outside a concert by a crowd of 40-50 "young, heavily tattooed hardcore kids." One is smashed with bottles, punched, stomped, and kicked while he's curled up on the ground and the other two are beaten severely with improvised weapons including cue balls, before bouncers pull them off. The attackers afterwards proudly displayed the authentic nazi caps they'd taken from their victims.

**May 13, 2010:** A bomb exploded outside Korydallos Prison in Athens, injuring a woman. Police suspected the Revolutionary Struggle. Only one day after the explosion in Athens, a second bomb exploded in the court of Thessaloniki. One person was injured. The building is heavily damaged inside.

**Summer 2010:** In Russia, nazi skinheads are repelled by antifa with warning blasts from a shotgun at a Moscow Death Brigade concert.

**June 25, 2010:** An unclaimed parcel bomb exploded within the Greek Ministry of Public Order. The bomb was addressed to the Minister of Public Order, Michalis Chrysohoidis, but was instead opened by Giorgos Vassilakis, his aide. Vassilakis was killed in the attack.

**July 19, 2010:** Sect of Revolutionaries claims responsibility for the killing of centrist journalist Sokratis Giolias in a communique. Several attackers in bulletproof vests and uniforms of the security services had called him into the street via his intercom before shooting him 15 times with guns forensically linked to the previous attacks and killing carried out by the group. In their statement, the Sect say that he had historically given favorable, manipulative coverage to those involved in doping and corruption scandals around the 2004 Olympics held in Greece as well as in other episodes, as part of the international, neo-liberal restructuring and imperialism of the attempt to integrate Greece into the global economy and system. He had also published disparaging comments about Sect of Revolutionaries and Revolutionary Struggle, supposedly threatening them, and had posted exclusive photos of the Afghan child killed in an unclaimed bombing. They say he took advantage of the new form of media in anonymous blogging (autonomous, liberatory versions of which they praise) to support the system while posturing as an enemy of it, criticizing corrupt journalists who had police escorts while himself secretly having police escorts. The Sect proclaim their opposition to Greece's capitalist democracy and intention to turn the country into a revolutionary warzone in the face of the expanding tourist industry and foreign investment. The head of the Greek Cyber-Crime Unit was subsequently investigated after apparently having notified Giolias, who was about to publish an investigative story about corruption, of an upcoming police search of his residence after a defamation complaint, so that he could hide any evidence. Supposedly the official also warned Giolias only a few days before his death of a contract for his murder that had been put out. This official was accused of some form of involvement in the killing, which he denied. Evidence also emerged that

one of the police escorts of Giolias had been approached by two unaccounted-for men dressed as police officers prior to the killing who asked him for information about Giolias, which he gave, not suspecting their identities.

**Fall 2010:** Two rapists in the United States 'radical' community are attacked in their homes, one in Santa Cruz, one in New York City, by two different groups of anti-authoritarian feminists. One is hospitalized with a baseball bat and the other leaves town. Communiques are posted online afterwards.

**December 9, 2010:** Mexican State police Commander Isaías García Zúñiga found dead with a gunshot to the right temple, at the 29th kilometer of the Mexico-Texcoco highway in the municipality of Chicoloapan. 'Mariano Sánchez Añón Insurreccional Cell – CI-MSA/FAI' in Mexico claims the killing in a later interview. The authorities had treated the attack as a suicide, closing any line of investigation.

**Spring 2011:** Letter bombs sent to Livorno, Italy parachute brigade (seriously injures an officer), Swissnuclear in Olten (injures two people) Switzerland, and the director of Korydallos prison in Greece (defused). Claimed by FAI.

**April 2011:** Two bigoted, nazi-adjacent skinheads are allegedly stabbed multiple times in Chicago by anti-racist skinheads, with another smashed in the head with a 2x4, in a beatdown among several others on this group in the few years prior. Fliers calling out the leader of a related group as a crypto-fascist are passed out and his info along with other members is doxxed online. Later, his hacked private emails and facebook messages are posted. These events lead to the disbanding of the doxxed skinhead group, and heavy fragmentation of the assaulted skinhead group who suffer further attacks (without retaliation) and many of whom are also later doxxed.

**April 15, 2011:** Four nazis from the NSM (National Socialist Movement) are hospitalized (with one suffering a shattered cheekbone and others reportedly 'gushing blood'), with more injured and their vehicles and property damaged in Trenton, New Jersey after a group of 30 members of ARA (Anti-Racist Action) confront the similarly sized group of nazis outside their hotel. One anti-racist is slightly wounded and two anti-racists are arrested after the fight involving knives, hammers, pipes, chairs, and wooden boards. A communique for the attack states, "Many of us at the melee were people of color, working class, immigrants, women, queer, transgendered, and/or people on parole or probation. The logic of the victim is constantly thrust upon us. We are said to be 'at risk' and must be protected and pandered to. It is said that we need others, usually the State, to protect and stand up for us. But, through the action of splitting Nazis' heads open, we rejected the logic of victimization... If the Nazis call us bitch ass faggots, they might not be that far off the mark. But if they conflate those slurs with weakness, the six hospital visits they faced would prove otherwise."

**May 21, 2011:** Five nazis in Worcester, Massachusetts are ambushed in their library meeting room by 10-20 local anti-fascists who block the only exit and smash the nazis in their faces and heads with u-locks, chairs, and kicks. No injuries or arrests to the anti-fascists.

**2011:** 'National Anarchist' nazi in Chicago is beaten with metal pipes by anti-fascists outside a doom metal show. He was previously the recipient of a curb-stomping in 2007. Ex-member of the nazi Christian 'Creativity Movement'

is also hospitalized by anti-fascists in Chicago.

**2011-2014:** 'Friends of the Earth – FAI' carries out dozens of arson attacks in Buenos Aires, Argentina, burning around 300 cars, mainly police vehicles, public transport, and high-end luxury cars. In September 2013, the group bombs a Gendarmerie building, slightly wounding two gendarmes on guard.

**2011:** 'Vandalika Teodoro Suárez Gang' carries out eight bomb attacks in Buenos Aires against banks, corporate offices, and police buildings, with no injuries. Another bomb in 2016 is deactivated and claimed by the group.

**2011:** A series of attacks against corporate buildings and ATMs in Sulawesi, Java and Sumatra are claimed by 'Long-Live Luciano Tortuga Cell – FAI, Indonesia Section'. Members Billy Augustian and Reyhard Rumbayan aka Eat attack an ATM in Yogyakarta, but are both quickly arrested after dropping incriminating evidence near the scene. Other members of the same cell in Sulawesi respond to their imprisonment with a series of attacks, including incendiary attacks on power stations and luxury cars. Many further attacks from other FAI cells around Indonesia have followed up to the present, as well as in occupied West Papua.

**September 16-October 25, 2011:** 'CCF Mexico – FAI' announces itself with three simultaneous arsons in an industrial park in Naucalpan, Mexico, just north of Mexico City. Seven more large scale arsons follow in a little over a month, with coordinated attacks stretching between the Mexico City region to the states of Veracruz and Jalisco.

**November 19, 2011:** Transphobe in Lansing, Michigan who harassed radical trans guy in bathroom is beaten by him and other trans guys, being pinned on the floor of a stall and smashed in the face for several minutes while the other attacker stomps him in the groin. A communique is posted online afterwards.

**Winter 2011:** Letter bombs sent to CEO of Deutsch Bank in Frankfurt, Germany (defused), director of Italian state tax-collection agency in Rome (injures his hands, blowing off part of his finger and almost blinding him after his glass desk shatters in the explosion), and Greek Embassy in Paris, France (defused). Claimed by 'Free Eat and Billy Cell – FAI', a reference to the arrested Indonesian FAI attackers.

**2011-2013:** In Moscow, anarchists under the name ELF Russia, and in anonymous public dialogue with global FAI cells, burn four police stations, at least four cop cars, firebomb a car dealership, carry out five attacks on forest-cutting equipment, three arsons, and a bombing near a traffic police post.

**May 18, 2011:** Two Greek police officers shot and wounded by two people suspected of links to CCF after police attempt a random check on them in the Pefki area, Athens. The two decided to not stick around, the cops ran after them and after a short chase, the two shot towards the cops injuring two but one also fell injured from the bullets of the cops and was arrested while the other managed to get away after stealing the police car and dragging a cop for a while, dumping it two kilometres away.

**March 8, 2012:** Bomb explodes at night outside Rome, Italy bank branch, with no injuries. Claimed by 'Antisocial Nucleus – FAI.'

**September 19, 2012:** Three municipal police officers in Mexico City shot dead in their car in attack claimed by Mariano Sánchez Añón Insurreccional Cell – CI-MSA/FAI. They later claim to have also been responsible for the killing of



three local police officers found shot dead in an alley in Chimalhuacán, also in the state of Mexico, one week earlier, and for previous unclaimed killings of police before forming as a named cell.

**May 2012:** At least five nazi skinheads and musicians attacked with pool cues, pool balls, bottles, and fists in Trenton, New Jersey, after playing nazi songs at a working-class, multiracial bar, while opening for an anti-racist punk band. Three nazis are knocked unconscious leaving pools of blood and teeth on the pavement, with one supposedly continuing to receive a severe beating of heavy blows to the face for several minutes even after being knocked out. The primary assailants are allegedly a Jewish punk and four black punks, who the nazis had been antagonizing. Police reportedly don't show up.

**May 7, 2012:** Roberto Adinolfi, the chief executive of Ansaldo Nucleare, an Italian nuclear power company controlled by the aerospace and defense conglomerate Finmeccanica is shot in the kneecap by Alfredo Cospito and Nicola Gai under the name 'Olga Cell – FAI/FRI' (named after imprisoned CCF member Olga Ekonomidou). At trial, Cospito states, "In a wonderful morning in May I acted, and in the space of a few hours I fully enjoyed my life. For once I left fear and self-justification behind and defied the unknown." In 2016 and already in custody, Alfredo Cospito was sentenced to life without the possibility of parole, accused of a bomb attack on a carabinieri school in Fossano in 2006. In 2022, he launches a hunger strike against the severe 41bis prison regime he is under, in 2023 after extensive global solidarity attacks and 180 days of life-threatening hunger strike which lead to a heart attack, the Italian supreme court reduces his sentence from life to 23 years.

**May 19, 2012:** Eight white supremacists injured in a Chicago suburb, as well as a restaurant manager who tried to restrain an anti-racist for arrest, and one anti-racist. Three of the white supremacists are hospitalized after 18 masked men and women of HARM (Hoosier Anti-Racist Movement) and ARA (Anti-Racist Action) storm the restaurant where the group of eight are meeting. The anti-racists are armed with railroad hammers, steel batons, baseball bats, and nunchakus. Five are arrested in their getaway car and convicted for the attack, with all free by the end of 2014. The main white supremacist organizer is charged for child pornography.

**May 2012:** Two sabotage attacks on railway signals near Bristol cause severe delays and the cancellation of services two months before the start of the Olympic Games in London, insurrectionary anarchists under the banner of the FAI claimed credit. Arson attack is also carried out by FAI against the Lord Mayor of Bristol, Geoff Gollop.

**May 29, 2012:** Four Bolivian youths arrested in connection with a dynamite attack on a Bolivian military barracks and the bombing of a car dealership throughout May. The FAI claimed responsibility for both incidents.

**June 27, 2012:** Three anarchists with pistols and an AK-47 drive a stolen van through the glass facade of Microsoft's Greek headquarters before marching out the two security guards on duty, dousing the van in gasoline and lighting it on fire, setting off gas canisters loaded inside the vehicle, causing major damage to the building's lobby but no injuries. The attack is claimed by 'Deviant Behaviors for the Expansion of Revolutionary Terrorism FAI-IRF'.

**January 3, 2013:** Arson of a transmitter in Bath, U.K claimed by FAI cell

resulting in television and radio outages to 80,000 homes.

**January 14, 2013:** The Greek anarchist 'Popular Fighters Group' claims a shooting attack on the headquarters of the governing New Democracy Party, no one is injured.

**January 20, 2013:** Bomb attack at shopping mall in Athens, warning calls are placed to two media outlets however two security guards are still injured. Claimed by 'Promoters of Social Explosions' and 'Wild Freedom'.

**February 2013:** Nikos Romanos, close friend of Alexis Grigoropoulos, arrested with three others after a car chase and charged with armed robbery at two banks in Northern Greece. Brutally beaten by police with his mugshot poorly photoshopped, leading to mass protests. Sentenced to 18 years in prison for incendiary attacks targeting politicians, journalists, companies, transport infrastructure, and a fascist, occurring in 2012 as part of participation in anarchist groups 'FAI – Fires on the Horizon', 'FAI-Unit Fire to the Galleys', and 'Militant Minority'. Released in 2019 after hunger strike, mass solidarity actions, and legal campaign for educational furlough.

**April 2013:** Letter bombs sent to newspaper offices in Turin, Italy and private investigation agency in Brescia, Italy fail to explode. Claimed by 'Damiano Bolano Cell – FAI', named after Greek imprisoned CCF member.

**October 11, 2013:** Nine nazis are attacked and at least three are injured in Terre Haute, Indiana by three anti-fascists who ambushed them at a meetup location prior to a protest. The leader of the nazi 'Traditionalist Youth Network' is left with a mouth full of blood after several punches to the face, while another is punched in the face repeatedly while being held by his shirt, a third is thrown to the ground and then punched in self defense by an antiracist bystander. The bystander is pepper-sprayed by the nazi, who inadvertently spray Matthew Heimbach, leader of the nazi Traditionalist Worker's Party. The bystander is arrested and released the next morning on a misdemeanor charge.

**November 1, 2013:** Two members of the fascist Golden Dawn political party are killed and a third seriously injured in a motorbike drive-by shooting outside the offices of the party in Athens. Anarchist communique under the name 'Fighting People's Revolutionary Powers' claims the attack in retaliation for the murder of anti-fascist rapper Pavlos Fyssas by Golden Dawn members.

**December 15, 2013:** Multiple nazis as well as anti-fascists are injured in a clash in Stockholm, Sweden. A peaceful anti-fascist demonstration against nazi organizing and assaults of anti-fascists in the area, with numerous elderly people and children in attendance, had been attacked by a large group of nazis armed with knives and metal bars. Revolutionary anti-fascist Joel Almgren is arrested after stabbing a nazi in self-defense.

**December 30, 2013:** Popular Fighters Group claims a shooting attack on the Athens house of the German ambassador; over 60 shots are fired from two AK-47s. No one is injured.

**January 5, 2014:** Greek individualist anarchist Giannis Naxakis, recently imprisoned for a 2011 bank robbery, is ambushed in Koridallos Prison by at least 5 members of CCF who beat him with wooden sticks, hospitalizing him with a broken arm and leg. Naxakis had been arrested at a cafe with 4 other anarchists (all also charged with criminal organization for DNA supposedly found at other bank robberies, while two were fugitives with warrants from the double

robbery Nikos Romanos and others had been arrested for) who were all abused during arrest and refused to give fingerprints or DNA. Naxakis refused legal representation or to make any statements at trial despite fraudulent government testimony, planning only to appeal any sentence he received. The attack was in response to a public letter he had published two days before, where he criticized the CCF group in his cell block, saying that after other imprisoned anarchists had attacked a guard the previous month CCF had dismissed the action as pointless and harmful for jeopardizing the relative position of privilege they held in the block where their cells weren't frequently searched etc. Naxakis also said he thought the attack on the guard was mistaken as the tensions involved could have led to a heavier rupture if not discharged then. He writes about the "constant movement" of CCF prisoners to and from the sergeant's office after the attack, saying they were promising that the disruptive anarchists would be ousted from the block. He says they have dropped out of the war against the existent, calls them "Disgusting", and that they are using "sick tactics of slander" against the attackers. He also makes a passing comment about expecting this authoritarianism from the closed, formal groups of prisoners from ex-USSR countries, such as Albanians. CCF, in a public letter after the attack on Naxakis, harshly criticizes him for "slander", calling him a childish, frivolous pretender and that he doesn't understand the hard struggle CCF has undertaken resulting in the authorities fearing them, other prisoners respecting them, and all anarchist prisoners being generally looked out for by the anarchist networks upon entry or transfer. They claim he only cares for his personal safety and criticize his criticism of the guard's beating, saying his statement against them is an attempt to curry favor with the authorities before his trial. CCF says they never lie, and would never criticize such an attack, having beaten guards themselves multiple times including during an escape attempt, and that their stance was to separate the two strategies of attacking guards in order to escape versus attacks in response to guards violating the privacy of one's cell, while saying they don't privilege one over the other. They deny any cooperation with authorities, saying they were making it clear to the administration that they would retaliate if any of those who beat the guard were harmed in any way. They also deny any immunity from searches, claiming to have experienced many, and that any leniency is the result of the authorities' fear of anarchist retaliation inside or outside prison. They claim to welcome criticism, but assert Naxakis' was insulting, bigoted, slanderous, not based on argument, and with selfish, anti-insurrectionary motives. They say his slander is worse than the cops or judges, threaten to respond fatally the next time, and justify the attack, "in order to put an end to the public downfall." Anarchists in other wings of the prison publish a letter supporting Naxakis, denying the claims of his cowardice or collaboration, and criticizing CCF's divisive use of violence against other anarchists as reducing debate to an authoritarian calculus of force, as well as their preoccupation with macho honor, objective truth, and vision of themselves as the only legitimate anarchists of action. They don't comment on Naxakis' criticisms of CCF's previous behavior, and make clear their criticism is not towards any anarchist tendency or informal organization as a whole but towards specific practices. They characterize interpersonal violence not directed at authoritarians as inherently un-anarchist and itself authoritarian. Naxakis clarifies that he did not

mean to imply CCF were snitches and that his mention of Albanians only referred to specific people and organizations and that it's ridiculous to think he's racist. He reasserts the criticism of CCF's actions toward him as authoritarian and misguided, and says the only way his text could be considered insulting and slanderous is through its, "deviation from the norms of politically correct language, a language which (CCF) theoretically... themselves are hostile to as well."

**January 12, 2014:** Popular Fighters Group claims an RPG attack on the Greek headquarters of Mercedes-Benz, which misses its target and lands in a field.

**January 21, 2014:** Tamara Sol enters a bank in the suburb of Pudahuel in Santiago, Chile and fires multiple shots at a security guard, wounding him, shouting "this is for revenge!" for her comrade Sebastian Oversluij, who was killed by a security guard a month prior at the same bank during an attempted expropriation. She took the guard's gun and fled, but was arrested shortly after, and sentenced to seven years imprisonment by the Chilean courts. Tamara's family, having both participated and lost relatives in the struggle against the Pinochet regime, consistently defend her actions and vocally attack the system that imprisons her and killed her comrade Sebastian. In January 2018, Tamara attempted to escape from Valparaiso Prison, and was injured by both the fence's razor wire and the guards who beat her after the attempt.

**April 2014:** Nikos Maziotis, member of Revolutionary Struggle disappears during his trial at Korydallos prison, and is recaptured in July 2014 after a shootout with police in Central Athens during a robbery, leaving himself and two others including one police officer injured.

**May 25, 2014:** Greek anarchist group 'Organization for Revolutionary Self-Defense' claims shooting attack against headquarters of Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) in Athens, no one is injured.

**August 25-26, 2014:** Bombs placed in Mexico City at night, one explodes at the office of the Attorney General of the conservative National Action Party, and another left in the Church of Our Lady of Loreto is defused. The attack is claimed as the first by 'The Informal Feminist Commando of Anti-Authoritarian Action' (aka COFIAA) who also claim to have left three other bombs in the area which will explode in 72 hours, no further blasts are reported. The group carries out at least eight other bombings and one incendiary attack until 2017 against government and industrial offices, churches, a bank, and the Women's Institute of Mexico City. From 2021-2023, at least four more bomb attacks are carried out by at least two other named Mexican anarcho-feminist groups.

**September 9, 2014:** An unclaimed blast in Santiago, Chile injures 14 at a fast food restaurant after police ignore the warning call. One of 30 bombings or attempts so far that year in Santiago.

**December 12, 2014:** Shooting attack against the Israeli Embassy in Athens, no one injured. Claimed by Popular Fighters Group. Further attacks – bombings without injuries, are carried out by the group until 2018, targeting industrial offices, courthouses, and the media.

**May 20, 2015:** Incendiary attack in Athens suburb at office of insurance agency owned by an advisor to Golden Dawn. The father of the insurer is injured as he tries to put out the flames. Claimed by 'Sahzat Luqman Attack Team' in

revenge for Golden Dawn 2008 murder of Pakistani immigrant Sahzat Luqman and 2013 murder of anti-fascist rapper Pavlos Fyssas.

**March 23, 2015:** Courthouse in Greece is lit on fire before an incendiary device is placed, injuring a police officer who tried to extinguish the fire. Claimed by 'Anti-Fascist Front – FAF'.

**2016:** Nikos Maziotis again attempts escape when romantic partner and fellow RS member Pola Roupa attempted to help Maziotis along with other political prisoners escape from prison via a hijacked helicopter. Reportedly Roupa rented a helicopter before pulling a pistol on the pilot, a retired police officer, in an attempt to force him to fly over the prison. The pilot instead started a landing and attempted to force the weapon from Roupa.

**June 2, 2016:** At least a dozen Trump supporters in San Jose, California are attacked and injured in a bloody attack by a largely latinx crowd of counter-protestors waiting for them as they leave a Trump rally. At least one cop is also injured.

**July 7, 2016:** Drug dealer killed in motorcycle drive-by shooting in Exarchia; Athens neighborhood populated by many anarchists. Claimed by anarchists 'Armed Group of the Protectors', who say it was in response to assaults on three anarchists and a drive-by shooting on a squat carried out by him.

**July 31, 2016:** Shooting attack against Mexican Embassy in Athens, no one is injured. Claimed by Organization for Revolutionary Self-Defense.

**November 10, 2016:** Hand grenade thrown at police guard of French Embassy in Athens, the officer is wounded. Claimed by Organization for Revolutionary Self-Defense.

**November 13, 2016:** Prominent nazi and football hooligan in Leipzig, Germany has his apartment completely destroyed by a group of masked antifa who smash their way in while he's out and destroy his plumbing, belongings, and appliances with hammers and a fire extinguisher filled with bitumen. The assault is in revenge for his participation in a coordinated nazi mass attack on the left-wing Leipzig neighborhood Connewitz earlier that year, and is recorded with a GoPro and uploaded online.

**January 10, 2017:** Shooting attack in Athens against national police bus, two cops wounded. Claimed by Organization for Revolutionary Self-Defense.

**February 1, 2017:** Six far-right activists wounded at UC Berkeley in California, and others pepper-sprayed during anti-fascist no-platforming of nazi and pedophile Milo Yiannopolos' speech. Two of the injured suffer concussions and broken ribs after they're hit in the head with sticks, pepper-sprayed, pushed to the ground and kicked. Another is beaten unconscious and kicked to the ground. Windows are smashed, fires break out, rocks are thrown at police, commercial fireworks are set off, and several banks and businesses in downtown Berkeley have their windows smashed afterwards. The speech is quickly canceled after the counterprotest begins.

**April 7, 2017:** Longtime nazi musician is hospitalized after him and his adult daughter (also a nazi) are knocked unconscious at a punk show in Philadelphia by a group of anti-fascists. One of the alleged attackers, Paul Minton, had previously been a nazi, and would revert back to nazism a few years later.

**April 11, 2017:** Nazi is hospitalized after being beaten with pool cues in a bar by anti-fascists in Chicago who recognized him from a doxx published in his

previous home city of Portland. His new address is doxxed after the attack. He had been infiltrating the local radical community in Portland and was suspected of snitching on them, as well as for a 2010 shooting of an ARA member which left him paralyzed for some time.

**April 15, 2017:** Three far-right activists left heavily bleeding and seriously injured in Berkeley, California after being smashed in the head with a u-lock, four others are also hit in their heads and less seriously injured. Takes place during a pro-Trump rally held by multiple far-right groups. Other rightists are also injured in separate fights this day, including one smashed in the head by a group with skateboards after being knocked to the ground. The u-lock attacker is arrested and sentenced to probation.

**June 14, 2017:** Assault on four Golden Dawn members at their party office in Aspropyrgos, Greece, leaving them injured, documents are also stolen and posted online. Claimed by Sahzat Luqman Brigade.

**August 27, 2017:** Five far-right activists are injured, with two hospitalized, in Berkeley, California during a vastly outnumbered far-right protest which is routed by antifa. A cop is also injured.

**September 12, 2017:** Arson at hangar of police forensics service in Grenoble, France causes major damage to the building, destruction of around 50 police vehicles and minor injury of one cop. Attack is claimed by 'Nocturnals Cell' and 'Cell of the Anarchist Revolt of the Exiled Gendarmes' (aka RAGE), and is timed to coincide with nationwide labor protests.

**November 6, 2017:** Shots fired at riot police outside of PASOK headquarters in Athens, no one is injured. Claimed by Organization for Revolutionary Self-Defense.

**February 26, 2018:** Grenade attack on police station in Exarchia, a passerby is injured. Claimed by 'Armed Revolutionary Forces'.

**September 27, 2018:** Two Proud Boys who were harassing an anti-fascist event in Denver leave in ambulances after a group of around 14 anti-fascists confronts a group of 10 Proud Boys.

**October 2, 2018-2023:** City council representative from nazi NPD party has kneecaps broken and receives kicks to the head from four masked attackers in front of his home in Leipzig. Later that October, another nazi is left with head lacerations and other injuries near Leipzig after an attack by four antifa. January 2019 in the leftist neighborhood of Connewitz in Leipzig, a sewer worker wearing a hat with nazi symbolism from a nazi brand is attacked by at least five people with hammers and pepper spray, causing skull fractures. He claims to no longer be a nazi, but his claims to have received the hat 15 years prior are undermined by the brand not existing until only 4 years prior. In October of 2019, 11 antifa stormed a nazi bar in Eisenach in Thuringia, attacking the nazi owner and all five patrons present with pepper spray, batons, and fists, injuring all of them and damaging the bar. That December, this same nazi was attacked around 3:15am with an axe handle, hammers, batons, and pepper spray as he walked to his front door but he was able to react before being overwhelmed. The four attackers chased the nazi's acquaintances who unexpectedly came to his aid, injuring three and destroying their car. Two of the antifa, including a well known defendant identified by police as Lina E., were then arrested in their getaway car. In February of 2020, at least eight antifa ambushed a group of six nazis re-

turning to the town of Wurzen near Leipzig by train from a nazi demonstration, one of whom was carrying a swastika flag. Four of the nazis were injured in the attack with batons and pepper spray, some seriously. German police charged Lina E. and three others with the attacks, using the testimony of a former leftist accused of sexual assault who turned snitch. He described tightly coordinated tactics with prior training, planning, and recon, stolen license plates, single-use burner phones used to coordinate more impromptu ambushes after a nazi had been spotted and followed, a 30 second time limit on attacks, designated scouts, drivers, incapacitators using pepper spray and blows to the head and legs to immediately knock the target down from behind, lookouts, attackers, a tactical emphasis on surprise and numerical superiority, an aim to cause maximum permanent injury as quickly as possible without killing, fake IDs, wigs, and funding for travel and tools via credit card fraud and theft. These tactics were generally highly effective, and though making good use of big and strong people, also enabled physically smaller attackers to exercise a formidable threat. Lina E. received a five year prison sentence in 2023, with the others getting shorter ones. Warrants issued for others supposedly connected to the attacks resulted in them going on the run. Thousands in Germany protested the sentences, with 50 cops injured in clashes following the verdict. In January 2021, the nazi bar previously attacked was targeted with explosives, with no injuries. In July two Northern German tourists who had made homophobic comments in a restaurant in Leipzig were pulled from a taxi shortly after and beaten. In September a bicyclist was hospitalized in Leipzig after being attacked with striking tools while wearing clothing popular with the far-right. Other attacks on German nazis suspected by police of being connected to this antifa network continued, with a nazi near Leipzig hospitalized after being beaten in his home in March 2021 by a group of five masked attackers in police uniforms. Police claim one of those suspected in this attack had fought in Syria as a sniper with the YPG. In Eisenach in Thuringia two months later, five attackers in police uniforms broke down the door of a nazi who had participated in several attacks on left-wing people (including one involving hundreds of nazis invading Connowitz), tying him and his girlfriend up, breaking his leg, and dousing him with chlorine. In January of 2023, two nazis received serious head injuries (fractured skull for one of them) after being attacked in Erfurt, Thuringia with an axe, clubs, pepper spray, and further kicks and punches while lying on the ground, with witnesses describing six men and two women in balaclavas as the attackers, who screamed “They’re fucking nazis!” as they ran away. In February 2023 attacks took place in Budapest, Hungary during the large annual gathering there of nazis from across Europe called the ‘Day of Honor’ – a commemoration of a failed Nazi and allied Hungarian attempt in 1945 to break out of a Soviet siege of the city. Eight or nine people were injured, four seriously, with batons, hammers, weighted gloves and pepper spray in surprise attacks by masked groups. Police claimed 15-20 antifa were involved in the five separate beatings, and a handful were arrested soon after the attacks. Many others sought by police for the attacks, including Lina E.’s partner, who had already been on the run after a warrant was issued for him after the attacks in Germany, were able to go into clandestinity. Most of the suspects were German, along with some Italians, Hungarians, Albanians, and Syrians. Rightwing Hungarian authorities claimed many of the

injured were innocents targeted based only on their clothes, however at least one of those most severely injured, and represented as a random bystander, was a well known nazi musician who admitted to attending the 'Day of Honor' events. Many of those targeted were also followed for several hours prior to being attacked, calling into question the idea of the attacks being random.

**December 30, 2018:** Four nazi skinheads are attacked in Philadelphia by anti-racist skinheads and punks at a hardcore show. Three of them are hospitalized, one with a broken arm.

**March 22, 2019:** Grenade thrown at police booth outside Russian Embassy in Athens, causing minor damage. Claimed by 'FAI/IRF Revenge Cell Mikhail Zhlobitski', named after the 17 year old Russian anarcho-communist who carried out a suicide bombing in an FSB office in October 2018 in Arkhangelsk, Russia, injuring three FSB officers in retaliation against the sweeping arrests on bogus charges and torture of Russian anarchists and anti-fascists.

**June 2019:** Anarchist Giannis Michailidis escapes from the agricultural prison of Tyrintha, alleged by police to be a member of Conspiracy Cells of Fire. Known as 'The Syntagma Archer' for raising a bow against police in a 2011 Syntagma square protest, he had also previously been arrested with Nikos Romanos after their 2013 double bank robbery. Also in June 2019 two anarchist robbers and an associate with alleged ties to the Conspiracy of Cells of Fire were arrested attempting to rob a money delivery van in Thessaloniki. Michailidis was recaptured in 2020 and given conditional release in 2023 after a hunger and thirst strike and solidarity campaign.

**July 13, 2019:** Privately owned ICE detention center in Tacoma, Washington attacked at 4am, the day after a protest there, by 69 year old anarchist and self-proclaimed, unaffiliated anti-fascist Willem van Spronsen, aka Emma Durruti (this was Spronsen's internet handle, it's not clear how Spronsen identified). Spronsen was armed with an AR-15 and threw molotovs and flares at multiple buildings and cars at the facility, igniting at least one car, and was shot dead by police while attempting to ignite a large propane tank, and after pointing the rifle at cops, according to police.

**July 25, 2019:** Five cops injured, two seriously, in Huechuraba, in Santiago Province, Chile after a parcel bomb sent to their station explodes. Anarchist Francisco Solar is convicted of the attack, as well as three other bombs, one unsuccessfully targeting the Minister of the Interior. Anarchist Mónica Caballero is also convicted of two of the other bombings. Both had previously been convicted in 2013 for two small bombings in Zaragoza and Barcelona, Spain, against Catholic churches with historical fascist symbolic importance and in retaliation for the colonization of South America, under the name Insurreccional Commando Mateo Morral (which also claimed a cathedral bombing in Madrid), where warning calls had been made and no injuries occurred. Also arrested with them in Barcelona and later released were three others, including people from Argentina and Italy. Mónica and Francisco were released and expelled from Spain in 2017. They had both previously been accused in the Caso Bombas case in Chile in 2010 and had their charges dropped after 9 months in high and maximum security pre-trial detention and a lengthy hunger strike along with others accused.

**September 11, 2019:** Three cops wounded in attack in Santiago, Chile



during riots commemorating anti-Pinochet resistance on the anniversary of the coup amid a popular uprising sparked by transit fare increases. Claimed by the anarchist group Antagonic Nuclei of the New Urban Guerrilla aka NANGU. Over 15 molotovs had been thrown at the tear gas vehicle, two of the cops were hit with shotgun pellets, and a third was injured after crashing the vehicle. The group had carried out numerous attacks since 2011, burning cars during marches and carrying out bombings and arsons of banks, public transit, and political party offices, setting a public bus ablaze after threatening the driver and firing shots in the air on one occasion. Some cells separated after the wounding of the cops, and the group later published an online book analyzing the uprising, titled "On Insurrectional Ghosts and False Flags".

**November 1, 2019:** About 10 people break into Golden Dawn offices in Greece and set off incendiary-explosive device, igniting a fire and causing damage to the interior. On the same day, two men suspected of membership in Organization for Revolutionary Self-Defense are arrested after searches find multiple AK-47s and explosives. Police claim their involvement in attacks, as well as commercial burglaries, and state the Organization also raised funds through bank robberies. In 2021, another suspected member is arrested after an armed bank robbery, with a warrant from 2019 for a robbery of a casino.

**June 1, 2020:** Four firebombs thrown at police station in Athens suburb of Nea Ionia, three cop cars damaged. Claimed by 'George Floyd Revenge Team'.

**August 29, 2020:** Far-right activist is shot in the chest with a pistol and killed in Portland, Oregon after participating in a pro-Trump caravan attacking anti-racist protestors throughout the city. He had a holstered loaded Glock and was holding bear spray and a baton. Michael Reinoehl, the shooter, claimed it was self-defense and that the man he shot was about to stab someone, though no knife was found. Reinoehl was a self-identified although unaffiliated anti-fascist, and immediately went on the run, giving an interview from fugitivity to *Vice News* before being shot dead six days after the shooting in an assassination by a federally led task force (endangering children in nearby apartments with dozens of shots from rifles and handguns), whom Trump commended for their 'retribution', claiming to have personally 'sent them in' to 'get' Reinoehl. Police systematically attempted to cover up the nature of the shooting with evidence tampering and inconsistent and false statements about Reinoehl shooting at police with a rifle or pistol or pointing it at them (later police statements said his body had a pistol with a full magazine in his pocket and a disassembled assault rifle in a bag in his car, with one empty shell casing in his car tracing back to the rifle), while 21 of 22 witnesses reported them immediately firing on him after arriving, without issuing any verbal commands. Reinoehl had been shot in the arm in a confrontation the month before. He also said in an interview before his death that his house had been shot at, had claimed the Proud Boys were trying to kill him, and the day after the initial killing, police responded to his house after other tenants reported it shot at before 1pm that day.

**September 5, 2020:** Proud Boy in Portland, Oregon is ran over by a pickup truck and suffers a fractured skull and ruptured eardrum after a far-right memorial for the man killed by Reinoehl. The attacker was someone who was filming him and other Proud Boys inside a bar beforehand, and is arrested afterwards.

**November 4, 2020:** Three far-right activists, two of whom are Proud Boys

are non-fatally stabbed multiple times in Washington D.C. and Enrique Tarrío, the national leader of the Proud Boys, is slashed in the stomach the day after the 2020 US election. Police report they're searching for three unknown black suspects, two men and one woman, who attacked the victims after they left a bar popular as a Proud Boy hangout, where they were watching election coverage. One of the Proud Boys is stabbed in the neck and video posted online shows him with blood gushing down his clothes, him and the others who were stabbed spattering the sidewalk with blood as they flee in panic. The attackers appeared to recognize and target one of the victims, a far-right black woman known for defacing Black Lives Matter murals. Another person is stabbed in clashes between Proud Boys and counter-protestors in D.C. 10 days later.

**November 18, 2020:** British counter-terrorism police execute coordinated raids as part of the international anti-anarchist Operation Adream on five collective living spaces and hangouts, and arrest anarchist Toby Shone in the remote Forest-of-Dean at gunpoint after a car chase, for being an alleged administrator of the highly influential counter-info website 325.nostate.net (online since 2006). Shone is charged with providing a service enabling others to access terrorist publications (for two videos, showing how to improvise an explosive shaped charge, and how to burn down mobile phone transmitters), with fundraising for terrorist purposes (a cryptocurrency wallet supporting persecuted and imprisoned anarchists and anarchist publications and organizing), and with two counts of possession of information likely to be useful to a terrorist. He was also accused of participating in FAI-IRF and the ELF, writing five communiques, and being involved in actions in Bristol including an incendiary attack on a police station, a cell tower arson, and animal liberations. With no real evidence, the court was forced to drop the terror charges, but convicted Toby of eight drug charges from the collective living spaces, for possession with intent to supply on a non-commercial basis of 840 doses of LSD, psilocybin mushrooms, offering to supply DMT to a friend, growing 36 cannabis plants, and simple possession of MDMA, THC oil, and DMT. Toby says he used these hallucinogenic medicines to treat his cancer as well depression. On March 29, 2021, Dutch police, in cooperation with UK cops, raid the data center of the nostate.net collective and seize the server, causing all the projects hosted on it to go offline (including 325, Act for Freedom Now!, ABC Berlin, Montreal Counter-Info, and North Shore Counter-Info). Many of these sites have since gone back online under different hosting, with the exception of 325, who said they haven't as it's clear if that they do under the same name, they'll immediately be targeted by UK authorities. Toby was held under severe anti-terror conditions, with poor care for his cancer, and was released on December 28, 2022. He was under harsh release conditions, forced to report all social contacts, movements, and finances, stay in a filthy bail hostel far from home, and forbidden from using a non-surveilled phone or internet access, using encryption technology, carrying over £50 in cash, or associating with anarchists. He was remanded back to prison on September 19, 2023, after being arrested by armed police while on his way to meet his probation officer, nine days after moving back to a flat in the Forest of Dean, accused of possessing an unauthorised phone and attending a meeting in Bristol.

**December 13, 2020:** Four far-right activists are stabbed near the same bar

as the previous stabbing, including one member of the Proud Boys. The attack occurs after a far-right crowd surround an opposition activist, pushing and punching him and trying to pull his mask off. The suspected attacker is arrested, along with one of those who struck him initially.

**January 6, 2021:** Two Proud Boys are stabbed in Albany, New York at a pro-Trump rally. One of them is stabbed multiple times and suffers an eviscerated bowel. The suspect, a self-identified anti-fascist, receives a 20 year prison sentence.

**March 10, 2021:** Coordinated assault in Patras, Greece by two groups of anarchists throwing gas canister bombs and molotovs in a heavily guarded neighborhood targets a police parking lot and ambushes a responding police patrol, severely damaging eight cop cars. Claimed by Anarchist Cell 'Lambros Fountas', who end their communique: "THE AIR HAS STARTED TO SMELL OF PETROL."

**May 17, 2021:** Nazi in Rittenhouse Square in downtown Philadelphia is attacked with "a sharp piece of metal to the back of the head" after being spotted taking a train from South New Jersey into Philadelphia. The nazi appeared to be on a date, holding hands with someone while wearing an SS armband, full military fatigues, a skull mask, backpack with the fascist Sonnenrad or Black Sun symbol, and shooting headphones. The anti-fascist attacker followed the nazi, surreptitiously taking photos and waiting until they reached an area away from police before pouncing. Bystanders cheered on the assault and encouraged the attacker to flee, who escaped without issue. A communique is later posted online.

**May 19, 2021:** Egoist, nihilist anarchist Sofia 'Comrade Candle' Johnson robs a 7/11 convenience store in Beaverton, Oregon with a 9mm pistol. She steals \$860 and a handful of Backwoods before escaping from responding police with the help of passersby. Candle, a recently homeless nonbinary trans woman, had been squatting and living off of shoplifted and robbed necessities and mutual aid. After the robbery, Candle kicked out the fire department responding to the smoke from her fireplace with a shotgun, was arrested for riding transit with the shotgun, and arrested again for breaking her release-agreement not to return to the squat. On June 8th, a few hours before leaving for a train ride out of state to escape her legal woes, she was raided by police and charged with the robbery after a detective recognized her from CCTV footage, and her squatmate, a Maoist trans girl, allegedly snitched on her. Additionally, Candle had a warrant out for riot and criminal mischief after being arrested the year before for destroying an ATM and smashing multiple buildings' windows during a protest, including those of a Catholic church. She has written a zine about the events called "Squatting as an Illegalist Anarchist", as well as other writings published online, and remains an unrepentant, committed anarchist.

**August 22, 2021:** Anti-fascists in downtown Portland, Oregon return fire with around five pistol shots after a far-right activist they were chasing away fired at least two shots from a pistol at them. The gunfight took place during a day of violent confrontations across the city between rival demonstrators. No one was hit.

**September 4, 2021:** Proud Boys member and influential far-right brawler Tusitala 'Tiny' Toese is shot in the ankle in Olympia, Washington after five pistol shots are fired at his group of Proud Boys by a group of anti-fascists dressed in

all black they were chasing.

**February 17, 2022:** Coastal GasLink pipeline drill site and gate in northern British Columbia, Canada are simultaneously attacked in concordance with Wet'suwet'en indigenous land defenders' ongoing campaign against the pipeline, causing millions of dollars in damage. Around 20 attackers, many in all-white camouflage, drive off security with axes, power tools, flare guns, spray paint, and smoke bombs, then commandeer heavy machinery to cause extensive damage to work facilities, multiple other heavy machines, and generators. When police arrived by the only road access, they encountered felled trees blocking the roadway, in addition to spiked boards, an old school bus, wires, and fires. One officer was injured reportedly after stepping on a spiked board. No arrests occurred.

### **2022 in Some Particularly Active Terrains, Including More 'Typical' Attacks:**

**Greece:** Multiple targeted vehicle arsons of an Italian diplomat and a politician, incendiary attack on an apartment where five cops and a politician live, incendiary attacks on three cops' houses, a journalist's house, and a police union chief's house, bombing of a police lieutenant's house who testified against anarchist bank robber who tried to snatch his gun outside interrogation room, bombing of a tax office, attack on riot police by queer anarchists in revenge for police killing of queer robber, multiple molotovings of cops and riot squads, multiple car dealership arsons, supermarket expropriations, incendiary attacks on relay antennas, power stations, a Catholic foundation, political offices, supermarkets, police stations, military companies, construction headquarters, and numerous attacks on vehicles, ATMs, and banks.

**Germany:** Arsons of numerous machines, army, luxury, and cop cars, relay antennas, a massive attack burning five trucks, five trailers, an excavator, and 25 reels of fiber optics, a nocturnal arson attack which destroyed eight riot police vans, multiple simultaneous sabotages of coal plant infrastructure, fiber optics cables, and relay antennas, numerous rail sabotages, and targeted incendiary attacks on vehicles of a Greek diplomat, a billionaire's son, and a snitch.

**France:** According to the president of the National Telecom company, around 100 mobile sites were intentionally damaged in 2020, 150 in 2021, and 200 in 2022. Many of these took the form of incendiary attacks on cell network relay towers. An average of 30 deliberate fiber optic cable severings took place per month in 2022 resulting in numerous weeks-long internet outages for hundreds of thousands of people. Attacks in multiple regions by unbolting high-voltage pylons or burning of electric supply cables cut power to multiple construction sites linked to nuclear projects or energy production, attacks on CCTV/surveillance cable bottlenecks, multiple rail sabotages resulting in service disruption, arsons of police stations and at least three electric stations, numerous arsons of electric vehicle charging points, a targeted attack on a nuclear company owner's car, cop cars, electrical company and utility cars, and construction machines. Up to 20 rebels do a planned assault on a police station with molotovs and firework mortars for 45 minutes, locking the station gate shut with the cops inside; two cop cars damaged and two cops injured, one person arrested.

# Against the Gendered Nightmare: Fragments On Domestication

baedan, 2014. A chapter in *baedan - a queer journal of heresy - issue two*. Excerpted

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## XII

Of all these stories, there is one which occurs consistently in almost any worthwhile history of gender: the splitting of the mind from the body. Various accounts will attribute this split to different times and places, but its centrality and power are beyond question. Anti-civilization critiques will often locate this as a primary emergence of dualism in the world (Zerzan will say it stems immediately from the dualism of gender), whereas Federici will find it in the machinations of the witch hunts; Evans in the rise of industrialism. Again, the precise origins interest us less than its repeated and unending operation. Wherever it started, the split widens and continues to tear us away from ourselves.

It is intuitive that such a split would be necessary in order to acclimate wild beings into those beings fit for labor in the world of work. If one is solely reliant on their own sensual perception of the world—the relation of their body to the bodies of other animals, plants and humans—then that bodily awareness is precisely what must be destroyed for the workers to be born. The disciplining of the body is the precondition of industrial existence.

This disciplining of the body can be understood as an internalization of the warfare occurring outside of it. The battleground of social control becomes the body itself, the site of an eternal conflict between Reason and Passion; Enlightenment and Darkness.

On the one side, there are the ‘forces of Reason’: parsimony, prudence, sense of responsibility, self-control. On the other, the ‘low instincts of the Body’: lewdness, idleness, systematic dissipation of one’s vital energies. The battle is fought on many fronts because Reason must be vigilant against the attacks of the carnal self, and prevent ‘the wisdom of the flesh’ (in Luther’s words) from corrupting the powers of the mind. In the extreme case, the person becomes a terrain for a war of all against all.’ (*Caliban and the Witch*.)

Others will call this Civil War, we will say it is part and parcel of the capture of the body in domestication. The body is a microcosm for this phenomena.

The commodification of bodies and of their capacities leads to an estrangement from self; a disassociation from the majority of one's activity and experience. The body is reified and reduced to an object. This separation and objectification of the body arrives at its own self-realization through Cartesian philosophy. Hobbes will enact a related attack upon the body in reducing it to the functioning of a machine. In later times, this mechanized view will reach a new apex through the theory of genetics. More esoteric theorists of genetics will argue that body is a machine-vessel for sentient and *selfish genes* which deploy said bodies in an effort to eternally perpetuate themselves. The philosophical mechanization of the body becomes so total that it is projected back through history and into our very biology. In a strange paradox, science revives God as the ultimate refutation of free will: genetics. Genetic manipulation and nanotechnological methods of surveillance and control are only the most contemporary manifestations of this archaic split.

But the projection of this invention onto the physical world is not done philosophically, it is done through bodily violence. The torture chambers of witch hunters, Nazi doctors and vivisectors are also the laboratories for the emergence of the mechanized body. This is also, of course, the violence of gendered domestication, as gender is that first dualism and remains the primary operation upon the body. The body is continuously dissected so as to identify and naturalize the biological differences which supposedly justify the entirety of the gendered world. The sex/gender dichotomy, but also the dichotomies of race are neatly mapped over the body/mind, and corresponds to an unending set of disciplinary measures and techniques of the self designed to maintain binary conformity. Black and feminine bodies are imagined as indocile and in need of disciplining, while white masculine bodies are believed to be rational and tame. Bodies viewed with any innate connection to animality can then justifiably be exposed to hard labor, sexual violence, and extermination.

Personally, any inquiry into the split between the mind and body yields a crazy diffusion of revelations. I immediately think of the experience of motion sickness as a worthwhile example. As an instinctual response to feeling motion without consciously perceiving it, this nausea is a helpful defense mechanism against the inadvertent consumption of various poisons. Outside of industrialism, this phenomenon is only experienced on the off chance that someone eats a hallucinogen. Yet in a world like our own, where we are constantly disassociating from the movement of our bodies, this nausea becomes universal. The repetitive motion injuries from my performance of service work (where the quick movement of the wrists and knees corresponds more to the needs of a Point-of-Sale system or bag of groceries than to any other agency) is another reminder of a nearly total disconnect of my perception from the actual movement of my body. The split widens through our acclimation to this constant pain and dizziness; the further severance of perception functions as a tragic survival strategy.

Regarding gender, the split is all the more blatant. As a teenager, my own experience of dysphoria and body dysmorphia led to the self-enactment of a whole range of disciplinary measure and torture in the form of anorexia. This was an experience I shared with the vast majority of my friends who grew up as girls and queers. These techniques of self-control reappear in the context of sex

work. In order to more profitably sell our sexual labor, we are constantly projecting the Ideal of gender upon our bodies; mutilating them and reducing them to objects of our own mechanization. More than just physiology, this domination concerns itself with gestures, grooming, communication, sexual propensity. In the actual experience of sex work, the split widens again. While some horrifying John is touching me, my mind struggles to be anywhere but my own body. I think about the capital, about my bank account, what I'll have for dinner; *anything besides what is actually occurring to my body*. I've experienced this flight from the body in countless other moments; while being arrested, while being sexually assaulted, while drunk. Even the experience of walking through the hallways of a high school can tear us from ourselves: how should I carry myself today so as not to face the predictable violence of a queer basher?

The story of the mind/body split gives us a helpful tool in understanding the complexity and nuance of the contention that domestication is the capture and engendering of our bodies. Where Fredy Perlman saw springs and wheels filling the armor encased body, we can read this as the re-ordering of the living body through its conflict with the rational mind. The fantasy of Biological Sex, of Race, and all other supposedly natural categories correspond to this same logic of severance of bodies from each other and the mind from the body. Taxonomies of the body consistently serve to rationalize, systematize and place the varied happenstances of the body into a Leviathanic structure. This mechanistic theory of biology attempts to lay down our destiny.

### XIII

Most theories of the split between mind and body miss a concomitant, yet unique, split: the material from the spiritual. The separation and obscuring of the spiritual dimension of gendered existence leaves us with a tragic inability to express or even really comprehend the implications of these operations of capture. To ignore the spiritual dimension of domestication leaves us with only half the story; with a crass, mechanistic materialism that can only offer us crass, mechanistic solutions.

If the human body and not the steam engine, and not even the clock, was the first machine developed by capitalism, then what remains of all the capacities of the body which cannot be efficiently put to use or rationalized by this technological innovation? The imposition of a Cartesian Master/slave dynamic between the mind/body also means the generalization of that dynamic toward all of the forms and capacities of life which once enchanted the body's sensual connection to the wild world. Our being was inscribed into a soulless world and a machine-body.

Francis Bacon lamented that *magic kills industry*. And this is precisely because the continued relation of human beings to their magical capacities was also their capacity to find meaning and sustenance outside of the world of work and industry. Magical and spiritual beliefs were dangerous simply because their refusal of linear, empty time itself was a source of insubordination. In order for Leviathan to achieve its restructuring of the body, it had to first divorce the body of its participation in a cosmology of power and spirit. The perceived wildness of the witches had to be crushed alongside the wildness of the world. Leviathan alone would possess the ability to alter, enchant and deploy the body. This con-

control over the body certainly happens in a largely metaphysical operation, yet it obscures itself and pretends toward the Natural and Objective. Perhaps the most sinister aspect of the spiritual decimation which mechanizes the body is that it denies the existence of spirit at all.

The mechanization of the body is so constitutive of the individual that, at least in industrialized countries, giving space to the belief in occult forces does not jeopardize the regularity of social behavior. Astrology too can be allowed to return, with the certainty that even the most devoted consumer of astral charts will automatically consult the watch before going to work. (*Caliban and the Witch.*)

This mechanization was achieved through the twofold operation of denying the spiritual existence while also destroying the rebel body. Hobbes: "As for witches, I think not that their witchcraft is any real power; but yet they are justly punished, for the false belief they have that they can do such mischief, joined with their purpose to do it if they can." Fredy Perlman and Arthur Evans will both criticize historians of the witch hunt for reiterating this same domesticated analyses—justifying the massacres of the witch hunts by projecting the mechanistic understanding of the body through time and into the 'natural' world.

The stakes on which witches and other practitioners of magic died, and the chambers in which their tortures were executed, were a laboratory in which much social discipline was sedimented, and much knowledge about the body was gained. Here those irrationalities were eliminated that stood in the way of the transformation of the individual and social body into a set of predictable and controllable mechanisms. And it was here again that the scientific use of torture was born...

This battle, significantly occurring at the foot of the gallows, demonstrates both the violence that presided over the scientific rationalization of the world, and the clash of two opposite concepts of the body, two opposite investments in it. On one side, we have a concept of the body that sees it endowed with powers even after death; the corpse does not inspire repulsion, and is not treated as something rotten or irreducibly alien. On the other, the body is seen as dead even when still alive, insofar as it is conceived as a mechanical device, to be taken apart just like any machine. [...] The course of scientific rationalization was intimately connected to the attempt by the state to impose its control over an unwilling workforce.

Feral Faun put things another way in "The Quest for the Spiritual":

This civilized, technological, commodity culture in which we live is a wasteland. For most people, most of the time, life is dull and empty, lacking vibrancy, adventure, passion and ecstasy. It's no surprise that many people search beyond the realm of their normal daily existence for something more. It is in this light that we need to understand the quest for the spiritual...

I discovered that this dualism [between the material and the spiritual] was common to all religions with the possible exceptions



of some forms of Taoism and Buddhism. I also discovered something quite insidious about the flesh/spirit dichotomy. Religion proclaims the realm of spirit to be the realm of freedom, of creativity, of beauty, of ecstasy, of joy, of wonder, of life itself. In contrast, the realm of matter is the realm of dead mechanical activity, of grossness, of work, of slavery, of suffering, of sorrow. The earth, the creatures on it, even our own bodies were impediments to our spiritual growth, or at best, tools to be exploited. What a perfect ideological justification for the exploitative activities of civilization... as exploitation immiserated the lives of people, the ecstatic joy of wild existence and of the flesh unrepressed became fainter and fainter memories until at last they seemed to be not of this world at all. This world was the world of travail (from the Latin root word which gives all the Romance languages their word for work) and sorrow. Joy and ecstasy had to be of another realm—the realm of spirit. Early religion is wildly orgiastic, clearly reflecting the lost way of life for which people longed. But by separating this wild abandon into the realm of spirit, which is in reality just a realm of abstract ideas with no concrete existence, religion made itself the handmaiden of civilized, domesticated culture...

This transformation of the body into predictable and controllable operations is absolutely central to the naturalization of the category of sex. The uterus becomes a machine—controlled by the state and doctors—for the production of new bodies. The incomprehensible diversity of the human body becomes reduced to a simplistic and quantitative relation between various chemicals and hormones. Certain shapes are deemed healthy while others abnormal and in need of surgical intervention. The binary of the so-called sex organs is almost achieved through this ongoing mutilation. Certain ratios of the distribution of fat, hair, bone structure and other occurrences come to be immutable proof of the eternal existence of the social prison of sex. In order for this prison to be totalizing, our conception of ourselves must be debased to these material operations. The engendering of humanity into the rational sexual body required the destruction of magic precisely because a magical view of the world holds that it is animated, unpredictable and that there is an occult force in plants, animals, stones, the stars and ourselves. Within this animist worldview, our individual capacities are not limited to the supposed biological destiny of sex; instead we can create, destroy, love, and take pleasure in an infinity of situations. This anarchic, molecular diffusion of powers throughout the world is antithetical to a gendered and social order which aims at capturing and dominating all life. *The world had to be disenchanted to be dominated.*

Here is science born. The disenchanted world can now be explained through rational, objective inquiry. And yet it is a meaningful contradiction that this new science did not mean an end to what it would have seen as an irrational persecution of witches. Instead, mechanistic philosophers celebrated the witch hunts as the advancement of the rational worldview. Francis Bacon, one of the early high priests of science, is explicit in taking methods of scientific inquiry directly out of torture chambers of the inquisition. For science, the whole world becomes analogous to a witch: a body to be interrogated, tortured, raped and

unveiled. Far from relegated to this particular period, we can see repeating over and over again in Nazi death camps, the medical experimentation on prisoners, the vivisection of animals, etc. Scientific rationalism is not some progressive intervention against brutality, it is simply the universalization of that brutality against all the wild world, against the body and against the spirit. This scientific approach to the world becomes all the more terrifying when it is taken up by revolutionaries. The bourgeois revolutions fought in the name of Reason and Justice, ended up carving those abstractions into the flesh of individuals through the Guillotine, committees of public safety and health, and other implements of systemic terror. This terror took on a new dimension in the communist revolutions which followed...

# Te Tuna Whiri: The Knot of Eels

Cassandra Barnett, 2017. A chapter in *Animism in Art and Performance* - Edited by Christopher Braddock. Excerpted.

The tale has been told before. This time begin with the eels. Eels, who came from the stars. Some are getting ready as I write this in February and March. They lurk fat and heavy, gathering strength amongst the whitebait and raupō (bulrush) along the muddy banks of Ōtākaro. There's one right under the edge where Pani went in—her legs just millimetres from its tail. It breathed faster, then slower, when Rosalyn's mākutu (magic) retrieved Emily from the whirlpool of time. There's another feeding on worms in the grass near where Te Aitu and George jumped into lake Hāpuakorari—retrieving a pile of pāua-shell eyes. There are a hundred and more in my own ancestral river, Waikato. Still or slow but on their way, pulled to their swarming cousins and the ocean. Soon they will navigate by floods, stars and moons, magnetics and temperatures, pheromones and salinities to their deeper, wider home to spawn.

They will be seen off, some of them, by people who count them as family. Slithering in their waterways past sacred, erect wharetupuna (ancestral meeting houses), past abandoned, submerged wharetupuna, past buried carvings with shining eyes, past motorways and railways and dunes and pīngao grasses, down to the smells of the sea. And in the rain and dark of Hinepouri the new moon they pause, then rush and converge and tumble suddenly in one tightly knotted ball over the bar. Push across the sand and now surge forward in their separate bodies again, on different waves, through competing swells, into a newer, vaster sea. Called on, past pāua in the shallows, keeping silent company with snapper, stingray and sharks, towards a watery sonar of whalesong, petrel squawks, oars, propellers or engines . . . Swim, tuna, swim.<sup>1</sup>

## Sea Change

This chapter has two main aims. First, to outline a Māori concept and practice of taonga. Loosely translatable as valuables or treasured things, taonga can be considered animate and alive because they instantiate ancestral hau (life breath), mauri (life force) and mana (spiritual power) in the present.<sup>2</sup> Hau, mauri and mana, and hence taonga, have enduring force and efficacy—they may amend the course of things here and now in unpredictable ways. Second, to ask how taonga might be found traversing contemporary art discourse and practice, holding a space there. I will examine in depth a set of works by Terri Te Tau (Rangitāne, Ngāti Kahungunu)...<sup>3</sup> I will attend to the taonga in the artwork, asking the following questions. What (or who) is it? Who is it

encountering—and where do I fit in? What stories are told of it? What whakapapa (genealogies), trajectories, contexts and currents are concentrated within it?

The term taonga is commonly applied to taonga tuku iho (material objects passed down from our ancestors), such as carved or woven tools, weapons and adornments; also to tribal resources and territories including customary food gathering areas, fisheries, flora and fauna; and to more abstract cultural entities such as waiata (songs), pūrakau (legends) and whakapapa. You might also hear many modern and postmodern Māori artworks referred to as taonga—and some of them no doubt are, through their animations and activations of taonga processes. Nonetheless, according to my argument, though taonga-things may traverse art-things, they will not bear the exact same forms, contours, configurations and ‘objectifications’ as those art-things. For they arise from (and sustain) different conceptual-cosmological universes.

Taonga can include both contemporary things and customary things. They continue to function beyond the bounded horizon of pre-colonial Māori life, and beneath the surface of other more visible or dominant currents, systems and dynamics—including global, capitalistic, corporate and aesthetic ones. (‘More visible’ to some, that is. For Māori of course the taonga system with its ebbs and flows is part of the weave of everyday discourse and practice, though this too encompasses invisibilities.) Like the tuna (eels) insinuating themselves upon my writing mind, taonga can survive *as taonga* at a great distance from their whānau (family/familiars), viewers or thinkers. This is in part a matter of hau, as will be seen. And even at that distance they can—like *all* things, on a Māori understanding—call us to attention. As Carl Mika writes in ‘The Thing’s Revelation’, ‘things are not just passive ... they are instead animate and creative, having a much greater impact on the self than would be credited in dominant rational discourse’ (2015, 63); and things are ‘capable of provocation; they can “call forth” ... something in us through their own language or expression’ (2015, 64). Taonga can indeed *insist upon* our attention, our custody, our care of them—as seen in this example from Rangihiroa Panoho:

In a very matter-of-fact manner, a *tino matua keke* ‘great aunt’ from a community along the Whanganui river, informed me that a carved ancestor told her to buy him *pāua* ‘abalone’ eyes so that he, Pāmoana, could see his *uri whakatipu* ‘descendants’ inside their ancestral meetinghouse. (2015, 250)

It is often argued that kaupapa (foundationally) Māori ‘art’ practices should not be confused with contemporary art. I agree, but am arguing that the two can hold their differences yet coexist, overlap or intersect in certain places and times. When they do coincide, taonga-objects and contemporary-art-objects bring into proximity their different worlds of meaning, creating potential for new questions, new understandings and new dynamics to form—depending on the taonga, and the people they encounter.

Such proximities and interleavings afford closer enquiry into where recent Western animisms (as enabled by new materialisms and philosophies of the posthuman and anthropocene) and indigenous world views meet—and where they part ways. Like Māori taonga, contemporary art can invoke a cosmic vibrant materialism, an interconnectedness of all things, and a concern for the

role/responsibility of the human within this. But somewhere around the assigning of ‘anthropomorphic’ personalities and behaviours (and even names) to things, the Western philosophies still tend to become troubled. Taonga Māori land us in a place where ‘animism’ has profound efficacies, yet does not exist as a critique-able term or concept.

### By Smell and Starlight

*Unwarranted and Unregistered* (2013) and *Unwarranted and Unregistered: Te Āhua o te Hau ki Te Papaioea* (2015) are two versions of a multimedia installation by Terri Te Tau. It consists of a 1986 Suzuki Carry 410 van—restored and reinvented by the artist as a high-gloss, black-cherry, window-tinted surveillance van, parked inside the gallery—and a video work projected onto the interior of the van’s windscreen. To experience the work, viewers must clamber inside (usually through the back hatch), and sit in one of the van’s seats gazing ‘out’ through the front windscreen, or rather ‘at’ the video projected onto that screen. The work is an artistic response to ‘Operation 8’, the 2007 dawn raids by over 300 New Zealand Police on 60 homes across the country, mostly the homes of indigenous activists. The raids occurred after a year of covert surveillance, and police subsequently attempted to lay charges against 12 people under the Terrorism Suppression Act 2002. As activist Valerie Morse notes, ‘The people targeted were overwhelmingly Māori’ (2010, 11).

I saw the first version of the work *Unwarranted and Unregistered* in the group exhibition ‘Surveillance Awareness Bureau’ in Wellington in 2015. There, the windscreen-film took us on a journey through Greytown, a small town in the Wairarapa region near the artist’s marae (tribal home). As we drive by streets and buildings, the naturalistic view on screen is gradually overlaid with accruing head-up display (HUD) digital surveillance data pertaining to the people and cars we pass. Thus the transparent windscreen showing the scene ‘outside’ gives way to a more opaque computer screen, as perceptual information is mediated, obscured, then obliterated by information flows from other sources—from rationalized data-mining systems and graphics-generating software. This thickened vision generates a range of grim paranoia affects: the helpless paranoia of the surveilled upon discovering their surveillants’ determined (and well-resourced) penetration of their worlds; and the controlling paranoia of the surveillants, fearful enough of the surveilled to invest untold resources in ceaselessly scrutinizing them. If the allusion is primarily to our state-level surveillance regimes (capitulating to an international War on Terror), gaming interfaces are also evoked by this graphically data-mapped screen. Gaming often plies a paranoid subjectivity by peddling, in various guises, panoptical search-and-destroy operations. What are our avatars here? Are we police, gathering data, getting ready to pounce? Objects of surveillance taking refuge? Disaffected gang members counter-patrolling their turf? Are these our streets, our ‘hood’—or someone else’s?

I saw the second version of Te Tau’s work, *Unwarranted and Unregistered: Te Āhua o te Hau ki Te Papaioea*, at Te Tohu o Uenuku Māngere Arts Centre, Tāmaki (Auckland), in June 2016, during Matariki—the season when Matariki (Pleiades) appears in the sky heralding the Māori new year. Not knowing the work had been altered since my last viewing, I again climbed inside the van, sat

quietly and watched the streets pass by. The view was soft and contemplative, the pace slow, a leisurely suburban daytime cruise. Somehow the sinister vibe I remembered had dissipated. There was an ambient soundtrack featuring taonga pūoro (traditional Māori wind instruments made of bone and wood) and other instruments,<sup>4</sup> while the drive-by footage of streets and houses was misted over with pastel swirls of green and purple, pink and blue. Like the fine film of oil on a puddle's surface, these prismatic swirls lent a strange beauty to the mundane street scene. Of course, a disquieting undercurrent remained. The cruising van still made of *me* a watcher. And the gallery wall text informing me that these streets of Te Papaioea were the sites of four of the 2007 terror raids kept that other watchful entity, the White supremacist state, in the room. But who was I now, and what and why was I watching? Was I looking for trouble, or—as I settled into the more benign atmosphere of this van and made a home there—just gazing lovingly at the neighbourhood and my mokopuna (grandchildren), watching them play and grow? A different, warmer avatar animated the van now. Our journey was still troubled, but through the pink and blue swirls our ride quietly emerged as a different kind of object, differently inhabited, drawing on different resources.

### Taonga Trench

To shift from this initial, percept-based reading of Te Tau's work we need a fuller understanding of taonga.<sup>5</sup> For this, I draw in part from Paul Tapsell's now classic 1997 account, but primarily from Amiria Henare's more contemporary, politically enabling account in 'Taonga Māori: Encompassing Rights and Property in New Zealand'

In 1853, Henare tells us (2007, 58), two taonga were gifted to New Zealand's retiring third governor, Sir George Grey, by the Māori chiefs Te Rangihaeata of Ngāti Toa and Taratoa of my own iwi (tribe) Ngāti Raukawa. These were a whalebone club named Hine Te Ao and a greenstone ear pendant named Kaitangata. Hine Te Ao, Henare explains, was a 'maternal ancestor of the Ngāti Raukawa tribe' (2007, 59). Kaitangata was, implicitly, also an ancestor; hence Grey could report that 'The old chief then proceeded after the ancient Māori custom of "Hongi" to press the green stone to his nose, and pass it over his face in token of farewell' (Henare 2007, 58).<sup>6</sup> Hongi is the Māori practice of greeting each other nose to nose, thus sharing hau (breath). These named taonga are people, and they have travelled on long journeys, gathering hau. As Henare outlines (2007, 59), Kaitangata was found in Te Wai Pounamu (Aotearoa's South Island) by Te Ngahue, then taken home to Hawaiki, prior to the Māori migrations to Aotearoa.

When passed down within iwi and hapū (subtribes), and occasionally gifted to other groups, taonga are handed over as loved ancestors, thus binding recipients into a duty of care—and creating a delicate state of imbalance or indebtedness that calls for ongoing relationality and reciprocity between the groups. Simultaneously, the ancestor's hau, and mauri, mana and tapu (sanctity), meets that of the new holders of the taonga, joining them all together:

In *hongi*-ing the taonga, the chiefs were mingling their own hau or breath of life with that of the ancestor-object, thus binding the

intertwined lineages of the chiefs and that of Grey together, reanimating the promises of the Treaty<sup>7</sup> and focusing their relationship in the form of their ancestor, the ancient *taonga*. (2007, 60)

Henare stresses that *taonga*, ‘more than simply ‘representing’, ‘signifying’ or ‘embodying’ ancestral efficacy and power, *are* it in specific form’ (2007, 56); ‘one *taonga* exchanged for another does not simply *carry* the hau of the gift, it is its hau’, thus ‘[t]here is a precise identity . . . between thing and spirit’ (2007, 48). *Taonga*, like people, as people, *are* the living presence of ancestral lines of descent and relation. The ancestorhood or personhood that Henare highlights, via a focus on hau, is key to the *relational* function of *taonga* in Māori social life. This efficacy of hau is illuminated by Te Tau, who writes, ‘the hau left behind by a person (e.g. footprints) is also still in them, connected to them’ (2015a, 52). Similarly, Natalie Robertson states, ‘the mauri can’t be untangled or separated from the image just because the photographer takes it far away from its source’ (2012, 103).<sup>8</sup>

The time-travelling relational function of *taonga* has been thoroughly delineated in a number of texts by Paul Tapsell—for instance:

Generations of the original kin group may have been born, lived and died without knowledge of their *taonga*’s continuing existence in another part of the universe. Suddenly it streaks back into their lives, often as a result of some significant life crisis, reaffirming the kin group’s connections to the ancestors who were originally associated with the *taonga*. (2006, 20)

But Henare emphasizes that it is by dint of their *objectness* (which provides a focal locus for the assembling of mauri and hau) that *taonga* have the capacity to produce and reproduce relations: ‘the very partibility and motility of *taonga* ... their “thinginess” within a general state of flux, is precisely what makes them indispensable to the work of relating’ (2007, 62).

This shifts attention to the kind of objecthood *taonga* allow us to think—one that ‘do[es] not necessarily invoke a subject’ (2007, 61)—because indeed for Māori there is no ‘ontological apartheid between persons and things’ (2007, 63). Nor do many other Western metaphysical dualisms (mind–body, spirit–matter) apply. Henare’s description of a live yet ‘subjectless’ kind of object is echoed in (Carl) Mika’s account of things, which ‘we might call our “whanaunga” (relations), even where these have been deemed by Western science to be inanimate’ (2015, 61). ‘For Māori,’ he writes, ‘the thing in its most basic sense is like the self: it is immediately connected to everything else’ (2015, 61), and ‘[t]he self can be thought of as amongst those things whilst being constituted by them’ (2015, 64). Following Henare and Mika, I wish to de-emphasize the agency of a human ‘subject’ and emphasize instead the agency of these ‘objects’ that do not necessarily need subjects to think them (but may themselves call forth or *produce* selves—and thought): ‘one is in the first instance cognisant of a thing through that thing’s choice’ (Mika 2015, 67). This ‘choice’ is linked to the awareness within te ao Māori that all things live or vibrate: ‘be it rocks or birds, people or trees, “physical phenomena and people are held to proceed from a common primal source”’ (Marcia Browne 2005, 22, citing Anne Salmond). Although I may be telling the eels here according to *my* mind’s inklings and leanings, it is

the eels' prior existence and exigencies, their impenetrable aliveness, *their* self-disclosure of wairua [Ed. Note: spirit or soul], mauri and mana that call me to feel and think them. From Mika I also borrow the 'possibility that things that are *imperceptible* ... may still have an effect on the self' (2015, 62, emphasis added). Indeed, he adds, 'whatever we perceive as Māori ... is comprised of what is not immediately there' (2015, 62)...

### Spawning

At Te Tohu o Uenuku I read the wall text again and it clicks: in this van I am tupuna (ancestor), and these are my pāua-shell eyes. Pāua, a shellfish abundant in Aotearoa harbours, is valued by Māori on many levels. Its meat is delicious creamed or fried. Its iridescent, peacock-coloured,<sup>9</sup> shell adorns customary Māori whakairo (carving) and raranga (weaving). This iris-like, light-reflecting shell was especially favoured for the eyes of pouwhakairo (carved figures depicting tupuna and gods), and was associated with the stars, the eyes of our tupuna. Pāua feature in whakatauki (sayings), pūrakau (legends) and contemporary literature. In the legend of Tinirau and Kae, the treacherous Kae places pāua shells over his own closed eyes before sleeping, to trick his visitors (rightly suspected of ill-intent) into believing he is awake through the night. Patricia Grace, in her novel *Potiki*, writes of the kahawai fish, 'its eye is small and gaudy, like the pāua-shell eyes that watch unblinking round all the many edges of the night' (1986, 113). Pāua, like eels, have whakapapa leading back to Tangaroa (god of the sea) and, before him, to Ranginui (sky father) and Papatūānuku (earth mother)—who are our ancestors too, meaning we humans are pāua's cousins. Our frequent encounters with pāua are constant reminders of their value not just to us but to our tupuna, who caught, shucked, ate, polished, cut, narrated and chanted karakia (incantations) over today's pāua's ancestors. As sacred instantiations of Tangaroa's own hau and mana, they hold the potential to reawaken us to our entire complex relationship with the sea *if* we engage appropriately with them.

Using Aura Reading Software and Adobe After Affects (Te Tau 2015a, 84), Te Tau has rendered visible the hau of the people and places of Te Papaioea, in the form of shimmering haloes or auras.<sup>10</sup> Simultaneously she has created a semblance of a 'tipuna gaze' (87), for the whole view is distinctly pāua-coloured. This tupuna gaze is one taonga traversing the artwork. As pāua-shell-eyed taonga we live, and look, on. You may need to have some familiarity with pāua-shell-eyed tupuna, as taonga, to really 'get' this experience. Moreover, we who do will each think of different whakairo, different tupuna as we sit and gaze. I think of the tekoteko (carved gable figure) in my own wharetupuna (ancestral meeting house), who was retrieved from a long hibernation in a swamp before coming to us, whose kōrero still awaits further telling and whom I now suddenly long to see again. I think of favourite pouwhakairo in other wharetupuna I have slept in, and of that sense of being cradled at their feet. I think of tupuna whose names and mana have resonated strongly for me, though I have never seen them represented visually.

The call to respond to tupuna in their liveness here and now—as a living face of my own tupuna—is what I experience in Te Tau's van. I feel called 'back' at the same time as some of my own tupuna are called 'forward',<sup>11</sup> to co-inhabit



this space and join hau and renew the cycle. It is unnerving and delicious—like being embraced by a long-gone kuia (grandmother), but simultaneously becoming that long-gone kuia and feeling the love she feels for the place we are seeing. I feel what this does to the streets of Te Papaioea—also in need of a good granny hug, and now getting it.

Of course (deflecting here any hegemonic, recuperative tendencies), this is not an arrival in individuation, and the tupuna (ancestors) are not accessed as subjectivities—no more than the passers-by are. I am awakened by this tupuna-gaze (sharing hau with the hau of ancestral pāua, pāua crafters and pāua-shell-eyed tupuna) *at the same time as* it holds me at bay, holds this as *its* space, not mine. I see through its eyes for a moment, feel the abiding hau and mauri of my tupuna and reconnect with them—and with a great sea of connectivity—but I do not penetrate their interiors, do not ‘know’ them in *that* way. (To my mind a ‘subjectless object’ is precisely one like this that is ‘impenetrably’ alive and connected to everything else. Another living person or thing can only be known in its opacity. To penetrate it is in a sense to kill it.) I see through its eyes while being *this* living face here and now. I am reminded of the whakaaro (thinking) without knowing that Mika describes (2015, 66), and the kinds of things thought in this way:

the spaces of obscurity where ‘whakaaro’ is called by things to speculate but not necessarily penetrate into;

The ... data here ... is thoroughly unknowable and crucially its own master; delight in the thing’s mercuriality may, in turn, promise a counter-colonial answer. (2015, 67)

Even as I see ‘through’ this tupuna gaze, the mercurial tupuna preserves its own opacity. But I get to feel the aroha (love) of connection. Meanwhile I am not being subjectivated as an embodied, knowing, seeing agent; instead I feel myself encompassed by something bigger that includes me, *moves me* and also *cares about me*. I am not looking at someone else’s taonga (or at a contemporary artwork) in a museum vitrine. I am immersed in a ‘taonga experience’. This cannot be objectified on the classic Western epistemological orientation of distance *and* penetration. Mika one more time: ‘not everything is available to us. The thinker is therefore not outside matter; he or she is instead within it’ (2015, 65). This tupuna gaze, this taonga experience, is about producing not knowledge but relationality and aliveness. Indeed the taonga is barely seen—it is seen through. Te Tau’s invitation, clearly, is to take off the surveillance helmet and put on a tupuna gaze instead. The van has travelled, and travels us, into a mode of survey that enhances rather than reduces mana. A mode of survey that precludes the precise knowing of objects by their ‘interiors’—but lends us the warmth of *being known—and loved*. A view vaster and older than the paranoid view, always working to bring things back into its safe embrace. . .

Perspective: the great healer. But not the god’s-eye-perspective of distance; rather, a felt ‘midstness’ within a vast sea of connections— which we might instead choose to call ‘aspective’. Being ‘amongst’ what he thinks or speculates about—a ‘withiness’ related to whakapapa, ‘which ensures my active participation amidst the term’ (2015, 65). Again, ‘not everything is available to us. The thinker is therefore not outside matter; he or she is instead *within it*’ (2015,

65). Such ‘withinness’ is surely all the stronger and more embodied for those who first heard their whakapapa chanted to them as babies, by tohunga [Ed. Note: priests, experts], before they had even acquired language, and who have participated in its ongoing recitations ever since. This connected, immersed perspective, approaching an object-oriented ‘aspective’, is there also in Tapsell when he describes the taonga’s assertion of a whakapapa landscape overriding any individual human experience:

The performance of taonga by elders effectively collapses time and reanimates the kin group’s ancestral landscape, allowing descendants to re-live the events of past generations [and] ... be fused back into a powerful, single genealogical identity. (1997, 330)

...

Tihei, mauri ora!<sup>12</sup>

*Ko tēnei taku mihi ki a Terri Te Tau, ki a Bridget Reweti, ki ō mātou tupuna, ki ngā tohunga mahi toi katoa o te ao Māori. Kei te mihi, kei te mihi, kei te mihi.*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Te Tuna-Whiri is a constellation within the Māori family of constellations Te Awa o Te Tuna, The River of Eels in the sky (Te Ao Turoa 2005, 22). Biologists do not know the exact spawning ground of Aotearoa’s tuna kuwharuruwharu (longfin eels)—thought to be around the Tonga Trench—nor exactly how they navigate the ocean. I have based my tuna imagining on a range of kōrero, some current, some less so, without excessive concern for empirical fact.

<sup>2</sup>English terms such as ‘animism’ and ‘spirit’ often invoke metaphysical dualisms that do not apply in te ao Māori (the Māori universe); and even when defined differently in non-dualist contexts they hold meanings not present within the Māori cosmology. The English translations offered for Māori terms here are mere glosses to facilitate reading.

<sup>3</sup>Terri Te Tau and Bridget Reweti are both members of the Mata Aho Collective, which represented Aotearoa at Documenta 14 in Kassel, 2017.

<sup>4</sup>Taonga pūoro played by Rob Thorne, a musician who also uses the instruments for healing purposes (Te Tau 2017).

<sup>5</sup>When reading Western contemporary art, it is not unusual to start from the perceptual and sensorial experience composed by the artist/s, then interpret its implications within an expanded geo-socio-political field through a progression of affects, concepts, semblances and other associations. To ‘read’ taonga Māori calls for different start points and end points, based not in perception and sensation but in whakapapa.

<sup>6</sup>Amiria Henare is quoting Sir George Grey’s correspondence with the Duke of Newcastle.

<sup>7</sup>The Treaty of Waitangi: Aotearoa’s deeply problematic ‘founding document’, co-signed by the British Crown and some chiefs of some Māori tribes in 1840. Henare’s discussion focuses on Wai 262, a claim brought to the Waitangi Tribunal (the commission charged with investigating breaches of the Crown’s promises under the Treaty of Waitangi).

<sup>8</sup>There is a fine distinction between hau and mauri, as Māori Marsden explains: “‘Hau-ora’—‘the breath of life’ is the agent or source by and from which mauri (life-principle) is mediated to objects ... Mauri without the qualifying adjective ‘Ora’ (life) is applied to inanimate objects; whilst hau is applied only to animate life’ (2003, 44). I have followed Henare in focusing on hau, to highlight the ‘peopledness’ or personhood of the objects (taonga) in question.

<sup>9</sup>Especially so in Aotearoa owing to their local diet of brown and red algae and bladder kelp.

<sup>10</sup>Te Tau uses ‘aura’ as a translation of hau, the flyer accompanying this installation stating: ‘Hau is an auric field that encompasses the vitality of man and the essence of land.’

<sup>11</sup>It might be more correct, on a Māori understanding, to say I am called forward and they are called back, but we haven’t the time here to digress into Māori temporalities.

<sup>12</sup>Tihei, mauri ora! A ritual exclamation punctuating beginnings or ends of whaikōrero (oratory) and ceremonial processes; also used as a greeting. Commonly translated as ‘I sneeze; it is life!’, a statement of the speaker’s (ancestrally given) life force or aliveness.

# Conquest of the Sky-Father & Thunder-Warrior

Autumn Leaves Cascade, 2015. A section in “To Rust Metallic Gods: An Anarcho-Primitivist Critique of Paganism” in *Black and Green Review*, Issue 1. Excerpted.

Though the Proto-Indo-European pagan cultures that came to dominate the Mediterranean and Continental Europe often warred with each other, they shared common social, economic, and technical developments (there are however some significant differences – though not binary oppositions, and inter-constitutive as well as conflictual – between Roman and later Frankish empires/kingdoms, nomadic steppe peoples, and some of the more acephalous pagan societies; recent archaeological perspectives have illuminated for example the possible Clastrean anti-state drive behind early Iron Age fortification-building, which initially coincided with status leveling and dispersal in parts of Northwest Iberia and Britain, as well as the ontological-political conflicts between and among Migration/Viking Era peoples identifying with Scandinavian descent and the ‘new’ groups affiliating with the Greco-Roman world and Christianity – where a tension between Clastrean, pseudo-animistic, anti-Christian, anti-imperial (at times via a nomadic looting and trading ethos which was itself partly proto-imperial and a prefiguring of capitalist patterns), ‘heterarchical’ aspects and the domesticating religious tendencies described in the following piece was notable within Scandinavian belief structures among others, continuing unresolved into folk belief/magic, witchcraft, and ‘devil-worship’ contexts – Editor). Metallurgy re-purposed from ornamental and minimal tool use, to war: battleaxes, swords, chariots. Pastoral and agrarian subsistence. Elite grave goods and treasure hoards, their weapons and livestock parts often buried too. Life in chiefdoms, city-states, kingdoms. Divine rulers, nobles, freeman, slaves. Priests governing spirituality.

Ancient Indo-European societies largely practiced tripartite class specialization between priests, warriors, and commoners (peasants or craftsmen). Their religions often reflected this division of sacral, martial, and economic spheres, with a patron deity for law, justice, or magic (e.g. Lugh/Teutates; Odin/Týr; Veles), a thunder-warrior (e.g. Taranis; Thor; Perun), and a patron deity for farming, stockbreeding, or crafting (e.g. Esus, Trí Déa Dána; Freyr; Jarilo & Svarog). Often these duties mix or spread somewhat, such as between the Greek Zeus, Demeter, Pan, and Hephaestus, with the Roman Jupiter, Mars, and Vulcan, or seen with the Celtic Lugh. Indo-European deities for sovereignty, military, and productivity rarely formed a sacred trinity however, whereas gods ruling the

heavens, earth, and underworld more often did.

Indo-European mythology chiefly worships a “Sky Father”, such as the Vedic “Dyaus Pitṛā”, the Greek “Zeus Pater”, the Latin “Jū Piter”, and the Thunder-Warrior. Symbols of the latter include the thundercross, suncross, sunwheel, and swastika, representing the thunderbolt, spoked chariot wheel, and solar chariot myth. Symbols of conquest. All of these pagan cultures, as products of the same Proto-Indo-European mythology tracing back to some of the original urban empires (i.e. Mesopotamia, Egypt), shared variations of a central conquest myth. The good, heavenly man-god (sometimes a knight), usually representing affinities with thunder or lightning, sun or sky, war, royalty, law, masculinity, truth, and dominance, a bringer of civilization, subdues an evil, earthen serpent woman (sometimes a giant), usually representing affinities with water or fire or underworld, nature, chaos, femininity, trickery, and rebellion. The latter a destroyer of civilization, who hides captured treasures in underground or undersea caves, who harms crops or livestock. The story echoes throughout Proto-Indo-European mythology and folklore, and that of its relatives.

Can we reduce this purely to snake-hatred? No. Many of these religions actually had serpent cults. Most fundamentally, Indo-European religions’ primary myths often center around the moralism of civilized heroes fighting savage monsters. Sometimes the message communicates quite explicitly. In one Slavic myth, the Great Black Snake unleashes dark forces, but the heavenly blacksmith of law and fire, Svarog, seizes the serpent’s tongue and tames it into a plow for agriculture, banishing its minions to the underworld. In Celtic Irish lore, Balor, giant king of the indigenous Fomorians, and personification of blight and drought, seizes the cow of fruitfulness to lock away. The Smith God forges Lugh a thunderbolt to slay him. Lugh then extorts from Balor’s son, Bres, the knowledge of agriculture, for Irish colonization. The origin of agriculture. Domesticating weather, vanquishing wildness, erecting empires. Civilization’s tale.

So what then of the historical pagan societies? As clerical religions, they atrophied participatory spiritualities rooted in place. Increased human domination of landscapes coincided with personification of natural forces as Humanoid figures, with distancing from primeval elements and phenomena. These militaristic chiefdoms and kingdoms may have claimed to worship the land, but they owned the land as property. They mined the land for copper and tin and iron. The initial transition from gathering surface clay or salt or flint to gathering surface copper or tin or bog iron may have occurred gradually, but the additive consequences reveal an extractive orientation. They had class hierarchy, slavery, and conquest. Anti-authoritarians have no good reason to venerate or romanticize “heathen” conquerors. Do not worship gods of farm and forge, gods of tillage and grazing, palace gods. Do not idealize the pastoral-agrarian war myths of Bronze and Iron Age colonizers, do not worship metallic gods...

# Named groups and barbarous tongues

Anonymous, 2023. Submitted to [scenes.noblogs.org](http://scenes.noblogs.org) in response to another anonymous submission titled “A Humble Conversation On Why You Shouldn’t Create A Named Guerrilla Cell Formation/Banner/Acronym And Why You Should Resist Being A Part Of One”

There is no question of speaking or not-speaking: there is only speaking finitely and speaking in-finitely. To speak of not-speaking is to speak. Only in the lacunae do the spirits dwell, and they speak in barbarous tongue. About which we cannot speak, says Wittgenstein, we must pass over in silence. The caesura is not a lack of meaning but an excess of meaning, it flows out and empties.

Pure negation is only consummated in unending, paradoxical affirmation – the endless circumambulation of negative space – a festival of flagellant procession to banish the haunting of the Sign.

Shall the rupture be named? It must and it must not be. Convention holds that the Above is not like the Below, that the Above names and orders the Below. By our secret teachings we know that the Above is the Below, between them there is a radical identity, a non-duality as it were. The name names itself. It is within the name that the name is undone. In the circle-A is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the Infinitesimal and the Infinite, the Moment and the Eternity. This is the reddening by fire.

*Similia similibus curantur*, says Paracelsus, the like cures like – the hair of the dog cures the bite of the dog. By a great play of symbols, words, names, and lodges, we can efface the idolatry of these and achieve the Great Work. The vulgar eye sees both the name and the unnamed (which is named the “unnamed”) – it sees objects and relations between objects. But embracing mystic ambiguity — the liminal space between these — the vulgar eye sees naught but opaque, esoteric imagery: dancing sylphs.

Names are ritual implements: we falter not in their use, but in their worship. Offerings on the altar should be replaced promptly and often, when flowers wilt and figs rot. Like a raft used to cross a turbulent stream, we leave our names at the shore when we cross over to the other side.

The liar speaks the truth. Hurry to play. Hurry to arm yourself!

# The Ontological Priority of Violence: On Several Really Smart Things About Violence in Jean Genet's Work

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Through a consideration of the later texts of Jean Genet, this paper attempts to think the consequences, for thinking, of any thought of violence or terror insofar as it exceeds its instrumentality. It proceeds through a thought of singularity, a concomitant thought of multiplicity, and a reflection on the immanence of the senses, to a thought of violence as an ontologically constitutive articulation.

## *The Thought of Violence*

The first really smart thing Jean Genet said regarding the ontological priority of violence, in *The Thief's Journal*, is this: »Too many people think, I said to myself, who don't have the right to. They have not paid for it by the kind of undertaking which makes thinking indispensable to your salvation.« (Genet 1964, 84) More than twenty years later, in conversation with Tahar Ben Jelloun, he was to say this:

*Insofar as [the Left] perpetuates Judeo-Christian kinds of reasoning and morality, I find myself incapable of identifying with it; it is more idealist than political, more annoying than rational. As for Sartre, I've understood for a long time that his political thought is pseudo-thought. To my mind, what is called Sartrean thought no longer exists. His position-taking is only the hasty judgment of an intellectual too pusillanimous to confront anything but his own fantasies.* (Quoted by Ben Jelloun 1992, 94-95)

Or, again, in an interview with Michèle Manceaux à propos the Black Panthers, Genet said: »The non-violent stance of the Whites belongs to a moral dilettantism. Nothing else.« (Genet 1991b, 59)

The questions I am trying to approach in my current work concern the situation of thinking with regard to violence insofar as it exceeds its instrumentality, insofar as it is also something other than negativity. What is at stake for thinking when it is a question of non-instrumental, or perhaps more accurately

para-instrumental, violence? Can we think consequently when what is at stake is terror? Or must we, insofar as we think we are thinking, resign ourselves to the philosophical tragedies of aporia? Can we think terror, violence in its non- or para-instrumentality, as also something other than aporia?

The thought of terror always exceeds its concept; that is, the thought of terror cannot be deduced from any principle of modern political thought – just as neither radical evil nor the sublime can be deduced from reason or any theology; just as trauma cannot be deduced from psychoanalysis. For what still counts as reason, for theology, for psychoanalysis, the sublime, radical evil, or trauma constitute the points at which philosophy, theology, and psychoanalysis can no longer think philosophically, theologically, or psychoanalytically. Here, thinking stammers, or rather, thinking becomes nothing but a certain stammering; here, thinking can no longer think the fact as such of its thinking; here, thinking can only reflect upon itself as tragic aporia; here, thinking is sustained by no image of itself. It is in elaborating concepts of evil, the sublime, and trauma that modern thought has, sometimes in spite of itself, acknowledged the *irreducibility* of terror, but has *necessarily* been unable to think violence and terror in their irreducible positivity. And this because modern political philosophy (in what I take to be a broad sense of the term) has always aspired to a thinking experience of the political, to the subjectivity that the fact of thinking about an epistemological object called the political putatively constitutes.

I proceed from the hypothesis (which I am certainly far from the first to put forward) that any consequent thinking with regard to what is at stake in terror must submit itself, perhaps impossibly, not to a thinking experience of the political, but to a political experience of thinking, a historical experience of thinking. Is this possible? And what would a political-historical experience of thinking be? Can we not do more than merely state *that* thought does not cause itself, and *that* thinking is nevertheless unavoidable, but think *from* the fact of the experience of that provocation? Can we think not merely *about* our non-transcendence, our non-neutrality, our finitude, but from, and as, the experience of the non-transcendence, the non-neutrality, the finitude that we *are*? Can we think *from* the ontological priority of the political, *from* the experience of a violence that is no metaphor?

I am aware that these are very fuzzy articulations of the questions. What, for example, might the term »experience« mean here? But it seems to me that any question about the *meaning* of the experience of the political, of non-transcendence, non-neutrality, or terror immediately recuperates the question for philosophy, albeit under the sign of aporia; such experiences are neither meaningful nor meaningless, but precisely that which exceeds the question of meaning altogether. I proceed on the hypothesis that semantic and conceptual rigor is not the only intellectually rigorous approach to these questions. It is for this reason, and because I think he is one of the few to attempt to imagine violence in its positivity, that I take Genet to be my guide here. My itinerary goes something like this: from a thought of singularity (finitude, non-neutrality, historicity), to a thought of multiplicity (a sociality that is something other, and frankly something more, than what has long counted as public), to an »immanent« seeing which neither establishes nor conserves subjectivity in and as seeing; to a kind of »historiographical« practice as the art of disappearance, the

embrace of history, the affirmation that violence as such is.

### ***On the Solitude of Things***

The second really smart thing Jean Genet said regarding the ontological priority of violence consists of a constant meditation, traversing all his work, on the solitude of things. Of the hundreds of possible citations, let me select, to begin, just this, from *The Thief's Journal*:

*[T]he mere appearance of things must have caused me that anxiety which at first was born of fear. Then the anxiety disappeared. I felt I was perceiving things with blinding lucidity. Even the most trivial of them had lost their usual meaning, and I reached the point of wondering whether it was true that one drank from a glass or put on a shoe. As I discovered the particular meaning of each thing, the idea of number deserted me. [ . . . ]*

*I think I remember having the revelation of an absolute perception as I considered, in the state of luxurious detachment of which I have been speaking, a clothespin left behind on a line. The elegance and oddness of this familiar little object appeared before me without astonishing me. I perceived events themselves in their autonomy. The reader can imagine how dangerous such an attitude must have been in the life I was leading [as a thief], when I had to be wide-awake every minute and ran the risk of being caught if I lost sight of the usual meaning of objects. (Genet 1964, 129-130)*

Commentary on this and nearly identical passages in Genet could go on forever; I will limit myself to four observations. First, that in the blinding lucidity of this seeing, things exceed their instrumentality, and to the extent that they do so, they lose their meaning (*signification*) as well as – but it is the same thing – their relation to other things; in this »absolute perception« (*connaissance absolue*, rather than any *savoir*), in this revelation, the disposition of things is entropic, coming to rest in the solitude of an absolute luminescence. In their singularity, things cannot be subsumed within any generality or universality; they therefore cannot be counted, and thus render the very idea of number incomprehensible (for, with Borges, Nancy, Deleuze and Guattari, and quite a number of others, we could only »count« singularities as »1, 1, 1, 1 . . .« but then »one« could no longer be a number [for what is one without 2, 3, 4?]).

In their singularity, things are neither individual nor particular; they are incommensurable in their entropic solitude, and thus never coalesce into what might be called a »world.« Which threatens, in an essential way, the comportments, practices, and gestures that constitute the thief's subjectivity; this seeing is not the faculty of a subject. As Genet was to tell Hubert Fichte years later à propos works of art, "»I more and more lose the feeling of being »me« [moi], the feeling of »I« [je] as anything other than the perception of a work of art.«" (Genet 1991a, 146) Finally, the solitude of things is neither a matter of astonishment nor of enchantment; this is neither enlightenment nor magical realism. And if this constitutes a fetishism, it is quite contradictorily a disenchanting fetishism (sometimes called materialism, of course).



The luminescent entropy of the solitude of things, the disenchanting fetishism of this materiality – in short, this singularity – is at once always already accomplished at the same time that it is always yet to come, and yet neither precedes nor survives its articulation. It is always a *process* of disenchantment, of an approach to absolute solitude, of a tendency toward entropy, a process (which perhaps amounts to a practice) of becoming-singular, becoming-nothing-but-thing, of becoming-nontranscendent. It is a kind of *k\_nosis* (a kind of becoming-stupid, as Ronell has recently reminded us; Ronell 2002, 178-185) in a certain abjectification, a becoming-destitute or desperate, constant themes of Genet's writing. Indeed, the quotation with which I began is preceded by a passage that is not merely existential psychology:

*In short, the greater my guilt in your eyes, the more whole, the more totally assumed, the greater will be my freedom. The more perfect my solitude and uniqueness. By my guilt I further gained the right to intelligence. Too many people think, I said to myself, who don't have the right to. They have not paid for it by the kind of undertaking which makes thinking indispensable to your salvation.* (Genet 1964, 84)

Here, guilt is the figure of that non-transcendence, non-neutrality, which alone vouchsafes the right to think. Evil, betrayal, crime, treason, the themes of more than the novels and plays, are all becomings, all trajectories of separation, passages of dissociation, flights from relationality, acts of more than metaphysical violence. All of these negations of relation, these non-relations, these anti-relations, are themselves relations. The constitutive – creative – relation in Genet is the violence of separation. At Mettray, the reformatory where Genet spent much of his adolescence and which preoccupies him throughout *Miracle of the Rose*, the only relation among the inmates are violent, erotic, and therefore social relations. And in his last, avowedly post-literary work, *Prisoner of Love*, he recalls attending mass at the abbey of Monserrat:

*Then came the famous kiss of peace: after the elevation the Abbot kissed each of the acolytes on both cheeks, and they conveyed the salutation to each of the monks sitting in the choir. Then two choristers opened the screen doors and his reverence came down among the congregation, kissing some of us. I was one of those who received a kiss, but I broke the chain of fraternity by not passing it on.* (Genet 1992, 33)

This thought of violent separation in betrayal, treason, crime, *k\_nosis*, abjection, guilt, evil, desperation, and disenchanting fetishism is a thought of becoming-thing, of entropy: in short, at once an empiricism and a materialism. And let me repeat that this violent becoming is neither the realization of a possibility (because it is always already realized), nor is it ever accomplished in any teleology; it is a becoming with neither ground nor telos, which nevertheless *happens*. If this thought of singularity is important for Genet, it is because it bears with it, equiprimordially as it were, a thought of multiplicity, a thought of sociality as the infinite proliferation of differences. But I have oversimplified; things are essentially more complicated than that.

*Jean Genet's Bachelor Machines*

So here is the third really smart thing Genet said regarding the ontological priority of violence. It takes the form of an exchange with Nigel Williams for the BBC in 1985:

NW [Nigel Williams] – *You have spoken in your books of love at the Colony [the reformatory at Mettray].*

G [Genet] — *You said ›l'amour? I heard ›la mort.*

NW — *Love, I don't want to talk about death, but of love.*

G — *Oh, yeah. What was the question?*

NW — *For you, I think, love began not with the family, but with a boy. . .*

G — *No, not with a boy, with two hundred! What are you saying?!*

NW — *With two hundred?*

G — *Well, one after another, after all. . . (Genet 1991c, 299)*

But perhaps the strongest, and certainly most succinct of Genet's meditations on the equiprimordiality (as it were) of singularity and multiplicity comes in a story he tells at least twice, once in his essay on Giacometti and again, in a somewhat more rigorous articulation, in the remarkable essay *What Remains of a Rembrandt Torn Into Four Equal Pieces and Flushed Down the Toilet*. After an important introductory paragraph, which I will have to ignore here, Genet begins his anecdote:

*Something which seemed to resemble decay was in the process of cankering my former view of the world. One day, while riding in a train, I experienced a revelation: as I looked at the passenger sitting opposite me, I realized that every man has the same value as every other. I did not suspect (or rather, I did, I was obscurely aware of it, for suddenly a wave of sadness welled up within me and, more or less bearable, but substantial, remained with me) that this knowledge would entail such a methodical disintegration. Behind what was visible in this man, or further – further and at the same time miraculously and distressingly close – I discovered in him (graceless body and face, ugly in certain details, even vile: dirty moustache, which in itself would have been unimportant but which was also hard and stiff, with the hairs almost horizontal above the tiny mouth, a decayed mouth; gobs which he spate between his knees on the floor of the carriage that was already filthy with cigarette stubs, paper; bits of bread, in short, the filth of a third-class carriage in those days), I discovered with a shock, as a result of the gaze that butted against mine, a kind of universal identity of all men.*

*No, it didn't happen so quickly, and not in that order. The fact is that my gaze butted (not crossed, butted) that of the other passenger; or rather melted into it. The man had just raised his eyes from a newspaper and quite simply turned them, no doubt unintentionally, on mine, which, in the same accidental way, were looking into his.*

*Did he then and there, experience the same emotion and confusion as I? His gaze was not someone else's: it was my own that I was meeting in a mirror, inadvertently and in a state of solitude and self-oblivion.*  
(Genet 1988, 10-13)

You will already have recognized something of what interests me in this anecdote: that it is a matter of decay, disintegration, decomposition, disenchantment; that the eyes of the other, far from being windows on the soul, repel and obstruct, they separate but also melt into each other in identity rather than resemblance; that therefore, for Genet as for Rancière's ignorant schoolmaster or Clastres's savages, equality is not equivalence; that what is at stake here is therefore no intersubjective recognition, no ground for any humanism; that, as Genet later says, »[n]o man was my brother: every man was myself« (Genet 1988, 22); that the absolute discrimination of abject singularity and the no less absolute non-discrimination of multiplicity are exactly the same thing. Anonymous singularity, promiscuous multiplicity, this is the logic of a disenchanted – ultimately Buddhist – cruising, a logic of the clone. It is also a kind of vagabond or nomad thievery that is more subversive than any mere affront to bourgeois property and sensibility. As Didier Eribon and Scott Durham have both seen, what is at stake in this multiplicity is a radically other sense of sociality (Eribon 2001; Durham 1998, 117-185). In what is perhaps Genet's most profoundly Spinozist moment, he writes at the end of his life of his time with the fedayeen:

*A little while ago I wrote that though I shall die, nothing else will. And I must make my meaning clear. Wonder at the sight of a cornflower, at a rock, at the touch of a rough hand – all the millions of emotions of which I'm made – they won't disappear even though I shall. Other men will experience them, and they'll still be there because of them. More and more I believe I exist in order to be the terrain and proof which show other men that life consists in the uninterrupted emotions flowing through all creation. The happiness my hand knows in a boy's hair will be known by another hand, is already known. And although I shall die, that happiness will live on. ›I‹ may die, but what made that ›I‹ possible, what made possible the joy of being, will make the joy of being live on without me. (Genet 1992, 314)*

Which changes nothing, except everything.

That one is at the same time singular and identical to everyone else (something rather different than a concrete universal, by the way) is not an analytic deduction or knowing; rather, it is an absolute certitude grasped in what Genet called a »sudden intuition.« The possession of this certitude does not constitute a knowledge that would certify the subjectivity of the one who knows. On the contrary, this intuition in its certainty deprives whoever intuits, by virtue of that intuiting, of the transcendence with which epistemological subjectivity presumptively endows us. It is not merely *what* is intuited, but the *fact* of intuiting that wrecks any transcendental aspiration; this intuiting itself belongs to the work of disenchantment and becoming. Recall that the glance Genet encounters communicates nothing except identity (which is, of course, incommunicable); this seeing is at once absolute separation, or non-understanding, as well as the equally absolute irrelevance of understanding or communication

for identity. Here, seeing is not the opportunity for interpretation, understanding, or judgment: seeing bypasses cognition, *what* you see is what you see. In the immanence of that intuition or seeing, what is seen overtakes the one who intuits or sees. The seeing is absorbed within what is seen; seeing becomes submission.

### **What You See Is What You See**

What you see is what you see. I would like to emphasize two aspects of this sensuous empiricism. The first aspect is embedded in this fourth really smart thing Jean Genet said regarding the ontological priority of violence:

*Every fedayee felt free ranging over this area [the Ajloun hills] on foot or by car, never letting go of the surface. It was the surface that concerned us, and we learned its contours as we moved over them. Each fedayee's horizon was taught him by his eyes and feet. He had only to look in front of him to see where he was going, and behind him to see where he'd come from. (Genet 1992, 105)*

This first seeing, this nearly empirical seeing, is first of all a practical and interested intuition of what is given; given not a priori or as essential possibility, but given in and as its utter contingency. What is seen in practical or interested intuition is not a landscape, but hiding places, escape routes, obstacles and possibilities. It is not simply that seeing all of this is contingent, but that seeing itself belongs to contingency itself, seeing is *of* contingency; this is the seeing of the glimpse rather than the gaze, illumination as fulguration rather than enlightenment. Calculation there is, but it is paradoxically an instantaneous calculation, or what is too easily termed »instinctive« calculation, a canine or feline calculation. Seeing here is not the path to transcendence; on the contrary, it is a kind of haptic seeing, where seeing becomes touch. This *haptic* seeing is first of all, as Genet says, a matter of surfaces – and nothing but surfaces, surfaces that are not shells that surround and protect any substantiality, but surfaces that constitute what Deleuze and Guattari called »smooth space,« a space that is not the emptiness of a plane, field, or volume, but the infinite empirical congestion of contingent being (Deleuze/Guattari 1987, 474-500; see also Ricco 2002). This is the seeing required by guerrilla warfare, as Genet says, of »that ›little war‹ in which you had to find allies in fog, damp and the height of rivers, in the rainy season, the long grass, the owl's cry, and the phases of the sun and moon« (Genet 1992, 108).

Thus, this guerrilla seeing belongs to the situation or opportunity; it is essentially and thoroughly opportunistic, as Massimo De Carolis has said (1996, 37-51); that is, what is seen determines the fact of seeing; haptic seeing, guerrilla seeing, is neither an instinct nor a faculty, but an accident, an opportunity. It is, as it were, a phenomenology without the essential reflection that makes phenomenology what it presumptively is. That is, it is a situating of oneself without a cartographic or perspectival reflection, because haptic, guerrilla seeing exceeds, essentially and at every point, every possible cartography or perspectivism. And therefore is something other, something more, than the reflective subjectivity of every transcendental cartography. Haptic, guerrilla seeing never

puts things in perspective. It is the very experience of non-transcendence, of non-neutrality.

What you see is what you see. The second, and I think consequent, aspect of this immanent seeing is a question of witnessing. Here, then, is the fifth really smart thing Jean Genet said regarding the ontological priority of violence: »When so many things are there to be seen, just seen, there are no words to describe them.« (Genet 1992, 55) »Just seen«: Genet insisted over and again – in the first pages of *Prisoner of Love*, in his commentary on a Paris exhibition of photos of the Palestinians, in his essay on the massacre at Chatila, for example – on the heteronymy of seeing and understanding, on the fact that seeing does more than download a world for interpretation's hard drive; he insists on the essential stupidity of the senses (and this is also the case, by the way, when what is seen is words). And yet this just seeing, this radical empiricism, does not go unremarked; indeed, the fact that it marks the limit of the possibility of description does not thereby augur the end of description or of representation altogether. What is at stake, I want to suggest, is a certain becoming: becoming non-transcendent, becoming non-neutral in a haptic witnessing, a guerrilla historicism. This is a going-under, what Genet calls a drowning, an art of disappearance with neither preservation nor conservation.

Over and again in his texts on the Palestinians and the Black Panthers, Genet insisted upon the uncommunicable distance between the transcendence of geopolitical perspective, the neutrality of what he called Europe on the one hand, and the haptic existence of Black and Palestinian guerrillas on the other. These texts bear witness to that existence and that distance. They do not translate that existence which Genet shared for a time; rather, in saying what he has seen – dead bodies in their empirical singularity and multiplicity, just for example – he bears witness to the fact of just seeing, to the stupidity of the senses in their heterogeneity (what Lyotard, à propos the sublime, called a »negative presentation«), but as »negative presentation« is specifically historicist; or rather, belongs to what Foucault called »political historicism,« a *guerrilla* historicism, the work of becoming non-transcendent, non-neutral. Genet's writing is not witness to the *feeling* of the post-Burkean, post-Kantian sublime, but testimony to the failure of the sublime to sustain subjectivity.

In all of Genet's political texts on the Black Panthers, the RAF, and on the Palestinians, he will offer a historical narrative, to suggest how it is things came to be the way they are. Yet these stories are in every case interrupted and fragmented by descriptive episodes, testimony to guerrilla phenomenology, testimony to catastrophe, negative presentations of what remains unrepresentable, everything that cannot be overcome and preserved in any story. These interruptions, »political historicism« on Foucault's account, constitute a work of dis-integration, dis-appearance, an affirmation, precisely, of non-transcendence, non-neutrality.

But let us not be lulled into historiographical slumber here. The work of dis-integration or dis-appearance, the affirmation of finitude and non-neutrality, are never peaceable processes or procedures; they are violent, the very fact of a violence that is never metaphorical. Nevertheless, they are not negative.

## **Finitude Now!**

The sixth really smart thing Jean Genet said regarding the ontological priority of violence comes during a discussion with Rüdiger Wischenbart and Layla Shahid Barrada in December of 1983: »Listen,« Genet said, »*the day the Palestinians become an institution, I will no longer be at their side. The day the Palestinians become a nation like any other nation, I will no longer be there.*« (Genet 1991d, 282) Later in the same discussion, he worried that life in the Palestinian camps was settling into the routines, structures, and institutions of Palestinian villages before 1948, but nevertheless affirms his support, for the moment, of »*la Palestine révoltée.*« It is beginning with the organization of the Palestinian revolt against the conservative Arab states (King Hussein's Jordan, in particular) and against the state of Israel, that there occurred for the Palestinians what Genet called a »physical transformation«: »*First, they expelled local armies (Jordanian, Lebanese, etc.) and organized themselves. From this moment, they felt they existed. Without national territory. But they existed all the same. And I think it was that, it was that, that was most important for them. To continue to feel that they exist. . . . But no Palestinian has a Palestinian passport. Such a thing doesn't exist.*« (Genet 1991d, 291) And Genet conceived the actions of the Black Panthers to be »*a poetical revolt, an ›act,«* (Genet 1992, 149) rather than a program; and so »*the Panthers' most definite achievement was to spotlight that the Blacks really existed.*« (Genet 1992, 42)

Clearly, violence is positive for Genet only insofar as it is non-instrumental or para-instrumental. Revolt is not revolution. Violence is positive only insofar as ends and means are identical in existence. For Genet, the Panthers and the Palestinians have no possibility for existence outside of their violence; they cannot »choose« whatever might count as non-violence, because their very existence in the world is violence. Concomitantly, the violence of existence in its positivity is never to be conflated with institutionalized brutality: should the Palestinians or the Panthers ever have a territory or state, Genet will no longer be there. In a short essay that first appeared in *Le Monde* in 1977, and which occasioned a major furor in the press, Genet supported the actions of the RAF precisely as a creative violence that sought the destruction of state brutality (Genet 1991e, 199-206). Not unlike Georges Sorel, Frantz Fanon, and others before him, Genet saw the positivity of violence to belong to the practical constitution of being, in the affirmation that is *potentia* rather than the affirmation of *potestas*; that is, in existence as the actualization of a possibility that did not exist before its actualization, *and which does not survive the happening of that actualization*, rather than in the brutality of institutionalized power. For Genet, the affirmation of violence as the actualized potential of existence depends not only upon its non- or para-instrumentality, but upon what one might call its »immediate finitude,« that fact that survival, continuity, institution, conservation, preservation, and salvation are quite beside the point. Genet wrote:

*You have to understand that the people you call terrorists know without needing to be told that they, their persons and their ideas, will only be brief flashes against a world wrapped up in its own smartness. Saint-Just was dazzling, and knew his own brightness. The Black Panthers knew their own brilliance, and that they would disap-*

*pear. Baader and his friends heralded the death of the Shah of Iran. And the fedayeen, too, are tracer bullets, knowing their traces vanish in the twinkling of an eye.*

*I mention these truncated lives because I see in them a joy I think I also see in the final rush of Nasser's funeral, in the ever more complicated and lively transports of the hands that drummed on the coffins, in the almost joyful passage in the ›Kyrie‹ of Mozart's Requiem. (Genet 1992, 179)*

The only possibility for existence is, as Genet quoted an old Palestinian woman, ›to have been dangerous for a thousandth of a second.« (Genet 1992, 239)

One might argue, rather wearily perhaps, that all this is nothing more than a Romantic vitalism, which may well be true. But I think it important to bear in mind, first, that Genet only ever spoke of, and from, the place of those who have nothing left to lose, from where one has no choice and is therefore, as Janis Joplin once told us, caught up in an affirmation she called ›freedom.« And, second, that this violence, in and as its ›immediate finitude,« is the very edge of becoming, of metamorphosis.

It is first of all a question of borders and frontiers, the lines that separate the here from the there, the this from the that, but are themselves both the here and the there, the this and the that, and yet are neither here nor there, this nor that. Were he to have been born other than who he was, and had he a choice in the matter, Genet mused, he would have been born in Alsace-Lorraine, because ›[w]hatever they may say, anyone approaching a frontier stops being a Jacobin and becomes a Machiavelli« (Genet 1992, 147); one forsakes a war of position in favor of guerrilla phenomenology. But borders and frontiers, geopolitical and metaphorical, are always the place of a decidedly non-metaphorical violence.

The figure that most forcibly expresses the violence of metamorphosis in *Prisoner of Love* is that of the post-op transsexual. The transsexual is the figure of the no longer male, but not yet female, but also the still male and the already female, who is absolutely fearful, but also knows ›a joy close to madness,« the joy, Genet says, of the fedayeen, the kamikaze, and the Mozart *Requiem* as well (Genet 1992, 52-53); for Genet, the transsexual, caught up in the violence of metamorphosis, is the heroine of becoming, with an essentially uncertain destination. So too, twilight is the time of a dangerous, violent passage, a time – or rather, a space according to Genet – when ›every being becomes his own shadow, and thus something other than himself. The hour of metamorphosis, when people half hope, half fear that a dog will become a wolf. The hour that comes down to us from at least as far back as the early Middle Ages, when country people believed that transformation might happen at any moment.« And thus, ›[f]or me in particular, in that particular place, the expression ›between dog and wolf,‹ *entre chien et loup*, instead of connoting twilight, described any, perhaps all, of the moments of a fedayee's life.« (Genet 1992, 220-221)

Transition, movement, metamorphosis, with neither a goal nor an origin: this is the very openness of violence to futurity as such; without the affirmation of that violence, the future is only an ahistorical – anti-historical – continuation of the present, or (but it is the same thing) the telos of a revolutionary project. It is perhaps for this reason that Genet repeatedly insisted that he was a vagabond, not a revolutionary. Genet might well have said of himself what he said of the

fedayeen – that he is »light on the earth« (Genet 1992, 210). Forty years earlier, he had concluded *Miracle of the Rose* with these lines: »If I take leave of this book, I take leave of what can be related. The rest is unsayable. I say no more and walk barefoot.« (Genet 1966, 291)

### **Zen Vampires Rule!**

I, on the other hand, have a few more words. I will not pretend to have come close to saying what a political experience of thinking might be; I have only hoped today to have made any approach to that experience a bit more difficult. But I do want to say by way of conclusion that of all that Genet gives us to think regarding the ontological priority of violence, several consequences desperately need to be thought with whatever sobriety and rigor we can muster in the current situation, if the word »history« is to signify anything other than a meretricious justification for the exercise of rationalized state brutality.

First, that witnessing, historiography in the largest sense of the term, in its obsession with singularity, is not – all appearances to the contrary – the work of preservation or conservation, least of all of restoration. In its consuming attention to the infinite empirical congestion of the proper, testimony and historiography constitute a work of dis-integration, the work of a disenchanting fetishism. The work of history is the art of an infinite fragmentation, of decay, and of disappearance, the work of entropy: this I have seen, and it cannot be preserved in the museum of its concept.

Second, and therefore, there is no such thing as violence or terror in the abstract generality of the concept; the words or concepts of violence and terror denote that impossibility of abstraction. This is of course the aporetic case with all singularities; what I have been trying to say, however, is that singularity *as such* is violence, and that violence is never anything other than singular and incomparable, at the same time that it is multiple and ontologically promiscuous.

Third, in other words, violence is the constitutive relation. Which means that violence is the first relation, and that violence constitutes relationality as such. Relation is violence. There is no outside of violence. That being said, however, I would emphasize that it is possible nevertheless to substitute a caress for a murder. When Genet was asked why he had never committed murder, he replied, »probably because I wrote my books« (Genet 1991a, 160). In any case, if we cannot think the ontologically constitutive nature of violence, we cannot possibly think the desperation of those for whom, by force of historical, existential circumstance, relation can *only* be expressed in what is called terror. Such desperation is not, or at least not merely, a psychological condition.

Fourth, Herakleitos was right: violence causes thinking. Violence is not merely given to thought as an object or aporia, but is the very possibility of thinking. Were peace, or the One, primordial, we would never have occasion to think. Thinking is bound to the violence of an original multiplicity; thinking is one articulation of that violent multiplicity. Thinking is not merely a weapon, and to the extent that it does not think its thinking, to the extent that thinking thinks without reflecting upon its thinking – that is to say, insofar as thinking is the work of Zen vampires – thinking is violent. What is at stake here is not merely a question of disagreement or the *différend*, but an essential interruption of our constitutive existential comportments, the risk of madness, physical



anguish, and death.

Fifth, the fact that thinking is bound to an original ontological violence forces us to acknowledge, I think, that there are no good guys, no innocents, in our histories. The good is not a historical concept, for there is no thought of the good, even as the »undeconstructibility of justice,« that does not bring with it at least the possibility of a transcendental, presumptively non-violent, subjectivity. We – however that »we« is construed – are not necessarily on the side of the good, nor even necessarily on the side of an aporetic thought of the good. As long as morality, whatever its sophistications, is the touchstone of thought, we are not yet thinking. It seems to me that we have yet seriously to think the consequences of this *for thinking*. Let me hasten to add, if only parenthetically, that this does not mean we cannot take sides, for we have always already taken sides; the problem – the historical, political problem – is not which side to take (the liberal version of the problem), but to invent sides we are not yet able to imagine. For the problem today is not which politics to profess, but to bring the very possibility of the political into being, a possibility which neither precedes nor survives its happening. The anti-war demonstrations, in and as their interestedness, are thereby attempts to make the political happen, not merely in the face of a particular regime, but an entire liberal disposition (or *dispositif*) that has no other purpose than to obviate the possibility of the political altogether.

What, finally, Genet gives us to think – as if we could avoid the thought these days – is this: that our histories will have no happy endings. I do not mean to suggest here that existing critiques of the happy ending, or of teleologies in general, are somehow insufficient. Nor do I mean to suggest, with Sorel, that pessimism is the only possibility for thinking. What I do mean to say is that hope and despair, like good and evil, are not historical or political concepts, because they necessarily assume the possibility of making sense; they are predicated on the assumption that the world can make sense. But that possibility, today, is not self-evident, and to the extent we might assume that self-evidence, we are not yet thinking. I will stop here.

This text was first delivered as a lecture at the invitation of the Department of East Asian Studies and the Center for the Study of Genders and Sexuality at New York University on 10 March 2003. I have not revised the text in the light of subsequent events. A further meditation might well begin with a consideration of an uncannily prescient passage from Deleuze and Guattari: »Doubtless, the present situation is highly discouraging. We have watched the war machine grow stronger and stronger, as in a science fiction story; we have seen it assign as its objective a peace still more terrifying than fascist death; we have seen it maintain or instigate the most terrible of local wars as parts of itself; we have seen it set its sights on a new type of enemy, no longer another State, or even another regime, but the »unspecified enemy«; we have seen it put its counterguerrilla elements into place, so that it can be caught by surprise once, but not twice.« (Deleuze/Guattari 1987, 422)

# Of Torture in Primitive Societies

Pierre Clastres, 1974. Translated from French by Robert Hurley in collaboration with Abe Stein. A chapter in *Society Against the State: Essays in Political Anthropology*. Excerpted.

## I. The law and writing

No one is meant to forget the severity of the law. *Dura lex sed lex*. Various means have been devised, depending on the epoch and the society, for keeping the memory of that severity ever fresh. For us the simplest and most recent was the generalization of free and compulsory schooling. Once universal education became legislated fact, no one could, without lying — without transgressing — plead ignorance. For, in its severity, the law is at the same time writing. Writing is on the side of the law; the law lives in writing; and knowing the one means that unfamiliarity with the other is no longer possible. Hence all law is written; all writing is an index of law. This is one of the lessons to be drawn from the procession of history's great despots, all the kings, emperors, and pharaohs, all the Suns who were able to impose their Law on the peoples under them: everywhere and without exception, the reinvented writing directly bespeaks the power of the law, be it engraved in stone, painted on animal skins, or drawn on papyrus. Even the *quipu* of the Incas can be regarded as a type of writing. Far from being merely mnemotechnic instruments of accountancy, the knotted cords were primarily and of necessity a writing that asserted the legitimacy of the imperial law and the terror it was intended to inspire.

## II. Writing and the body

Various literary works teach us how the law contrives to annex unforeseen places for its inscription. The officer of *In the Penal Colony*<sup>1</sup> explains in detail to the explorer the operation of *the machine for writing the law*:

“Our sentence does not sound severe. Whatever commandment the prisoner has disobeyed is written upon his body by the Harrow. This prisoner, for instance” — the officer indicated the man — “will have written on his body: HONOR THY SUPERIORS!”

And, as if it were a matter of common sense, the officer replies to the explorer, who was astounded to learn that the condemned man did not know the sentence that had been passed on him: “There would be no point in telling him. He'll learn it on his body.” And later:

You have seen how difficult it is to decipher the script with one's eyes; but our man deciphers it with his wounds. To be sure, that is a hard task; he needs six hours to accomplish it.

Here Kafka designates the body as a writing surface, a surface suited for receiving the legible text of the law..

### III. The body and the rite

A very large number of primitive societies mark the importance they attach to the admission of their young people into adulthood by the institution of the so-called rites of passage. These initiation rituals often constitute a basic axis around which the whole social and religious life of the community is organized. Now the initiatory rite always involves a laying hold of the body. It is the body in its immediacy that the society appoints as the only space that lends to bearing the sign of a time, the trace of a passage, and the allotment of a destiny. What secret are initiates made privy to by the rite that, for a moment, takes full possession of their bodies? A recognition of the intimacy, the complicity of the body and the secret, the body and the truth revealed by the initiation, leads one to question further. Why must the individual body be the focal point of the tribal ethos? Why can the secret only be communicated by means of the social enactment of the rite on the body of the young people? The body mediates the acquisition of a knowledge; that knowledge is inscribed on the body. The significance of initiation is contained in the answer to the twofold question concerning the nature of the knowledge transmitted by the rite, and the function of the body in the performance of the rite.

### IV. The rite and torture

Oh! "horrible visu — et mirabile dictu." Thank God, it is over, that I have seen it, and am able to tell it to the world.

George Gatlin<sup>2</sup> has just witnessed, for four days running, the great annual ceremony of the Mandan Indians. In the description he gives of it, as well as in the finely executed sketches that illustrate it, he cannot keep from expressing — despite the admiration he feels for these great warriors of the Plains — his horror and repugnance at seeing the ritual spectacle. An understandable response, considering that while the ceremonial is a taking possession of the body by society, the latter does not seize hold of it in just any manner: almost invariably — and this is what horrifies Catlin — the ritual subjects the body to *torture*:

One at a time, one of the young fellows, already emaciated with fasting, and thirsting, and waking, for nearly four days and nights, advanced from the side of the lodge, and placed himself on his hands and feet, or otherwise, as best suited for the performance of the operation, where he submitted to the cruelties...

Holes pierced in the body, skewers forced through the wounds, hanging, amputation, "the last race,"<sup>3</sup> torn flesh: cruelty's resources seem inexhaustible.

And yet:

The unflinching fortitude with which every one of them bore this part of the torture surpassed credulity; each one as the knife was passed through his flesh sustained an unchangeable countenance; and several of them, seeing me making sketches, beckoned me to look at their faces, which I watched through all this horrid operation, without being able to detect anything but the pleasantest smiles as they looked me in the eye, while I could hear the knife rip through the flesh, and feel enough of it myself, to start involuntary and uncontrollable tears over my cheeks.

The explicitly declared techniques, means, and goals of the cruelty vary from tribe to tribe, and from region to region, but the object is always the same: the individual must be made to suffer. I myself have described elsewhere<sup>4</sup> the initiation of Guayaki young people, whose backs are furrowed over their entire surface. The pain always ends up being unbearable: keeping silent all the while, the individual being tortured loses consciousness. Among the celebrated Mbaya-Guaycuru of the Paraguayan Chaco, the young men old enough to be admitted into the warriors' ranks also had to go through the ordeal of suffering. With the aid of a sharpened jaguar bone, their penises and other parts of the body were pierced through. There too, silence was the price exacted by the initiation.

The examples could be multiplied endlessly and they would all tell us one and the same thing: in primitive societies, torture is the essence of the initiation ritual. But is not this cruelty inflicted on the body aimed solely at measuring the young people's capacity for physical resistance, at reassuring the society as to the quality of its members? Would not the purpose of torture in the rite be merely to furnish the occasion to demonstrate individual worth? Catlin expresses this classic viewpoint quite well:

I have already given enough of these shocking and disgusting instances to convince the world of the established fact of the Indian's superior stoicism and power of endurance. I am ready to accord them in this particular, the palm. My heart has sickened also with disgust for so abominable and ignorant a custom, and still I stand ready with all my heart, to excuse and forgive them for adhering so strictly to an ancient celebration...

If one lets it go at that, however, one is bound to mistake the *function* of the suffering, grant it far too little significance, and overlook its use by the tribe to teach the individual something.

## V. Torture and memory

The initiators make certain that the intensity of the suffering is pushed to its highest point. Among the Guayaki, for instance, a bamboo knife would be more than sufficient to slice into the skin of the initiates. *But it would not be sufficiently painful.* Consequently, a stone must be used, with something of an edge, but not too sharp, a stone that tears instead of cutting. So a man with a practiced eye goes off to explore certain stream beds where these torturing stones are found.

George Catlin notes, among the Mandan, the same preoccupation with the intensity of suffering:

An inch or more of the flesh on each shoulder, or each breast was taken up between the thumb and finger by the man who held the knife in his right hand; and the knife, which had been ground sharp on both edges, and then hacked and notched with the blade of another, to make it produce as much pain as possible...

And, like the Guayaki scarifier, the Mandan shaman shows not the least amount of compassion:

When he is, by turning, gradually brought to this condition, there is a close scrutiny passed upon him among his tormentors, who are checking and holding each other back as long as the least struggling or tremor can be discovered, lest he should be removed before he is (as they term it) "entirely dead."

Precisely insofar as the initiation is — undeniably — a test of personal courage, this courage is expressed (in a manner of speaking) by silence in the face of suffering. But after the initiation, when all the suffering is already *forgotten*, something remains, an irrevocable surplus, the *traces* left on the body by the wielding of the knife or stone, the scars of the wounds received. An initiated man is a marked man. The purpose of the initiation, in its torturing phase, is to mark the body: in the initiatory rite, *society imprints its mark on the body* of the young people. Now, a scar, a trace, a mark are ineffaceable. Inscribed in the deepest layer of the skin, they will always testify, as a perpetual witness, that while the pain may be no longer anything but a bad memory, it was nonetheless experienced in fear and trembling. The mark is a hindrance to forgetting; the body itself bears the memory traces imprinted on it; *the body is a memory*.

For, what is wanted is not to lose the memory of the secret imparted by the tribe, the memory of that knowledge henceforth held in trust by the young initiates. What does the young Guayaki hunter, the young Mandan warrior, now know? The mark is a sure sign of their membership in the group. "You are one of us, and you will not forget it." Martin Dobrizhofer<sup>5</sup> is at a loss for words to describe the rites of the Abipones, who cruelly tattoo the faces of the young women at the time of their first menstruation. And to one of them who cannot keep from groaning from the etching of the thorn needles, this is what the old woman who is torturing her shouts:

Enough of your insolence! You are not dear to our race! Monster for whom a little tickling of the thorn becomes unbearable! Maybe you do not know that you are of the race of those who bear wounds and are counted among the victors? You appear softer than cotton. There is no doubt that you will die an old maid. Will one of our heroes judge you worthy of uniting with him, frightened one?

And I recall how, one day in 1963, the Guayaki satisfied themselves as to the true "nationality" of a young Paraguayan woman: after pulling off her clothes, they discovered the tribal tattoos on her arms. The whites had captured her during her childhood.

Thus there are two obvious functions of initiation as the inscription of marks on the body: measuring personal endurance, and giving notice of membership. But is this really all that the memory acquired in pain has to retain? Is it truly

necessary for one to go through torture in order to always remember the value of the ego and maintain tribal, ethnic, or national consciousness? Where is the secret transmitted; where is the knowledge revealed?

## VI. Memory and the law

The initiatory ritual is a pedagogy that passes from the group to the individual, from the tribe to the young people. An assertive pedagogy, and not a dialogue: hence the initiates must remain silent under the torture. Silence gives consent. To what do the young people consent? They consent to accept themselves for what they are from that time forward: full members of the community. *Nothing more, nothing less.* And they are irreversibly marked as such. This, then, is the secret that the group reveals to the young people in the initiation: "You are one of us. Each one of you is like us; each one of you is like the others. You are called by the same name, and you will not change your name. Each one of you occupies the same space and the same place among us: you will keep them. None of you is less than us; none of you is more than us. *And you will never be able to forget it.* You will not cease to remember the same marks that we have left on your bodies."

In other words, society *dictates its laws* to its members. It inscribes the text of the law on the surface of their bodies. No one is supposed to forget the law on which the social life of the tribe is based.

In the sixteenth century, the first chroniclers described the Brazilian Indians as people without faith, king or law. To be sure, those tribes had no knowledge of the harsh, separate law, the law that imposes the power of the few on all others in a divided society. That is a law — the king's law, the law of the State — of which the Mandan and the Guaycuru, the Guayaki and the Abipones know nothing. The law they come to know in pain is the law of primitive society, which says to everyone: *You are worth no more than anyone else; you are worth no less than anyone else.* The law, inscribed on bodies, expresses primitive society's refusal to run the risk of division, the risk of a power separate from society itself, a power that would escape its control. Primitive law, cruelly taught, is a prohibition of inequality that each person will remember. Being the very substance of the group, primitive law becomes the substance of the individual, a personal willingness to fulfill the law. Let us listen once more to the words of George Catlin:

But there was one poor fellow though, who was dragged around and around the circle, with the skull of an elk hanging to the flesh on one of his legs — several had jumped upon it, but to no effect, for the splint was under the sinew, which could not be broken. The dragging became every instant more and more furious, and the apprehensions for the poor fellow's life, apparent by the piteous howl which was set up for him by the multitude around; and at last the medicine man ran, with his medicine pipe in his hand, and held them in check, when the body was dropped, and left upon the ground, with the skull yet hanging to it. The boy, who was an extremely interesting and fine-looking youth, soon recovered his senses and his strength, looking deliberately at his torn

and bleeding limbs; and also with the most pleasant smile of defiance, upon the misfortune which had now fallen to his peculiar lot, crawled through the crowd (instead of walking, which they are never again at liberty to do until the flesh is torn out, and the article left) to the prairie, and over which, for a distance of half a mile, to a sequestered spot, without any attendant, where he laid three days and three nights, yet longer, without food, and praying to the Great Spirit, until suppuration took place in the wound, and by the decaying of the flesh the weight was dropped, and the splint also, which he dare not extricate in another way. At the end of this, he crawled back to the village on his hands and knees, being too much emaciated to walk, and begged for something to eat, which was at once given to him, and he was soon restored to health.

What force propelled the young Mandan? Certainly not some masochistic impulse, but rather the desire to be faithful to the law, the will to be neither more nor less than the equal of the other initiates.

I began by saying that all law is written. Here we see a reconstitution, in a sense, of the triple alliance already discerned: the body, writing, and the law. The scars traced on the body are the inscribed text of primitive law; in that sense, they are a *writing on the body*. As the authors of *L'Anti-Oedipe* have so forcefully argued, primitive societies are first of all societies that mark. And to that extent, they are in fact societies without writing; but what this statement means primarily is that writing points to the existence of a separate, distant, despotic law of the State, such as Martchenko's fellow prisoners write on their bodies. And one cannot emphasize too strongly the fact that it is precisely in order to exorcise the possibility of that kind of law — the law that establishes and guarantees inequality — that primitive law functions as it does; it stands opposed to the law of the State. Archaic societies, societies of the mark, are societies without a State, *societies against the State*. The mark on the body, on all bodies alike, declares: *You will not have the desire for power; you will not have the desire for submission*. And that non-separate law can only have for its inscription a space that is not separate: that space is the body itself.

It is proof of their admirable depth of mind that the Savages knew all that *ahead of time*, and took care, at the cost of a terrible cruelty, to prevent the advent of a more terrifying cruelty: *the law written on the body is an unforgettable memory...*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Franc Kafka, "In the Penal Colony," in *The Complete Stories*, Willa and Edwin Muir, trans., New York, Schocken, 1971.

<sup>2</sup>G. Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians*, New York, Dover, 1973.

<sup>3</sup>This refers to that part of the Mandan ordeal in which the already exhausted young men were made to run (or be dragged) until the weights attached to their arms and legs ripped the wooden pegs from their flesh, signaling the successful completion of the initiation. (Translator's note.)

<sup>4</sup>Pierre Clastres, *Chronique des Indiens Guayak*, Paris, Plon, 1972.

<sup>5</sup>M. Dobrizhofer, *Historia de los Abipones*, Universidad Nacional del Nordeste, Facultad de Humanidades, Resistencia (Chaco), 1967, 3 vols

# The Untimely, Again

Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, 2010. Translated from Portuguese by Ashley Lebner. A preface to *Archeology of Violence* (P. Clastres, 2010 Semiotext(e) Edition). Excerpted.

*Savages want the multiplication of the multiple.*

— Pierre Clastres

## Relearning to Read Pierre Clastres

... “In Clastres there is a way of affirming that I prefer to all of the academic precautions.” The person who says this is Nicole Loraux (1987: 158—59), the distinguished Hellenist scholar, who did not hesitate, however, to counter a number of Clastres’ assertions with critical considerations that are as judicious as they are serene. A serenity, it should be said, that is quite rare when one is dealing with the reception of Clastres’s work, whose “way of affirming” is strongly polarizing. On one side, it awakens a hatred of astonishing intensity among the zealots of reason and order; it is not uncommon that his anthropological anarchism should be the target of verdicts that seem to belong more to criminal psychopathology than to the history of ideas.<sup>1</sup> Even in the specific field of South American ethnology, where his influence was formative (don’t mistake this for normative) for an entire generation, one witnesses today a re-intensification of the effort to nullify his work, in a badly-disguised ideological move where “academic caution” seems to work as an instrument for the conceptual defanging of Amerindian thought, reducing it to the blandest banality, so as to submit it to that regime of “harmony” that Clastres saw menacing the indigenous way of life in general.

Among the more generous and restless spirits, on the other hand, the work of Clastres provokes an adhesion that can be a little too impetuous, thanks to the spellbinding power of his language, with its quasi-formulaic, insistent concision, with the deceiving directness of his argumentation, and, above all, with the authentic passion that transpires from almost every page he has written. Clastres transmits to the reader the sensation that he or she is a witness to a privileged experience; he shares with him or her his own admiration for the existential nobility of the absolutely Other — those “images of ourselves” in which we do not recognize ourselves, and which thus retain their disquieting autonomy.

A difficult author, then. It is precisely his best readers who need to (re)learn to read him, after so many years of being convinced to forget and forsake him. They must remain attentive as much to his virtues as to his defects: to appreciate



his anthropological insights and his sensitivity as a field ethnographer — *Chronicle of the Guayaki Indians*<sup>2</sup> is a masterwork of the ethnographic genre — but also to resist his sometimes excessive finality, rather than timidly averting one's eyes before his hyperboles and hesitations, his hastinesses and imprecisions. Resisting Clastres, but not stopping to read him; and resisting *with* Clastres, too: confronting with and in his thought what remains alive and unsettling.

Maurice Luciani, in a eulogy published in the magazine *Libre*, mentioned the “indifference to the spirit of the times” as one of the most characteristic features of the ironic and solitary personality of his friend. It is a curious assessment, seeing that the spirit of the present times tends to connect Clastres with another *Zeitgeist*, in order to discount his work as, of all things, anachronistic: romantic, primitivist, exoticist and other assorted sins that the “neo-neo” criticism (neo-liberal and neo-conservative) associates with the *annus horribilis* of 1968.<sup>3</sup> But precisely, Luciani wrote in 1978, when the silence or opprobrium that would surround the oeuvre of Clastres and of so many of his contemporaries had already begun. A re-reading of *Archeology of Violence* at thirty years's distance is, therefore, both a disorienting and an illuminating experience. If it is worth doing, it is because something of the era in which these texts were written, or better, against which they were written – and it was in this exact measure that they helped to define it – something of this era remains in ours, something of the problems of then continue with us today. Or maybe not: the problems have changed radically, some will say. So much the better: what happens when we reintroduce in another context concepts elaborated in very specific circumstances? What effects do they produce when they resurface?<sup>4</sup>

The effect of anachronism caused by the reading of Clastres is real. Take the first three chapters of *Archeology of Violence*, for example. The author speaks of the Yanomami as “the dream of every ethnographer”; he unleashes a furious sarcasm against missionaries and tourists without sneaking in any “reflexive” identification of the anthropologist with these pathetic figures; he shows a frank fascination for a mode of life that he does not hesitate to call primitive and to qualify as happy; he falls prey to immediatist and “phallogocentric” illusions, as displayed in his praise of the story of Elena Valero; and he wallows in the sentimental pessimism (Sahlins 2000) of the “final frontier,” of the “ultimate freedom,” of “the last free primitive society in South America and no doubt the world.” All of this has become properly unsayable nowadays, in the polite society of contemporary Academe (the BBC or the Discovery Channel being now in charge of the enterprising up and dumbing down of such concerns). We live in an era in which prurient puritanism, guilty hypocrisy and intellectual impotence converge to foreclose whatever possibility of seriously *imagining* (rather than merely fantasizing) an alternative to our own cultural inferno, or even of recognizing it as such.

The brief but devastating analysis that Clastres makes of the anthropological project<sup>5</sup> today seems uncomfortably aristocratic, in the Nietzschean sense. But it simultaneously anticipates the essence of the post-colonial reflexivity that would plunge the discipline in the following decades, into an acute “crisis of conscience” – the worst possible way to introduce a creative discontinuity within any political or intellectual project. This edge of Clastres's thought has become almost incomprehensible today, with the rising tide of good feelings and bad

faith that colors the cultural apperception of the neo-Western globalized citizen. And nevertheless, it is easy to see that the scornful prophecy concerning the Yanomami was substantially correct:

They are the last of the besieged. A mortal shadow is being cast on all sides.... And afterwards? Perhaps we will feel better once the final frontier of this ultimate freedom has been broken. Perhaps we will sleep without waking a single time.... Some day, then, oil derricks around the chabunos, diamond mines in the hillsides, police on the paths, boutiques on the riverbanks.... Harmony everywhere. (p. 80)

This “some day” seems pretty close: mining is already there, wreaking mortal havoc; oil derricks are not that far, neither are the boutiques; the policing of public thoroughfares might still take some time (let’s see how the ecotourism economy performs). The great and unexpected difference from Clastres’s prophecy, however, is that now the Yanomami have taken upon themselves the task of articulating a cosmopolitical critique of Western civilization, refusing to contribute to the “harmony everywhere” with the silence of the defeated. The detailed and unforgiving reflections of the shaman-philosopher Davi Kopenawa, in a joint effort of over thirty years with the anthropologist Bruce Albert materialized, at last in a book, *La chute du ciel*, which is bound to change the terms of anthropological interlocution with indigenous Amazonia (Kopenawa & Albert 2010). With this exceptional work we are perhaps *really* beginning to move “from silence to dialogue”; even if the conversation cannot be anything more than dark and ominous, for we live in somber times. The light is entirely on the side of the Yanomami, with their innumerable brilliant crystals and their resplendent legions of infinitesimal spirits that populate the visions of their shamans.<sup>6</sup>

Rather than anachronistic, Clastres’s work gives off an impression of un-timeliness. One sometimes has the feeling that it is necessary to read him as if he were an obscure pre-Socratic thinker, someone who speaks not only *of* another world, but *from* another world, in a language that is ancestral to ours, and which, not being capable any longer of understanding it perfectly, we need to interpret: changing the distribution of its implicit and explicit aspects, literalizing what is figurative and vice versa, proceeding to a re-abstraction of its vocabulary in view of the mutations of our philosophic and political rhetoric; reinventing, in sum, the meaning of this discourse that strikes us as fundamentally *strange*...<sup>7</sup>

The theme of “how to finally take seriously” the philosophical choices expressed in primitive social formations returns insistently in Clastres. In chapter 6 of the present book, after affirming that the ethnology of the last decades had done much to liberate these societies from the exoticising gaze of the West,<sup>8</sup> the author writes: “we no longer cast upon primitive societies the curious or amused look of the somewhat enlightened, somewhat humanistic amateur; we take them seriously. The question is how far does taking them seriously go?” (p. 163). How far, indeed? That is the question that anthropology has decidedly not resolved, because that is the question that defines it: to resolve it would be for Clastres, equivalent to dissolving an indispensable and irreducible difference; it would be going farther than the discipline could aim.<sup>9</sup>

Maybe this is why the author always associated the project of the discipline with the notion of paradox. The paradox is a crucial operator in the anthropol-

ogy of Clastres: there is a paradox of ethnology (knowledge not as appropriation but as dispossession); a paradox intrinsic to each one of the two major social forms (in primitive society, chiefship without power; in ours, voluntary servitude); and a paradox of war and of prophetism (institutional devices for non-division that become the germs of a separated power). It would even be possible to imagine the first great conceptual persona (or perhaps “psycho-social type”; see Deleuze & Guattari 1991/ 1996) of Clastrean theory, the chief without power, as a kind of *paradoxical element* of the political, supernumerary term and empty case at the same time, a floating signifier that signifies nothing in particular (its discourse is empty and redundant), existing merely to oppose itself to the absence of signification (this empty discourse institutes the *plenum* of society). This would make the Clastrean chief, needless to say, an emblematic figure of the structuralist universe (Levi-Strauss 1950/1987; Deleuze 1967/2003).

Be that as it may; the fact is that today the paradox has become generalized; it is not only ethnologists who find themselves before the intellectual and political challenge of alterity. The question of “how far” is now posed to the West as a whole, and the stakes are nothing less than the cosmopolitical fate of that which we are pleased to call our Civilization. The problem of “how to take others seriously” became, *itself*, a problem that is imperative to take seriously. In *La sorcellerie capitaliste*, one of the few books published in present-day France that pursues the spirit of Clastrean anthropology (mediated by the voice of Deleuze and Guattari), Pignarre and Stengers observe:

[W]e are used to deploring the misdeeds of colonization and confessions of guilt have become routine. But we lack a sense of dread when faced with the idea that not only do we take ourselves to be the thinking head of humanity but that, with the best intentions in the world, we do not cease to continue doing it. [ . . . ] The dread only begins when we realize that despite our tolerance, our remorse and our guilt, we have not changed that much (Pignarre & Stengers 2005: 88).

And the question with which the authors conclude this reflection is a version of the one posed by Clastres: “how to make space for others?” (ibid.: 89).

To make space for others certainly does not mean to take them as models, make them change from being *our* victims (ibid.) to being *our* redeemers. Clastres’s project belongs to those who believe the proper object of anthropology is to elucidate the ontological conditions of the self-determination of the Other, which means first of all to recognize the Other’s own socio-political consistency, which, as such, is not transferable to our world as if it were the long-lost recipe of eternal universal happiness. Clastrean “primitivism” was not a political platform for the West. In his reply to Birnbaum (ch. 9), he writes:

No more than the astronomer who invites others to envy the fate of stars do I militate in favor of the Savage world.[ . . . ] As analyst of a certain type of society, I attempt to unveil the modes of functioning and not to construct programs... (p. 210)

The comparison with the astronomer calls to mind the “view from afar” of Lévi-Strauss, but gives it an ironic-political twist, putting us in our due place, as if the voyage that was both desirable and impossible to make fell upon us and not

the primitives. In any case, Clastres did not pretend to possess the plans of the vehicle that would have permitted us to make that trip. He believed that an absolute limit would prevent modern societies from reaching this “other sociological planet” (Richir 1987: 62): the population barrier. While rejecting the accusation of demographic determinism (here, p. 216), Clastres always maintained that the small demographic and territorial dimensions of primitive societies was a fundamental condition for the non-emergence of a separate power: “all States are natalists” (1975: 22). Primitive multiplicities are more subtractive than additive, more molecular than molar, and *minor* both in quantity and in quality: the multiple is only made with few and with little. . .

### Between philosophy and anthropology

It is customary to consider Clastres as an author of the hedgehog type (“one idea only, but a BIG idea”), a proponent of a monolithic thesis, the “Society against the State,” a mode of organization of collective life defined by a doubly inhibiting relation: one internal, the chieftainship without power, the other external, the centrifugal apparatus of war. It is in this very duality that one can glimpse the possibility of alternative philosophical readings of the Clastrean thesis.

The first reading places the emphasis on Clastres’s role in determining a universal “political function” in charge of constituting “a place where society appears to itself” (Richir 1987: 69). The society against the State is defined, in these terms, by a certain *mode of political representation*, while politics itself is conceived of as being a *mode of representation*, a projective device that creates a molar double of the social body in which it sees itself reflected. The figure of the chief without power stands out here as being Clastres’s major discovery: a new transcendental illusion (ibid.: 66), a new mode of *institution* (necessarily “imaginary”) of the social. This mode would consist in the projection of an outside, a Nature that must be negated in order for Culture or Society to institute itself, but which must at the same time be *represented* within the culture through a simulacrum, the powerless chief.

This take on Clastres’s work effects what can be called a “phenomenological reduction” of the concept of society against the State. It originates in the approximation between Clastres and the intellectuals that gathered around Claude Lefort in the magazine *Textures* and, following that, in *Libre*, where the three last chapters of *Archeology of Violence* were published. Lefort, a former student of Merleau Ponty, was co-founder with Cornelius Castoriadis of the group “Socialism or Barbarism,” an important actor in the history of leftist libertarian politics in France. The trademark of this phenomenologico-socialist assemblage (which included Marcel Gauchet until his realignment in the ’80s) was the combination of a resolute anti-totalitarianism with a no less staunch metaphysical humanism that reveals itself, for example, in the “anti-exchangist” position that was assumed early on by Lefort. Lefort’s critique of the structuralist search for formal rules subtending practice, and his preference for understanding “the shaping of the lived relations between men” (1987: 187), might have been one of the influences on Clastres, alongside the more explicit Nietzschean-derived theory of debt (see ch. 8, for example) that connects Clastres’s work to the different anti-exchangism of Deleuze and Guattari.

This phenomenological reading gives Clastres's "political anthropology" a decidedly metaphysical slant. From that angle it is through politics that man, the "political animal," ceases being "merely" an animal and is rescued from the immediacy of nature and turned into a divided being, having both the need and the capability to represent in order to be. The extra-human, even when it is recognized as essential to the constitution of humanity, belongs to the realm of belief; it is a division that is internal to the human, for exteriority is a transcendental illusion. Politics is the proper mirror for the animal turned Subject: "Only man can reveal to man that he is man" (Lefort in Abensour 1987: 14).

The second and, to my mind, more consequential appropriation of Clastres's ethnology places emphasis on the inscription of fluxes rather than on the institution of doubles, on semiotic-material codes rather than on symbolic Law, on supple and molecular segmentarity rather than on the binary macropolitics of the inside and the outside, on the centrifugal war machine rather than on the centripetal chiefship. I am referring, of course, to the reading of Clastres by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* (1972/1983) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1981/1987), where Clastres's ideas are used as one of the building blocks for the construction of a "universal history of contingency" and of a radically materialist anthropology, which is quite at odds with the political spiritualism that transpires from their phenomenological interpretation

*Anti-Oedipus* was an essential book for Clastres himself, who attended the courses where the book was rehearsed, while *A Thousand Plateaus*, published after his death, criticized and developed his intuitions in an entirely new direction. In a certain sense, Deleuze and Guattari completed Clastres's work, fleshing out the philosophical richness that lay in potential form therein. The embarrassed and embarrassing silence with which anthropology as a discipline received the two books of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, in which take place one of the most exciting and disconcerting dialogues that philosophy and anthropology have ever had, is not without connection to the similar malaise that Clastres's work provoked in an always prudent and always prudish academic environment. "It seems to me that ethnologists should feel at home in *Anti-Oedipus*..." (Clastres in Guattari 2009: 85). Well, the vast majority of them didn't.<sup>10</sup>

In *Anti-Oedipus*, society against the State becomes a "primitive territorial machine," losing its residual connotations of a collective Subject and transforming itself in a pure "mode of functioning" whose objective is the integral codification of material and semiotic flows that constitute human desiring production. That territorial machine codes the flows, invests the organs, marks the bodies: it is a machine of inscription. Its working presupposes the immanent unity of desire and of production that is the Earth. The issue of the powerless chiefship is thereby resituated in a wider geophilosophical context: the will to non-division that Clastres saw in the primitive socius becomes an impulse to the absolute codification of all material and semiotic flows and to the preservation of the coextensivity of the social body and the body of the Earth. The "anticipatory" conjuration of a separate power is the resistance of primitive codes to despotic overcodification, the struggle of the Earth against the deterritorializing Despot. The collective intentionality that is expressed in the refusal to unify under an over-codifying entity loses its anthropomorphic mask, becoming — and here we

are using the language of *A Thousand Plateaus* — an effect of a certain regime of signs (the presignifying semiotic) and the dominance of a primitive segmentarity, marked by a “relatively supple line of interlaced codes and territorialities.”<sup>11</sup>

The main connection between *Anti-Oedipus* and Clastres’s work is a common, although not exactly identical, rejection of exchange as a founding principle of sociality. *Anti-Oedipus* maintained that the notion of debt should take the place occupied by reciprocity in Mauss and Lévi-Strauss. Clastres, in his first article on the philosophy of indigenous chiefship — a convoluted critique of an early article of his teacher, where the chiefly role was thought of in terms of a reciprocal exchange between the leader and the group — had already suggested that the indigenous concept of power simultaneously implied an affirmation of reciprocity as the essence of the social and its negation, in placing the role of the chief outside of its sphere, in the position of a perpetual debtor to the group. Without taking from exchange its anthropological value, Clastres introduced the sociopolitical necessity of a non-exchange. In his last essays on war, the disjunction between exchange and power transforms into a strange resonance. In dislocating itself from the intracommunitary relation to the intercommunitary relation, the negation of exchange converted itself into the essence of the primitive socius. Primitive society is “against exchange” (p. 269) for the same reasons that it is against the State: because it desires autarchy and autonomy — because it knows that all exchange is a form of debt, that is, dependence, even if reciprocal.

*A Thousand Plateaux* takes up Clastres’s theses in two long chapters: one on the “war machine” as a form of pure exteriority (in terms of which organized violence or war “proper” has a very minor role) in opposition to the State as a form of pure interiority (in terms of which administrative centralization has an equally secondary role); and another chapter on the “apparatus of capture,” which develops a theory of the State as a mode of functioning that is contemporaneous to the war machines and the mechanisms of inhibition of primitive societies. These developments not only modify elements of distress propositions, but also some of *Anti-Oedipus*’ central categories. The Savage-Barbarian-Civilized scheme opens up laterally to include the pivotal figure of the Nomad, to which the war machine now sees itself constitutively associated. A new tripartition, derived from the concept of *segmentarity*, or quantified multiplicity, makes its appearance: the supple and polyvocal line of primitive codes and territorialities; the rigid line of overcoding resonance (the State apparatus); and the line(s) of flight traced by decoding and deterritorialization (the war machine). Clastres’s primitive society (the “Savages” of *Anti-Oedipus*) loses its privileged connection to the war machine. In *A Thousand Plateaux*, it is seen as simply recruiting it as a form of exteriority, in order to conjure the tendencies towards over-coding and resonance that are constantly threatening to subsume the primitive codes and territorialities. In similar fashion, the State can capture the war machine (that is, nonetheless, its absolute exterior) and put it at its service, not without running the risk of being destroyed by it. And finally, contemporary societies remain in full contact with their “primitive” or molecular infrastructure, “suffused by a supple fabric without which their rigid segments would not hold.”<sup>12</sup> With this, the exhaustive and mutually exclusive dichotomy between the two macro-types of society (“with” and “against” the State) gets di-

versified and complexified: the lines coexist, intertwine and transform into each other; the State, the war machine, and primitive segmentarity all lose their typological connotations and become abstract forms or models, which manifest themselves in multiple material procedures and substrates: in scientific styles, technological phyla, aesthetic attitudes and philosophical systems as much as in macro-political forms of organization or modes of the representation-institution of the socius.

Finally, at the same time that they take on board one of Clastres's fundamental theses, when they affirm that the State, rather than supposing a mode of production, is the very entity that makes production a "mode" (op.cit.: 429), Deleuze and Guattari blur the overdrawn distinction made by Clastres between the political and the economic. As is known, the attitude of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* towards historical materialism, including towards French ethno-Marxism, is quite different from that of the author of "Marxists and their anthropology" (ch. 10). Above all, the issue of the origin of the State ceases being the mystery that it always was for Clastres. The State stops having a historical or chronological origin, as time itself is made the vehicle of non-evolutionary reverse causalities (op.cit.: 335, 431). There is not only a very old actual presence of the State "outside" of primitive societies, but also its perpetual virtual presence "within" these societies, in the form of the bad desires that it is necessary to conjure and the foci of segmentary resonance that are always developing.<sup>13</sup> Deterritorialization is not historically secondary to territory, the codes are not separable from the movement of decodification (op.cit.: 222).

Critiqued and requalified, the theses expounded in the short texts of Pierre Clastres therefore have decisive weight in the conceptual dynamic of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. In particular, the Clastrean theory of "war" as an abstract machine for the generation of multiplicity, opposed, in its essence, to the over-coding State monster — war as enemy number one of the One — plays a key role in one of the major philosophical systems of the 20th century. . .

### Between Anthropology and Ethnology

... Primitive society perhaps was, for Clastres, something like an essence; but it wasn't a static essence. The author always conceived of it as a profoundly unstable mode of functioning in its very pursuit of ahistorical stability. Be that as it may, there indeed exists a quite characteristic "way of being" of what he called primitive society, one that no ethnographer who has lived with an Amazonian culture, even one which has well-defined features of hierarchy and centralization, can fail to experience in all of its evidence, as pervasive as it is elusive. This way of being is "essentially" a politics of multiplicity; Clastres may only have been mistaken to interpret it as if it should always express itself in terms of a "political" multiplicity, an institutional form of collective self-representation. The politics of multiplicity is a mode of becoming rather than a way of being (hence its elusiveness); it is effectively instituted or institutionalized in certain ethno-historical contexts, but does not depend on such transition to a molar state to function — quite the opposite. That mode precedes its own institution, and remains in or returns to its default molecular state in many other, non-primitive contexts. "Society against the state," in brief, is an *intensive concept*, it designates an intensive mode or an omnipresent virtual form, whose variable

conditions of extensivization and actualization it is incumbent upon anthropology to determine.

Clastres's posterity in South American ethnology followed two main axes. The first consisted in the elaboration of a model of Amazonian social organization — a “symbolic economy of alterity” or a “metaphysics of predation”<sup>14</sup> — which extended his theses on primitive warfare. The second was the description of the cosmological background of counter-state societies, the so-called Amerindian “perspectivism.”<sup>15</sup> The two axes explore the fertile hesitation between structuralist and post-structuralist tendencies that characterizes Clastres's work; both privilege a Deleuzo-Guattarian reading over a phenomenological reading.<sup>16</sup> Together, they define an indigenous cosmopraxis of immanent alterity, which is tantamount to a counter-anthropology, a “reverse anthropology” of sorts, which is located in the precarious space between silence and dialogue.

Clastres's theory of war, although at first glance it seems to reinforce a binary opposition between inside and outside, the human Us and the less-than-human Other, in fact ends up by differentiating and relativizing alterity — and, by the same token, any position of identity — undermining the narcissistic or “ethnocentric” subtext (see chapter 4) that sometimes accompanies the author's characterization of primitive society.

Let us imagine Clastresian ethnology as a conceptual drama in which a small number of personae or types come face to face: *the chief, the enemy, the prophet, the warrior*. All are vectors of alterity, paradoxical devices that define the socius by means of some form of negation. The chief incarnates the negation of society's exchangeist foundations, and represents the group inasmuch as this exteriority is interiorized: in becoming “the prisoner of the group,” he counterproduces the latter's unity and indivision. The enemy negates the collective Us, allowing the group to affirm itself against him, by his violent exclusion; the enemy dies to secure the persistence of the multiple, the logic of separation. The prophet, in turn, is the enemy of the chief, he affirms society against chiefship when its incumbent threatens to escape the control of the group by affirming a transcendent power; at the same time, the prophet drags society towards an impossible goal, self-dissolution. The warrior, finally, is the enemy of himself, destroying himself in the pursuit of glorious immortality, impeded by the society that he defends from transforming his prestigious deeds in instituted power. The chief is a kind of enemy, the prophet a kind of warrior, and so forth, and back again.

These four characters therefore form a circle of alterity that counter-effectuates or counter-invents primitive society. But at the center of this circle is not the Subject, the reflexive form of Identity. The fifth element, which can be considered the central dynamic element precisely due to its excentricity, is the character upon which the politics of multiplicity rests: *the political ally*, the “associate” who lives elsewhere, halfway between the local, co-resident group and the enemy groups. Never have there been merely two positions in the primitive socius. Everything turns around the ally, the third term that permits the conversion of an internal indivision into an external fragmentation, modulating indigenous warfare and transforming it into a foil social relation, or more, as Clastres maintains, into the fundamental relation of the primitive socius.

Political allies, those local groups that form a band of security (and uncer-



tainty) around each local group, are always conceived, in Amazonia, under the guise of potential affinity, that is, as a qualified form of alterity (matrimonial affinity) but that nevertheless remains alterity (*potential* affinity), and which is marked by aggressive and predatory connotations that are much more ritually productive — that is, *really* productive — than mere undetermined, anonymous enmity (or than the depotentializing reiteration of matrimonial exchanges that creates a social interiority).<sup>17</sup> It is the unstable and indispensable figure of the political ally that so impedes a “generalized reciprocity” (a fusion of communities and a superior sociological unity) as much as generalized warfare (the suicidal atomization of the *socius*). The true center of primitive society, this loose network of local groups jealous of their reciprocal independence, is always extra-local, being situated at each point where the conversion between interior and exterior can be effected. For this reason, the “totality” and the “indivision” of the primitive *community* do not contradict the dispersion and the multiplicity of primitive *society*. The character of totality signifies that the community is not part of any other hierarchically superior Whole; the character of indivision signifies that it isn’t internally hierarchized either, divided in parts that form an interior Whole. Subtractive totality, negative indivision. Lack of a locatable distinction between an inside and an outside. Multiplication of the multiple.

The society against the State is a human-only project; politics is an affair that is strictly intraspecific. It is with regards to this aspect that Amerindian ethnology advanced most in recent years, extracting the intuitions of Clastres from their anthropocentric shell and showing how his decision to take indigenous thought seriously requires a shift from the description of a (different) form of institution of the (similarly conceived) social to another notion of anthropology — another practice of humanity — and to another notion of politics — another experience of sociality.

Chapter 5 of this book is a fundamental text in this respect. The author writes there:

Any amount of time spent among an Amazonian society, for example, allows one to observe not only the piety of the Savages but the investment of religious concerns into social life to a point that seems to dissolve the distinction between the secular and the religious, to blur the boundaries between the domain of the profane and the sphere of the sacred: nature, in short, like society, is traversed through and through with the supernatural. Animals or plants can thus at once be natural beings and super-natural agents: if a falling tree injures someone, or a wild beast attacks someone, or a shooting star crosses the sky, they will be interpreted not as accidents, but as effects of the deliberate aggression of supernatural powers, such as spirits of the forest, souls of the dead, indeed, enemy shamans. The decided refusal of chance and of the discontinuity between the profane and the sacred would logically lead to abolishing the autonomy of the religious sphere, which would then be located in all the individual and collective events of the tribe’s daily life. In reality, though, never completely absent from the multiple aspects of a primitive culture, the religious dimension manages

to assert itself as such in certain specific ritual circumstances.

The decision to determine a religious dimension “as such” — the refusal, therefore, to draw the consequences from what was suggested by the general cosmology of Amazonian societies — perhaps indicates the influence of Gauchet.<sup>18</sup> This made Clastres less sensitive to the fact that the common “supernaturalization” of nature and society made any distinction between these two domains utterly problematic. Under certain crucial conditions — religious conditions, precisely — nature revealed itself as social and society, as natural. It is the cosmological non-separation of nature and society, rather than the exteriorization by “society” of power as “nature,” which should be connected to the political non-separation that defines the society against the State.

And still, Clastres puts us on the right track. In that chapter he outlines a comparison between the cosmologies of peoples from the Andes and the Lowlands, which contrast diacritically in terms of their respective modes of dealing with the dead. In the agrarian Highlands, dominated by the imperial machine of the Inca, religion relies on a funerary complex (tombs, sacrifices, etc.) that links the living to the original mythical world (populated by what the author called somewhat inappropriately “ancestors”) by means of the dead; in the Lowlands, all the ritual effort consists, on the contrary, of maximally disjoining the dead and the living. The relation of society with its immemorial foundation is made, so to speak, over the dead body of the deceased, which should be dememorialized, that is, forgotten and annihilated (eaten, for example) as if they were mortal enemies of the living. Yvonne Verdier (1987: 31) in her beautiful commentary of *Chronicle of the Guayaki Indians*, noted that the major division between the living and the dead was a guarantee of the indivision among the living. The society against the State is a society against memory; the first and most constant war of the “society for war” is waged against its dead defectors. “Every time they eat a dead man, they can say: one more the State won’t get” (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 118).<sup>19</sup>

But there is an additional step to be made. The contrast between the Andes and Lowlands suggests that the variable distinction between the living and the dead has a variable relation with another variable distinction, that between humans and non-humans (animals, plants, artifacts, celestial bodies and other furniture of the cosmos). In Andean worlds, the diachronic continuity between the living and the dead jointly oppose these as humans to the non-humans (which are thereby potentially conceived as a single encompassing category), submitting the cosmos to the “law of the State,” the *anthropological* law of the interior and exterior, at the same time that it allows for the institution of synchronic discontinuities among the living, which were blocked in societies against the state thanks to the annihilation of the dead (no ancestry = no hierarchy). In the Lowlands, the extreme alterity between the living and the dead brings dead humans close to non-humans — to animals in particular, since it is common in Amazonia that the souls of the dead turn into animals, whereas one of the main causes of death is the revenge of “spirits of the game” and other animal souls on humans (animals as both the cause and outcome of human death). At the same time, however, this approximation makes of non-humanity a mode or modulation of humanity — all of the non-humans possess a similar anthropomorphic essence or power, a soul, hidden beneath their varied species-specific

bodily clothing. Relations with “nature” are “social” relations, hunting as well as shamanism pertain to bio-cosmopolitics; “productive forces” coincide with “relations of production.” All of the inhabitants of the cosmos are people in their own department, potential occupants of the deictical “first person” position in cosmological discourse: inter-species relations are marked by a perpetual dispute surrounding this position, which is schematized in terms of the predator/prey polarity, agency or subjecthood being above all a capacity for predation.<sup>20</sup> This makes humanity a position marked by relativity, uncertainty and alterity. Everything can be human, because nothing is *only* one thing, every being is human for itself: all denizens of the cosmos perceive their own species in human form as humans and see all other species, including us “real” humans (I mean, real to “us”) as non-humans. The molecular dissemination of “subjective” agency throughout the universe, in testifying to the inexistence of a transcendent cosmological point of view, obviously correlates with the inexistence of a unifying political point of view, occupied by an Agent (the agent of the One) that would gather unto itself the principle of humanity and sociality.<sup>21</sup>

It is that which ethnologists of Amazonia call “perspectivism,” the indigenously theory according to which the way humans perceive animals and other agencies that inhabit the world differs profoundly from the way in which these beings see humans and see themselves. Perspectivism is “cosmology against the State.” Its ultimate basis lies in the peculiar ontological composition of the mythical world, that originary “exteriority” to where the foundations of society would be projected. The mythical world, however, is neither interior nor exterior, neither present nor past, *because it is both*, just like its inhabitants are neither humans nor non-humans, *because they are both*. The world of origins is, precisely, everything: it is the Amazonian plane of immanence. And it is in this virtual sphere of the “religious” — the religious as immanence — that the concept of society against the State obtains its true ethnographic endo-consistence, or difference.

It is of the utmost importance to observe, then, that the mode of exteriorization of the origin which is specific to societies against the State does not signify an “instituting” exteriorization of the One, or a “projective” unification of the Exterior either.<sup>22</sup> We must take note of all the consequences of the fact that primitive exteriority is inseparable from the figures of the Enemy and the Animal as transcendental determinations of (savage) thought. Exteriorization serves a dispersion. Humanity being everywhere, “humanism” is nowhere. The savages want the multiplication of the multiple.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>See, for example, the diagnostic in Moyn 2004: “exaggerated and monomaniacal hatred of the State”; “vociferous hatred of capitalism”; “fanatical suspicion of the State”; “paranoid obsession,” among others. The author is not far from blaming Clastres for the Unabomber attacks.

<sup>2</sup>Clastres 1972/1998.

<sup>3</sup>One should add to this unholy anti-68 rightwing alliance the recent return, in the left extremity of the intellectual spectrum, to a certain authoritarian universalism that seems to have learned little and forgotten even less.

<sup>4</sup>F. Châtelet cited in Barbosa 2004: 532.

<sup>5</sup>See “Copernicus and the Savages” (1969, ch. 1 of Clastres 1987), and “Between Silence and Dialogue” (Clastres 1968).

<sup>6</sup>See Viveiros de Castro 2007. Kopenawa and Albert's book is an eloquent proof (there are others) that anthropology has something better to show with respect to the Yanomami than the heinous record of abominations, large and small, it has been implicated since its arrival among this people.

<sup>7</sup>The analogy with the pre-Socratics is more than poetic license; it is justified by the fact that Clastres approximated and opposed, on more than one occasion, the thought of Guarani shamans to the philosophy of Heraclitus and Parmenides, reformulating the traditional problem of the "passage" from myth to philosophy rigorously parallel, for him, to the problem of the emergence of the State-in terms of a contrast between the fate of the opposition of the One and the Multiple among the Guarani and the Greeks (Loraux 1987; Prado Jr 2003). One notes, incidentally, that Clastres did not see the passage of myth to philosophy as marking a transition from a theocratic "Oriental" despotism to a "proto-European" rational democracy.

<sup>8</sup>The fact that his own work would later be rebuked as exoticizing is proof both that Clastres was more correct than he suspected and that he underestimated his present and future enemies.

<sup>9</sup>See the melancholy last words of chapter two – "Things remaining what they are..." – to which the already mentioned book of Kopenawa and Albert perhaps constitutes the beginning of a welcome negation.

<sup>10</sup>The silence of the anthropological community vis a vis Deleuze and Guattari is addressed in Viveiros de Castro 2009 and 2010. For an insightful assessment of the anthropological component of Anti-Oedipus, see Vianna 1990.

<sup>11</sup>Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 222. On presignifying semiotics, cf. op.cit.: 117-18.

<sup>12</sup>Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 213.

<sup>13</sup>See Clastres's approving comments on the notion of "Urstaat" in Guattari 2009: 86. On "without" and "within," see the strategic observation of Deleuze and Guattari: "The law of the State is not the law of All or Nothing (State societies or counter-State societies) but that of interior and exterior" (1987: 360).

<sup>14</sup>Viveiros de Castro 1996; Levi-Strauss 2000: 720.

<sup>15</sup>Lima 1996/1999; Viveiros de Castro 1996/1998.

<sup>16</sup>In Brazilian ethnology, which is responsible for a good part of these developments, Clastres never stopped being a primary interlocutor (see Lima & Goldman 2001); the still unpublished thesis of Sztutman (2005) deserves special mention as a thorough and perceptive attempt to update his ideas in light of current theoretical developments. In the Anglophone world, an ethnological current led by Joanna Overing was equally inspired by Clastres's work, adopting a broadly phenomenological stance, which emphasized the *gemeinschaftlich* aspects of Amazonian societies rather than their "being-for-war." Among French Amazonianists, Clastres's influence is systemic, but often self-repressed and at times denied (if for no other reason than that ontological anarchy is not exactly the order of the day in local academia).

<sup>17</sup>It is known that the Clastrean theory of war was strongly influenced by its direct and indirect contact with the Yanomami. The most authoritative reference here is unquestionably Bruce Albert's still-unpublished thesis (1985). Albert shows how, in Yanomami sociocosmology, it is death as a biocosmic event that produces violence as a sociopolitical event, rather than the contrary. Albert inscribes war in a concentric gradient of aggression (natural as well as supernatural), which is directly projectable on social space. This space structures itself both inwardly and outwardly around the ambivalent relation between non-co-resident allies. Recall also an observation of Bento Prado Jr (2003): "According to Clastres, the coefficient of violence entailed in [Yanomami] war was almost equal to zero... Violence emerged, so to speak, outside of war. And it occurred during parties — above all when the guests were distant allies — in which one tribe received another, its ally, for a celebratory feast. As if the most distant ally were, more than the enemy, the true object of social violence" (emphasis mine). Ternarism and cromatism of the Other (hence of the Self), rather than a massive binarism of the I and the not-I.

<sup>18</sup>But it is also the result of the "obsession" of the author with Tupi-Guarani prophetism, which would testify to the autonomization of religious discourse.

<sup>19</sup>See the paradigmatic monograph of Carneiro da Cunha (1978) on the disjunctive relationship between the living and the dead in a Lowlands society.

<sup>20</sup>But of course, if what we eat becomes part of what we are, we also become what we eat. Predation is rarely non-ambivalent.

<sup>21</sup>Jose Antonio Kelly, another ethnographer of the Yanomami, has been working precisely on this connection. I thank him for the discussions.

<sup>22</sup>This is a point that did not escape Lefort (1987: 201).

# Archeology of Violence

Pierre Clastres, 1974. Translated from French by Jeanine Herman. Excerpted.

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## Archeology of Violence: War in Primitive Societies

For the past few decades an abundance of ethnographic literature has been devoted to describing primitive societies, to understanding their mode of operation: if violence is dealt with (rarely), it is primarily to show how these societies work toward controlling it, codifying it, ritualizing it, in short, tend to reduce, if not abolish it. We evoke the violence, but mostly to demonstrate the horror that it inspires in primitive societies, to establish that they are, finally, societies against violence. It would not be too surprising, then, to observe in the field of research in contemporary ethnology the quasi-absence of a general reflection on violence in at once its most brutal and most collective, most pure and most social form: war. Consequently to limit oneself to ethnological discourse, or more specifically, to the nonexistence of such a discourse on primitive war, the curious reader or researcher in social sciences will justifiably deduce that (with the exception of secondary anecdotes) violence does not at all loom over the horizon of the Savages' social life, that the primitive social being unfolds outside of armed conflict, that war does not belong to the normal, habitual functioning of primitive societies. War is thus excluded from ethnological discourse; one can think of primitive society without at the same time thinking of war. The question, clearly, is to determine whether this scientific discourse is speaking the truth on the type of society it targets: let us stop listening to it for a moment and turn toward the reality of which it speaks.

The discovery of America, as we know, provided the West with its first encounter with those we would from then on call Savages. For the first time, Europeans found themselves confronted with a type of society radically different from all they had known up until then; they had to think of a social reality that could not exist in their traditional representation of the social being: in other words, the world of the Savages was literally unthinkable for European thought. This is not the place to analyze in detail the reasons for this veritable epistemological impossibility: they have to do with the certainty, coextensive to all history of western civilization, of what human society is and should be, a certainty expressed starting with the Greek dawn of European political thought, of the *polis*, in the fragmented work of Heraclitus. Namely that the representation of society as such must be embodied in the figure of the One exterior to

the society, in the hierarchical configuration of political space, in the function of the command of the chief, king, or despot: there is no society without the characteristic division into Masters and Subjects. A human grouping without the characteristic division could not be considered a society. Now, whom did the discoverers see arise from the Atlantic shores? "People without faith, without law, without king," according to the chroniclers of the 16th century. The cause was clear: these men in a state of nature had not yet acceded to a state of society. There was quasi-unanimity in this judgment on the Indians of Brazil, upset only by the discordant voices of Montaigne and La Boétie. But on the other hand, there was not unrestricted unanimity when it came to describing the Savages' customs. Explorers or missionaries, merchants or learned travelers, from the 16th century until the (recent) end of world conquest, all agreed on one point: whether Americans (from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego) or Africans, Siberians from the steppes or Melanesians from the isles, nomads from the Australian deserts or sedentary farmers from the jungles of New Guinea, primitive peoples were always presented as passionately devoted to war; it was their particularly bellicose character that struck European observers without exception. From the enormous documentary accumulation gathered in chronicles, travel literature, reports from priests and pastors, soldiers or peddlers, one image continuously emerged from the infinite diversity of the cultures described: that of the warrior. An image dominant enough to induce a sociological observation: primitive societies are violent societies; their social being is a being-for-war.

This is the impression, in any case, of direct witnesses in many climates and throughout several centuries, many of whom participated in the life of the indigenous tribes for years. It would be both easy and useless to make up an anthology of these judgments concerning the populations of very different regions and periods. The aggressive dispositions of the Savages are almost always severely judged: how, indeed, could one Christianize, civilize or convince people of the virtues of work and commerce, when they were primarily concerned with warring against their neighbors, avenging defeats or celebrating victories? In fact, the French or Portuguese missionaries' opinion of the Tupi Indians of the Brazilian coast in the mid-16th century anticipates and condenses all the discourses to come: were it not, they said, for the incessant war these tribes wage against each other, the country would be overpopulated. . .

The extreme segmentation that characterizes primitive society everywhere would be the cause, it has often been written, of the frequency of war in this type of society. Scarcity of resources would lead to vital competition, which would lead to isolation of groups, which would produce war. Now, if there is indeed a profound relationship between the multiplicity of sociopolitical entities and violence, one can only understand this link by reversing the habitual order of their presentation: it is not war that is the effect of segmentation, it is segmentation that is the effect of war. It is not only the effect, but the goal: war is at once the cause of and the means to a sought-after effect and end, the segmentation of primitive society. In its being, primitive society wants dispersion; this wish for fragmentation belongs to the primitive social being which institutes itself as such in and by the realization of this sociological will. In other words, primitive war is the means to a political end. To ask oneself, consequently, why the Savages wage war is to probe the very being of their society. . .

What of the being of primitive society, insofar as it is realized, identical, in the infinite series of communities, bands, villages, or local groups? The answer is present in all ethnographic literature since the West has taken interest in the Savage world. Primitive society has always been considered a place of absolute difference in relation to western society, a strange and unthinkable space of absence — absence of all that constitutes the observers' socio-cultural universe: a world without hierarchy, people who obey no one, a society indifferent to the possession of wealth, chiefs who do not command, cultures without morals for they are unaware of sin, classless societies, societies without a State, etc. In short, what the writings of ancient travelers or modern scholars constantly cry out and yet never manage to say is that primitive society is, in its being, undivided.

Primitive society is unaware of — because it prevents the appearance of — the difference between rich and poor, the opposition between exploiters and the exploited, the domination of the chief over society. The Domestic Mode of Production, which assures the economic autarky of the community as such, also allows for the autonomy of kinship groups which compose the social ensemble, and even the independence of individuals. Outside of gender-related division, there is, in effect, no division of labor in primitive society: each individual is polyvalent in a way; men know how to do everything men should know how to do, women know how to do everything women should know how to do. No individual is less knowledgeable or less capable; no individual can fall victim to the enterprises of another more talented or better-off: the relatives of the victim would soon discourage the vocation of the apprentice-exploiter. Vying with each other, ethnologists have noted the Savages' indifference before their goods and possessions which are easily refabricated once worn or broken, have noted the absence among them of all desire for accumulation. Why, indeed, would such a desire appear? Productive activity is exactly measured by the satisfaction of needs and does not go beyond that: surplus production is perfectly possible in the primitive economy, but it is also totally useless: what would be done with it? Moreover, the activity of accumulation (producing a useless surplus) could only be, in this type of society, a strictly individual enterprise: the entrepreneur could only count on his own strengths, the exploitation of others being sociologically impossible. Let us imagine, nevertheless, that despite the solitude of his effort, the savage entrepreneur manages to constitute, by the sweat of his brow, a stock of resources which, let us recall, he would not know what to do with since it is already a matter of a surplus, that is, goods that are unnecessary in that they no longer have anything to do with the satisfaction of needs. What will happen? Simply, the community will help him consume these free resources: the man who has become rich by the strength of his own hand will see his wealth disappear in the blink of an eye into his neighbors' hands or stomachs. The realization of the desire of accumulation would reduce itself thus at once to a pure phenomenon of self-exploitation of the individual by himself, and the exploitation of the rich man by the community. The Savages are wise enough not to abandon themselves to this folly; primitive society functions in such a way that inequality, exploitation, and division are impossible there.

At its actual level of existence — the local group — primitive society presents two essential sociological properties that touch upon its very being: the social

being that determines the reason for being and the principle of the intelligibility of war. The primitive community is at once a totality and a unity. A totality in that it is a complete, autonomous, whole ensemble, ceaselessly attentive to preserving its autonomy: a society in the full sense of the word. A unity in that its homogeneous being continues to refuse social division, to exclude inequality, to forbid alienation. Primitive society is a single totality in that the principle of its unity is not exterior to it: it does not allow any configuration of One to detach itself from the social body in order to represent it, in order to embody it as unity. This is why the criterion of non-division is fundamentally political: if the savage chief is powerless, it is because society does not accept power separated from its being, division established between those who command and those who obey. And this is also why, in primitive society, it is the chief who is commissioned to speak in the name of society: in his discourse, the chief never expresses the flights of his individual desire or the statement of his private law, but only the sociological desire that society remain undivided, and the text of Law that no one has established, for it has nothing to do with human decision. The legislators are also the founders of society — the mythical ancestors, the cultural heroes, the gods. It is of this Law that the chief is spokesperson: the substance of his discourse always refers to the ancestral Law that no one can transgress, for it is the very being of society: to violate the Law would be to alter the social body, to introduce into it the innovation and change that it absolutely rejects.

Primitive society is a community that assures control of its territory in the name of the Law guaranteeing its non-division. The territorial dimension already includes the political in that it excludes the Other. It is precisely the Other as minor — the neighboring groups — who reflect back onto the community the image of its unity and totality. Faced with neighboring communities or bands, a particular community or band posits itself and thinks of itself as absolute difference, as irreducible freedom, as a body possessing the will to maintain its being as a single totality. Here then is how primitive society concretely appears: a multiplicity of separate communities, each watching over the integrity of its territory, a series of neo-monads each of which, in the face of others, asserts its difference. Each community, in that it is undivided, can think of itself as a We. This We in turn thinks of itself as a totality in the equal relationship that it maintains with the equivalent We's that constitute other villages, tribes, bands, etc. The primitive community can posit itself as a totality because it institutes itself as a unity: it is a whole, because it is an undivided We.

At this level of analysis, the general structure of primitive organization can be thought of as purely static, as totally inert, as void of movement. The global system seems to be able to function only in view of its own repetition, by making all emergence of opposition or conflict impossible. Now, ethnographic reality shows the opposite: far from being inert, the system is in perpetual movement; it is not static but dynamic, and the primitive monad, far from remaining closed upon itself, actually opens itself to others in the extreme intensity of the violence of war. How then do we think of both the system and war? Is war a simple diversion that would translate the occasional failure of the system, or would the system be unable to function without war? Wouldn't war simply be a prerequisite for the primitive social being? Wouldn't war be, not the threat of



death, but the condition of primitive society's life?

One point is clear: the possibility of war is inscribed in the being of primitive society. Indeed, the will of each community to assert its difference is strong enough so that the least incident quickly transforms the sought-after difference into a real dispute. The violation of territory, the assumed aggression of the neighbors' shaman: this is all that is required for war to break out. A fragile equilibrium, as a result: the possibility of violence and armed conflict is an immediate given. But could one imagine this possibility never being realized and instead of war of each against each, as Hobbes thought, having, on the contrary, exchange of each with each, as Lévi-Strauss's viewpoint implies?

Take for instance the hypothesis of generalized friendship. We quickly discover that this is impossible for several reasons. First of all, because of spatial dispersion. Primitive communities maintain a certain distance between each other, both literally and figuratively: between each band or village there are their respective territories, allowing each group to keep its distance. Friendship does not adapt well to distance. It is maintained easily with nearby neighbors who can be invited to parties, from whom one can accept invitations, whom one can visit. With distant groups, these types of relations cannot be established. A primitive community is loathe to travel very far or stay away for long from its own, familiar territory: as soon as they are no longer "at home," the Savages experience, rightly or wrongly but most often rightly, a strong feeling of distrust and fear. Amiable relations of exchange only develop between groups close to one another; distant groups are excluded: they are, at best, Foreigners. But the hypothesis of friendship of all with all contradicts each community's profound, essential desire to maintain and deploy its being as single totality, that is, its irreducible difference in relation to all other groups, including neighbors, friends and allies. The logic of primitive society, which is a logic of difference, would contradict the logic of generalized exchange, which is a logic of identity, because it is a logic of identification. Now, it is this, above all, that primitive society refuses: identifying with others, losing that which constitutes it as such, losing its very being and its difference, losing the ability to think of itself as an autonomous We. In the identification of all with all, which generalized exchange and friendship of all with all would entail, each community would lose its individuality. The exchange of all with all would be the destruction of primitive society: identification is a movement toward death, the primitive social being is an affirmation of life. The logic of identicalness would give way to a sort of equalizing discourse, the motto of friendship of all with all being: We are all the same! The unification of the multiplicity of partial We's into a meta-We, the elimination of the difference unique to each autonomous community would abolish the distinction between the We and the Other, and primitive society itself would disappear. This is not a matter of primitive psychology but of sociological logic: there is, inherent in primitive society, a centrifugal logic of crumbling, of dispersion, of schism such that each community, to consider itself as such (as a single totality), needs the opposite figure of the foreigner or enemy, such that the possibility of violence is inscribed ahead of time in the primitive social being; war is a structure of primitive society and not the accidental failure of an unsuccessful exchange. This structural status of violence is illustrated by the universality of war in the Savage world.

Structurally, generalized friendship and exchange of all with all are impossible. Consequently, should we say that Hobbes was right, and from the impossibility of friendship of all with all conclude the reality of war of each against each? Take for example, now, the hypothesis of generalized hostility. Each community is in a confrontational situation with all the others, the war machine is functioning at full speed, global society is composed only of enemies aspiring to reciprocal destruction. Now all wars, as we know, leave a victor and a vanquished. What, in this case, would be the principal result of war of all against all? It would institute precisely the political relationship that primitive society works constantly to prevent: the war of all against all would lead to the establishment of domination and power that the victor could forcibly exercise over the vanquished. A new social configuration would then appear, introducing a relationship of command-obedience and the political division of society into Masters and Subjects. In other words, it would be the death of primitive society insofar as it is and considers itself an undivided body. As a result, generalized war would produce exactly the same effect as generalized friendship: the negation of the primitive social being. In the case of friendship of all with all, the community would lose its autonomous totality through the dissolution of its difference. In the case of war of all against all, it would lose its homogeneous unity through the irruption of social division: primitive society is a single totality. It cannot consent to universal peace which alienates its freedom; it cannot abandon itself to general war which abolishes its equality. It is not possible, among the Savages, to be either friend of all or enemy of all. . .

An examination of ethnographic facts reveals the properly political dimension of warlike activity. It is related neither to a zoological specificity of humanity, nor to the vital competition of communities, nor, finally, to a constant movement of exchange toward the suppression of violence. War is linked to primitive society as such (and so it is universal there); it is its mode of operation. It is the very nature of this society that determines the existence and meaning of war, which, as we have seen, because of the extreme specificity displayed by each group, is present ahead of time as a possibility in the primitive social being. For all local groups, all Others are Foreigners: the figure of the Foreigner confirms, for every given group, the conviction of its identity as an autonomous We. That is, the state of war is permanent, since with foreigners there can only be hostile relations, whether actually implemented in a real war or not. It is not the limited reality of armed conflict or combat that is essential, but the permanence of its possibility, the permanent state of war that maintains all communities in their respective difference. What is permanent, structural, is the state of war with Foreigners which sometimes culminates, in rather regular intervals, rather frequently depending on the society, in actual battle, in direct confrontation: the Foreigner is thus the Enemy, which engenders in turn the figure of the Ally. The state of war is permanent, but the Savages do not necessarily spend their time waging war. War, as external policy of primitive society, relates to its internal policy, to what one might call the intransigent conservatism of this society, expressed in the incessant reference to the traditional system of norms, to the ancestral Law which must always be respected, which cannot be altered. What is primitive society seeking to conserve with its conservatism? It is seeking to conserve its very being; it wants to persevere in its being. But what is this be-

ing? It is an undivided being; the social body is homogeneous; the community is a We. Primitive conservatism thus seeks to prevent innovation in society; it wants the respect of the Law to assure the maintenance of non-division; it seeks to prevent the appearance of division in society. This is primitive society's internal policy, as much on the economic level (the impossibility of accumulating wealth) as on the level of power relations (the chief is there not to command): to conserve itself as an undivided We, as a single totality.

But we see clearly that the will to persevere in its undivided being equally animates all We's, all communities: each position of the Self implies opposition and hostility to others; the state of war will last as long as each primitive community can assert its autonomy in relation to the others. If one proves itself incapable of this, it will be destroyed by the others. The capacity to implement structural relations of hostility (dissuasion) and the capacity to resist effectively the enterprises of others (to fend off an attack), in short, the warlike capacity of each community, is the condition of its autonomy. In other words: the permanent state of war and actual war periodically appear as the principal means used by primitive society to prevent social change. The permanence of primitive society has to do with the permanence of the state of war; the application of internal policy (to maintain the undivided and autonomous We intact) has to do with the implementation of external policy (to form alliances in order to wage war): war is at the very heart of the primitive social being, war constitutes the very motor of social life. In order to think of themselves as a We, the community must be both undivided (one) and independent (totality): internal non-division and external opposition are combined; each is a condition for the other. Should war cease, the heart of primitive society will cease to beat. War is its foundation, the very life of its being, it is its goal: primitive society is society for war, it is, by definition, warlike . . .<sup>1</sup>

The dispersion of local groups, which is primitive society's most immediately perceptible trait, is thus not the cause of war, but its effect, its specific goal. What is the function of primitive war? To assure the permanence of the dispersion, the parceling, the atomization of the groups. Primitive war is the work of a *centrifugal logic*, a logic of separation, which is expressed from time to time in armed conflict.<sup>2</sup> War serves to maintain each community's political independence. As long as there is war, there is autonomy: this is why war cannot cease, why it must not cease, why it is permanent. War is the privileged mode of existence of primitive society, made up of equal, free and independent sociopolitical units: if enemies did not exist, they would have to be invented.

Thus, the logic of primitive society is a centrifugal logic, a logic of the multiple. The Savages want the multiplication of the multiple. Now what is the major effect of the development of centrifugal force? It faces an insurmountable barrier, the most powerful sociological obstacle to the opposite force, centripetal force, the logic of unification, the logic of One: the more dispersion there is, the less unification there is. We see henceforth that the same rigorous logic determines both the internal policy and external policy of primitive society. On the one hand, the community wants to persevere in its undivided being and prevent a unifying authority — the figure of the commanding chief — from separating itself from the social body and introducing social division between Master and Subjects. The community, on the other hand, wants to persevere

in its autonomous being, that is, remain under the sign of its own Law: it thus refuses all logic that would lead it to submit to an exterior law; it is opposed to the exteriority of the unifying Law. Now, what is the legal power that embraces all differences in order to suppress them, that exists precisely to abolish the logic of the multiple and to substitute it with the opposite logic of unification? What is the other name of this One that primitive society by definition refuses? It is the State.

Let us go back. What is the State? It is the total sign of division in society, in that it is a separate organ of political power: society is henceforth divided into those who exercise power and those who submit to it. Society is no longer an undivided We, a single totality, but a fragmented body, a heterogeneous social being. Social division and the emergence of the State are the death of primitive society. So that the community might assert its difference, it has to be undivided; its will to be a totality exclusive of others rests on the refusal of social division: in order to think of themselves as We exclusive of Others, the We must be a homogeneous social body. External segmentation, internal non-division are two faces of a single reality, two aspects of the same sociological functioning and of the same social logic. So that the community might be able to confront the enemy world, it must be united, homogeneous, division-less. Reciprocally, in order to exist in non-division, it needs the figure of the Enemy in which it can read the unified image of its social being. Sociopolitical autonomy and sociological non-division are conditions for each other, and the centrifugal logic of the crumbling is a refusal of the unifying logic of the One. This concretely signifies that primitive communities can never attain great sociodemographic dimensions, for the fundamental tendency of primitive society is toward dispersion and not toward concentration, toward atomization and not toward assembly. If, in a primitive society, one observes the action of centripetal force, the tendency toward reorganization visible in the constitution of social macro-units, it is because this society is losing the primitive logic of the centrifuge, it is because this society is losing its properties of totality and unity, it is because this society is in the midst of no longer being primitive.<sup>3</sup>

Refusal of unification, refusal of the separate One, society against the State. Each primitive community wants to remain under the sign of its own Law (autonomy, political independence) which excludes social change (society will remain what it is: an undivided being). The refusal of the State is the refusal of economy, of exterior Law, it is quite simply the refusal of submission, inscribed as such in the very structure of primitive society. Only fools can believe that in order to refuse alienation, one must have first experienced it: the refusal of alienation (economical or political) belongs to the very being of this society, it expresses its conservatism, its deliberate will to remain an undivided We. Deliberate, indeed, and not only the effect of the functioning of a social machine: the Savages know well that any alteration of their social life (any social innovation) could only translate into the loss of freedom.

What is primitive society? It is a multiplicity of undivided communities which all obey the same centrifugal logic. What institution at once expresses and guarantees the permanence of this logic? It is war, as the truth of relations between communities, as the principal sociological means of promoting the centrifugal force of dispersion against the centripetal force of unification.

The war machine is the motor of the social machine; the primitive social being relies entirely on war, primitive society cannot survive without war. The more war there is, the less unification there is, and the best enemy of the State is war. Primitive society is society against the State in that it is society-for-war.

Here we are once again brought back to the thought of Hobbes. With a lucidity that has since disappeared, the English thinker was able to detect the profound link, the close relationship between war and the State. He was able to see that war and the State are contradictory terms, that they cannot exist together, that each implies the negation of the other: war prevents the State, the State prevents war. The enormous error, almost fatal amongst a man of this time, is to have believed that the society which persists in war of each against each is not truly a society; that the Savage world is not a social world; that as a result, the institution of society involves the end of war, the appearance of the State, an anti-war machine par excellence. Incapable of thinking of the primitive world as a non-natural world, Hobbes nevertheless was the first to see that one cannot think of war without the State, that one must think of them in a relation of exclusion. For him, the social link institutes itself between men due to "a common Power to keep them all in awe:" the State is against war. What does primitive society as a sociological space of permanent war tell us in counter-point? It repeats Hobbes's discourse by reversing it; it proclaims that the machine of dispersion functions against the machine of unification; it tells us that war is against the State.

### Sorrows of the Savage Warrior

... If war is a societal attribute, then warlike activity functions as a determining factor of the male being-in-the-world: in primitive society, man is, by definition, a warrior. An equation that, as we shall see, when brought to light, illuminates the frequently and often foolishly debated question of social relations between men and women in primitive society.

Primitive man, as such, is a warrior; each male adult is equal to the warlike function, which, though it allows — even calls for — acknowledged differences in individual talents, particular qualities, personal bravery and know-how (in short, a hierarchy of prestige), it excludes, on the other hand, any unegalitarian disposition of the warriors on the axis of political power. Warlike activity does not tolerate, any more than economic activity or social life in times of peace, the division of the warrior community — as in all military organizations — into soldiers-performers and chiefs-commanders: discipline is not the principal force of primitive armies; obedience is not the first duty of the basic combatant; the chief does not exercise any commanding power. For, contrary to an opinion that is as false as it is widespread (that the chief has no power, *except in times of war*), the warrior leader is at no moment of the expedition (preparation, battle, retreat) in a position — should such be his intention — to impose his will, to give an order which he knows ahead of time will not be obeyed. In other words, war does not, any more than peace, allow the chief to act the chief. To describe the true figure of the savage chief in his warrior dimension (what use is a war chief?) requires special treatment. Let us note for now that war does not open a new field in the political relations between men: the war chief and the warriors remain Equals; war never creates, even temporarily,

division in primitive society between those who command and those who obey; the will for freedom is not canceled by the will for victory, even at the price of operational efficiency. The war machine, by itself, is incapable of engendering inequality in primitive society. Travelers' and missionaries' ancient chronicles and ethnologists' recent work concur on this observation: when a chief seeks to impose his own desire for war on the community, the latter abandons him, for it wants to exercise its free collective will and not submit to the law of a desire for power. At best, a chief who wants to act the chief is shunned; at worst, he is killed.

Such, then, is the structural relationship primitive society generally maintains with war. Now, a certain type of primitive society exists (existed) in the world in which the relationship to war went far beyond what was said above. These were societies in which war-like activity was somehow subdivided or overdetermined: on the one hand, it assumed, as in all primitive societies, the properly sociopolitical function of maintaining communities by ceaselessly digging and redigging the gap between them; on the other hand, it unfolded on a completely different level, no longer as a political means of a sociological strategy — letting centrifugal forces play themselves out in order to ward off all forces of unification — but indeed as a private goal, as *the warrior's personal end*. War at this level is no longer a structural effect of a primitive society's mode of operation; it is an absolutely free and individual enterprise in that it proceeds only from the warrior's decision: the warrior obeys only the law of his desire or will.

Would war, then, be the sole affair of the warrior in this case? Despite the extremely personalized aspect of warlike activity in this type of society, it is rather clear that it does have an effect on the sociological level. What new figure does the twofold dimension that war assumes here assign to the social body? It is upon this body that a strange space — a foreign space — is outlined; an unforeseeable organ is attached to it: *the particular social group constituted by the ensemble of warriors*.

And not by the ensemble of men. For not all men in these societies are necessarily warriors; all do not hear the call to arms with equal intensity; only some realize their warlike vocation. In other words, the warrior group is made up of a minority of men in this type of society: those who have deliberately chosen to devote themselves, full time, so to speak, to warlike activity, those for whom war is the very foundation of their being, the ultimate point of honor, the exclusive meaning of their lives. The difference between the general case of primitive societies and the particular case of these societies appears immediately. Primitive society being warlike by essence, all men there are warriors: potential warriors, because the state of war is permanent; actual warriors, when, from time to time, armed conflict erupts. And it is precisely because all men are always ready for war that a special group, more warlike than the others, cannot differentiate itself from the heart of the masculine community: the relation to war is equal for all. In the case of "warrior societies," however, war also assumes the character of a personal vocation open to all males, since each is free to do what he wants, but which only some, in fact, realize. This signifies that, in the general case, all men go to war from time to time, and that, in the particular case, *some men go to war constantly*. Or, to say it even more clearly: in "warrior" societies, all

men go to war from time to time, when the community as a whole is concerned (and we are brought once again to the general case); but, in addition, a certain number among them are constantly engaged in warlike expeditions, even if the tribe for the time being finds itself in relative peace with neighboring groups: they go to war on their own and not in response to a collective imperative.

Which, of course, does not in any way signify that society remains indifferent or inert before the activism of its warriors: war, on the contrary, is exalted, the victorious warrior is celebrated, and his exploits are praised by all in great festivals. A positive relation thus exists between society and the warrior. This is indeed why these societies are distinctly warlike. Still, it will be necessary to elucidate the very real and unexpectedly profound relationship that links a community such as this to the slightly enigmatic group of its warriors. But where does one find such societies?

We should first note that the warlike societies do not represent a specific, irreducible, immutable essence of primitive society: they are only a particular case, this particularity having to do with the special place occupied by warlike activity and warriors. In other words, all primitive societies could transform themselves into war-like societies, depending on local circumstances, either external (for example, neighboring groups' increased aggressiveness, or, on the contrary, their weakening, inciting an increase of attacks on them) or internal (the exaltation of the warlike ethos in the system of norms that orders collective existence). Furthermore, the path can be traveled in the opposite direction: a warlike society could very well cease to be one, if a change in the tribal ethic or in the sociopolitical environment alters the taste for war or limits its field of application. A primitive society's becoming warlike, or its eventual return to the classic, previous situation, pertains to specific, local history and ethnography, which is sometimes possible to reconstitute. But this is another problem. . .

Let us consider, for example, the case of three tribes of the Chaco, because they illustrate perfectly the singular world of warrior societies and because the documentation concerning them is very rich: the Abipone, the Guaicuru, and the Chulupi. Institutionally accepted and recognized by society as a determined place in the sociological field, or as a particular organ of the social body, the warrior groups are called, respectively: Höchero, Niadagaguadi, Kaanoklé. These terms denote not only these men's principal activity (war), but also their appurtenance to an order whose superiority is socially admitted (a "nobility," say the chroniclers), to a sort of chivalry whose prestige reflects on the entire society: the tribe is proud of its warriors. To earn the name of warrior is to win a title of nobility.

This superiority of the warrior group rests exclusively on the prestige that war exploits procure: society functions here as a mirror that gives the victorious warrior a rather flattering image of himself, not only so that he will deem legitimate the efforts deployed and the risks taken, but also so that he will be encouraged to pursue and carry out his bellicose vocation, to persevere, in sum, in his warrior being. Festivals, ceremonies, dances, chants and drinking parties collectively celebrate or commemorate his exploits, and the Abipone Höchero or Chulupi Kaanoklé experiences, in the secret depths of his being, the truth of this recognition, meshing the ethical world of tribal values and the private warrior's individual point of honor.

This is to say that this hierarchical arrangement — not only accepted by society but desired — which acknowledges the warrior's superior social status, does not go beyond the sphere of prestige: it is not a hierarchy of power which the warrior group possesses and exercises over society. No relation of dependence forces society to obey the warlike minority. Warlike society does not allow social division to rupture the homogeneity of the social body any more than any other primitive society; it does not let the warriors institute themselves as an organ of political power separated from society; it does not let the Warrior incarnate the new figure of Master. Still, it would be necessary to analyze in depth the procedures that society implements in order to maintain the distance between warriors and power. It is this essential disjunction that Sanchez Labrador observes, having noted the propensity of the Guaicuru noblemen-warriors to boasting and bragging:

... there is, in truth, little difference between all of them (I, p. 151)

Who are the warriors? As one might well imagine, aggressiveness and bellicosity generally diminishing with age, warriors are primarily recruited from a select age group: that of young men over 18. The Guaicuru in particular developed a complex ensemble of ceremonial activities around war, celebrating a boy's reaching the age to carry arms (after 16) with a veritable rite of passage. In the course of the ritual, the adolescents underwent painful physical trials and had to distribute all their goods (weapons, clothing, ornaments) to the people of the tribe. This is a specifically military ritual, and not an initiation rite: the latter is celebrated earlier, for boys 12- to 16- years-old. But the young men who successfully underwent the warrior ritual nevertheless did not belong to the group of the Niadagaguadi, the brotherhood of warriors, to which only a particular type of exploit gave access. Beyond the ritual differences of these societies, a military career was open to all young men in all the tribes of the Chaco. As for the ennoblement resulting from entrance into the warrior group, it depended exclusively on the novice's personal valor. A totally *open* group, consequently (which should prevent viewing this group as a closed caste in gestation), but a *minority* group at the same time, for all young men did not come to accomplish the exploit required, and among those who did succeed, *not all desired* (as we shall see) to be socially recognized and named warriors: that a Chulupi or Abipone combatant refuse the coveted title of Kaanoklé or Höchero suffices to show, through the importance of the renouncement, the greatness of what he hopes to preserve in exchange. In this one can read precisely what being a warrior signifies. . .

Young men's taste for war is no less intense in otherwise very different societies. It is thus that at the other end of the American continent in Canada, Champlain often fails in his efforts to maintain peace among the tribes with whom he would like to forge an alliance: always the same instigators of war, the young men. His long-term strategy, based on establishing peaceful relations between the Algonkin and the Iroquois, would have succeeded, perhaps, were it not for

...nine or ten scatterbrained young men [who] undertook to go to war, which they did without anyone being able to stop them, for the little obedience they give to their chiefs... (p. 285)



The French Jesuits experienced the same disappointments in these regions as their German and Spanish counterparts in the Chaco a century later. Wanting to stop the war that their allies the Huron were waging on the Iroquois, and at the very least save the prisoners of war from the terrible tortures that the victors would inflict, they systematically attempted to buy back the Iroquois captives from the Huron. To such an offer of ransom, here is what an indignant Huron chief answered:

I am a man of war and not a merchant, I have come to fight and not to bargain; my glory is not in bringing back presents, but in bringing back prisoners, and leaving, I can touch neither your hatchets nor your cauldrons; if you want our prisoners so much, take them, I still have enough courage to find others; if the enemy takes my life, it will be said in the country that since Ontonio (indigenous name of French governor - Editor) took our prisoners, we threw ourselves into death to get others (III, year 1644, p. 48)

As for the Chulupi Indians, their veterans told me how, between 1928 and 1935, in preparation for a particularly decisive and dangerous raid against the Bolivian and Argentinean soldiers, then determined to exterminate them, they had to turn away dozens of very young men whose impetuosity and lack of discipline threatened to compromise the success of the expedition, indeed, to turn it into a disaster. We do not need you, said the Kaanoklé, there are enough of us. There were sometimes no more than twelve.

Warriors are thus young men. But why are young men so enamored of war? Where does their passion originate? What, in a word, makes the warrior tick? It is, as we have seen, the desire for prestige, which society alone can bestow or refuse. Such is the link that unites the warrior to his society, the third term that connects the social body and the warrior group by establishing a relationship of dependence at the outset: the warrior's self-realization involves social recognition; the warrior can only think of himself as such if society recognizes him as such. Carrying out an individual exploit is but a necessary condition for acquiring the prestige that only social approval can confer. In other words, depending on the circumstances, society could very well refuse to recognize the valor of a warlike action judged inopportune, provocative or premature: a game is played between society and the warrior in which only the tribe makes the rules. The chroniclers measure the potency of the desire for prestige by the passion for war, and what Dobrizhoffer writes of the Abipone goes for all warlike societies:

They consider the nobility most worthy of honor to be not that which is inherited through blood and which is like patrimony, but rather that which one obtains through one's own merits. [...] For them, nobility resides not in the worth and honor of lineage, but in valor and rectitude (II, p. 454).

The warrior acquires nothing in advance; he does not profit from the situation; glory is not transferable and is not accompanied by privilege.

Love of war is a secondary passion, derived from a primary passion: the more fundamental desire for prestige. War here is a means to achieve an individual goal: the warrior's desire for glory, the warrior himself is his own goal. Will not to power but to glory: for the warrior, war is by far the quickest and

most efficient means to satisfy his will. But how does the warrior make society recognize him? How does he force society to confer upon him the prestige that he expects? What proof, in other words, does he advance to establish his victory? There are, first of all, the spoils. Their at once real and symbolic importance in the tribes of the Chaco is all the more remarkable since generally in primitive society, war is not waged for economic ends. Having noted that the Guaicuru do not wage war in order to augment their territory, Sanchez Labrador defines the main reasons for war:

The principal reason that makes them bring war to a foreign territory is solely the interest for spoils and vengeance for what they consider offenses (I, p. 310).

To Dobrizhoffer, the Abipone explained that

war against the Christians procured for them more benefits than did peace (II, p. 1 33).

What do the spoils of war consist of? Essentially, metallic instruments, horses and prisoners, men, women or children. Metal's purpose is obvious: to increase the technical efficiency of weapons (arrowheads, lance tips, knives, etc.). Horses are much less useful. Indeed, the Abipone, Mocovi, Toba, Guaicuru did not lack horses at all: on the contrary, they had thousands; some Indians had up to 400 animals and only used a few (for war, travel, cargo). Most Abipone families had at least fifty horses. They therefore had no need for others' horses, yet at the same time felt they could never have enough: it was a sort of sport to capture the enemies herds (Spanish or Indian). A risky sport, naturally, since each tribe jealously watched over its most precious good, the immense herd of horses. It was a precious good, certainly, but one of pure prestige, spectacular in its weak use and exchange value. Possessing thousands of horses was also quite a burden for each community because of the obligations it created: constant vigilance in order to protect them from the neighbors, the constant search for pastures and abundant sources of water. Nevertheless, the Indians of the Chaco risked their lives to steal other people's horses, knowing well that increasing their livestock at the enemies' expense would cloak them in twice the glory. Dobrizhoffer indicates how massive these thefts were:

Once, in a single assault, the young Abipone men, who are more ferocious than the adults, stole 4,000 horses (III, p. 16).

Finally, the most prestigious spoils: prisoners, as Sanchez Labrador explains:

Their desire for prisoners and children of any other nation, even the Spanish, is inexpressible and frenzied (I, p. 310).

Less marked than among the Guaicuru, the desire to capture enemies is nevertheless strong among the Abipone or the Chulupi. When I stayed with the Chulupi, I met two old people in one of their villages, a man and a woman who had spent long years in captivity among the Toba. A few years earlier, they had been returned in exchange for some Toba prisoners held by the Chulupi. Comparing what Sanchez Labrador and Dobrizhoffer write of the status of captives among the Guaicuru and the Abipone, there is a considerable difference in the way they are treated. According to the Sanchez Labrador, the prisoners of the

Guaicuru were serfs or slaves. Due to their presence, adolescents were allowed to run free:

They do what they want, without even helping their parents.  
This is the servants' occupation (I, p. 315).

Dobrizhoffer, on the contrary, notes regarding the Abipone:

They would never consider their prisoners of war, whether Spanish, Indian or Negro, as serfs or slaves (II, p. 139).

In reality, the tasks demanded of the prisoners by their Guaicuru masters were hardly more than daily chores: gathering firewood, fetching water, cooking. For the rest, the "slaves" lived like their masters, participating with them in military enterprises. Common sense explains why the victors could not transform the vanquished into slaves whose labor could be exploited: what tasks would they perform? There are no doubt worse conditions than being a slave of the Guaicuru, as Sanchez Labrador himself explains:

While the masters sleep, they get drunk or do other things (I, p. 251).

The Guaicuru, moreover, hardly took an interest in the subtleties of social distinctions:

Their self-glorification makes them consider the rest of the nations of which they have knowledge, including the Spanish, as slaves (II, p. 52).

... There is no doubt that the mortality of young men was very high and that the Chaco tribes paid a heavy price for their passion for war. This is not, however, what accounts for the low demographic: the polygynous marriages would have had to compensate for the losses in men. It seems evident that the drop in population was provoked not by the excess mortality of men, but by the lack of natality: there were not enough children. To be more specific: there were few births because *the women did not want to have children*. And this is why one of the goals of war was to capture the children of others. An operation that was often successful, by the way: the tribes' captive children and adolescents, particularly the Spanish, generally refused to leave when they had the chance. Nevertheless, these societies (especially the Abipone, Mocovi and Guaicuru), by the very fact of the warlike dynamic, found themselves confronted with the question of their own survival. For should not these two distinct and convergent desires be linked: the desire of society to bring war and death elsewhere, the individual desire of women not to have children? The will to give death, on the one hand, the refusal to give birth, on the other. In satisfying its warlike passion, the haughty chivalry of the Chaco pointed, tragically, toward the possibility of its own death: sharing this passion, young women agreed to be the wives of warriors, but not the mothers of their children.

War's mid-term socioeconomic effects in these societies remain to be outlined. Some of these societies (Abipone, Mocovi, Guaicuru) had long since abandoned agriculture, because permanent war and pastoral needs (seeking

new pastures for the horses) were not suited to sedentary life. Thus, they became nomads on their territory in groups of 100 to 400 people, living from hunting, fishing and collecting (wild plants, honey). If the repeated raids against the enemies at first aimed at conquering prestige goods (horses, prisoners), they also assumed a properly economic dimension: to procure not only equipment goods (weapons), but also consumer goods (edible cultivated plants, cotton, tobacco, beef, etc.). In other words, without exaggerating the extent of these functional tendencies of war, the raids *also* become enterprises of pillaging: the Indians found it easier to procure the goods they needed with weapons in hand. Such a practice could in the long-run create a twofold relation of economic dependence: society's external dependence on the places producing the desired goods (essentially the Spanish colonies); the tribe's internal dependence on the group that at least partially assured its subsistence, namely the warrior group. And so, it is not too surprising to learn that the term the Guaicuru used to designate not only hunters, but warriors, was Niadagaguadi, those thanks to whom we eat.

Would not this economic "perversion" of war in societies totally devoted to it, be, rather than a local accident, the effect of a logic inherent to war itself? Does not the warrior fatally transform himself into a looter? This is what we are led to believe by primitive societies who followed an analogous path. The Apache, for example (cf. bibliography), having abandoned agriculture, gradually allowed war to assume an economic function: they systematically pillaged Mexican and American settlements, under the command of the famous Geronimo, among others, whose tribe only tolerated military action if enough spoils were produced. The logic of war, perhaps, but strongly aided by possession of the horse. The detailed analysis of the elements that comprised the spoils of war could suggest that they alone established recognition of the warrior as such, that spoils were the essential source of the sought-after prestige. This is not the case, and the appurtenance to the Höchero or the Kaanoklé group was not in any way determined by the number of horses or prisoners captured: *it was necessary to bring back the scalp of an enemy killed in combat*. We are generally unaware that this tradition is as old in South America as it is in North America. Almost all the Chaco tribes respected it. To scalp the fallen enemy explicitly signified the young victor's desire to be admitted into the club of warriors. Impressive ceremonies celebrated the entrance of the new member, recognizing his definitive right to the title — for this was an ennoblement — of *warrior*. It is necessary, thus, to posit this double equation: the warriors occupy the summit of the social hierarchy of prestige; a warrior is a man who, not content to kill his enemies, scalps them. Immediate consequence: a man who kills the enemy without scalping him *is not a warrior*. A seemingly insignificant distinction, but one that reveals itself to be of extreme importance.

There is a hierarchy of scalps. Spanish heads of hair, though not disdained, were not, by far, as esteemed as those of Indians. Thus for the Chulupi, nothing could equal a Toba scalp, their eternal enemies. Before and during the Chaco war, the Chulupi warriors stubbornly resisted the Bolivian army which wanted to seize their territory and exterminate its occupants. Admirable experts of the terrain, the Chulupi watched for and attacked the invaders near the rare sources of water. The Indians told me of these combats. Silent arrows decimated the

troops, who were panic-stricken by thirst and the terror of an invisible enemy. Hundreds of Bolivian soldiers thus perished; so many, in any case, the old warriors said, that the Indians gave up on scalping mere soldiers and brought back only officers' locks. All these scalps are still kept by their owners, carefully arranged in cases of leather or basket: when they die, their relatives will burn the scalps on the tomb so that the smoke will mark a path of easy access to Kaanoklé paradise for the soul of the deceased. There is no smoke more noble than that of a Toba warrior scalp. Enemy scalps were now hung from the ceiling of huts or tied to war lances. They were surrounded by intense ritual activity (festivals of celebration or of commemoration): this illustrates the depth of the personal link that united the warrior to his trophy.

Here, then, essentially, is the ethnographic context in which the life of warrior societies unfolds, and the horizon upon which the most secret web of relations between warrior and tribe is spun. Let us note immediately that if these relations were static, if the relations between a particular warrior group and society as a whole were stable, inert or sterile, the present enterprise of reflection would have to end here. We would have, in such a hypothesis, a minority of young men — the warriors — waging a permanent war for their own account — the quest for prestige which society would tolerate because of the primary and secondary benefits that the warriors would procure for it: collective security assured by the constant weakening of enemies, the captures and spoils of war resulting from the pillage of enemy settlements. A similar situation could reproduce itself and repeat itself indefinitely, with no innovation altering the being of the social body and the traditional functioning of society. We would have to observe, with Marcel Duchamp, that there is no solution because there is no problem. The entire question is precisely this: is there a problem? How should it be articulated?

It is a question of knowing whether primitive society is running a risk by letting a particular social group, that of the warriors, grow in its breast. There is some basis, then, to examining them, the existence in primitive society of a group of singers or dancers, for example, does not in any way affect the established social order. But it is a question here of warriors, namely, the men who hold a quasi-monopoly on society's military capacity, a monopoly, in a sense, on organized violence. They exercise this violence on their enemies. But could they eventually exercise it as well on their own society? Not physical violence (a civil war of warriors against society), but *a taking of power* by the warrior group which would from then on exercise it on, and if necessary, against society? Could the warrior group, as a specialized organ of the social body, become *a separate organ of political power*? In other words, does war harbor within it the possibility of what all primitive societies, in essence, are devoted to warding off: namely, the division of the social body into Masters (the warlike minority) and Subjects (the rest of society)?

We have just seen, in the tribes of the Chaco and among the Apache, how the dynamic of war could transform the search for prestigious spoils into the pillage of resources. If society allows the proportion of its provisions attained from the spoils of war to grow, it would thereby establish a relation of growing dependence on its providers, that is, the warriors, who would be in a position to guide the tribe's sociopolitical life as they pleased. Though minor and temporary

in the specific cases evoked, the economic effects of war nevertheless show that society is in no way sheltered from such an evolution. But rather than look at local and conjunctural situations, it is the logic inherent in the existence of a body of warriors and the ethics belonging to this body that we should interrogate. Which amounts, in fact, to posing a single question: what is a warrior?

It is a man who puts his warlike passion to the service of his desire for prestige. This desire is realized when a young combatant is authorized to claim his integration into the warrior brotherhood (in the strict sense) and his confirmation as warrior (Kaanoklé, Höchero, etc.): when he brings back an enemy scalp. One could then suppose that such a fact would guarantee the new warrior an irrevocable status and a definitive prestige which he could peacefully savor. This is not the case. Far from being finished, his career has, in effect, only just begun. The first scalp is not the crowning, but, on the contrary, the point of departure. Just as in these societies, a son does not inherit the glory acquired by his father, the young warrior is not freed by his initial prowess: he must continuously start over, for each exploit accomplished is both a source of prestige and a questioning of this prestige. The warrior is in essence *condemned to forging ahead*. The glory won is never enough in and of itself; it must be forever proven, and every feat realized immediately calls for another.

The warrior is thus a man of permanent dissatisfaction. The personality of this restless figure results from a convergence of the individual desire for prestige and the social recognition that alone confers it. For each exploit accomplished, the warrior and society utter the same judgment: the warrior says, That's good, but I can do more, I can increase my glory. Society says, That's good, but you should do more, obtain our recognition of a superior prestige. In other words, as much by his own personality (glory before everything) as by his total dependence in relation to the tribe (who else could confer glory?) the warrior finds himself, *volens nolens*, a prisoner of a logic that relentlessly makes him want to do a little more. Lacking this, society would quickly forget his past exploits and the glory they procured for him. The warrior only exists in war; he is devoted as such to action: the story of his valorous acts, declaimed at festivals, is only a call for further valorous acts. The more the warrior goes to war, the more society will confer prestige upon him.

It follows that if society alone bestows or refuses glory, the warrior is dominated, alienated by society. But couldn't this relationship of subordination be reversed to the benefit of the warrior, to the detriment of the tribe? This possibility is, in effect, inscribed in the same logic of war which alienates the warrior in the ascending spiral of the ever more glorious feat. This dynamic of war, originally the purely individual enterprise of the warrior, could gradually transform it into the collective enterprise of society: it is within the warrior's reach to alienate the tribe in war. The organ (the warrior group) can develop the function (the warlike activity). In what way? We must first consider that the warriors, though devoted by nature to the individual fulfillment of their vocation, together constitute a group determined by the identity of their interests: ceaselessly organizing new raids to increase their prestige. They wage war, moreover, not against personal enemies, but against enemies of the tribe. It is, in other words, in their interest never to leave the enemies in peace, always to

harass them, never to give them any respite. As a result the existence in this or that society of an organized group of “professional” warriors tends to transform the *permanent state of war* (the general situation of the primitive society) into *actual permanent war* (the particular situation of warrior societies).

Such a transformation, pushed to its conclusion, would have considerable sociological consequences since, in affecting the very structure of society, it would alter the undivided being. The power to decide on matters of war and peace (an absolutely essential power) would in effect no longer belong to society as such, but indeed to the brotherhood of warriors, which would place its private interest before the collective interest of society and would make its particular point of view the general point of view of the tribe. The warrior would involve society in a cycle of wars it wanted nothing to do with. The tribe’s foreign policy would no longer be determined by itself, but by a minority that would push it toward an impossible situation: permanent war against all neighboring nations. First a group seeking *prestige*, the warlike community would then transform itself into a *pressure* group, in order to push society into accepting the intensification of war, then finally into a *power* group, which alone would decide peace and war for all. Having traveled this trajectory, inscribed ahead of time in the logic of war, the warrior group would hold power and exercise it over society in order to force it to pursue its goal: it would thus be instituted as a separate organ of political power; the entire society would be radically changed, divided into the dominating and the dominated.

War carries within it, then, the danger of the division of primitive society’s homogeneous social body. A remarkable paradox: on the one hand, war permits the primitive community to persevere in its undivided being; on the other hand, it reveals itself as the possible basis for division into Masters and Subjects. Primitive society as such obeys a logic of non-division; war tends to substitute this with a logic of division. In a primitive society that is not protected from dynamic conflict, from social innovation, or, quite simply, from internal contradiction, there is conflict between the group’s social desire (to maintain the social body as a single totality) and the warrior’s individual desire (to increase glory), contradiction between two opposite logics such that one must triumph through radical exclusion of the other. Either the sociological logic carries it away in order to abolish the warrior, or else the warlike logic emerges in order to destroy society as an undivided body. There is no middle road. How do we posit the relationship between society and the warriors from now on? It depends on whether society can erect defense mechanisms likely to protect it from the lethal division toward which the warrior fatally leads society. It is, for society, a problem of survival: either the tribe, or the warrior. Which of the two will be the stronger? In the concrete social reality of these societies, which solution finds the problem? To know, we must look once again to the ethnology of these tribes.

Let us first locate the limits assigned to the warrior group as an autonomous organization. In fact, this group is only instituted and socially recognized as such on the level of acquired prestige: warriors are men who have won the right to certain privileges (title, name, hairdo and special paintings, etc.) not counting the erotic repercussions of their prestige among women. The very nature of their vital goal — prestige — prevents them from forming an ensemble that

could elaborate a unified policy and strategy, a part of the social body that could promote and attain its own collective objectives. It is, in fact, the obligatory individualism of each warrior that prevents the warrior group from emerging as a homogeneous collectivity. The warrior desirous of acquiring prestige is only able and only wants to rely on his own forces: he has no use for the potential solidarity of his companions in arms with whom, in this case, he would have to share the benefits of an expedition. A band of warriors does not necessarily lead to a team sport mentality: ultimately, the savage warrior's only possible motto is every man for himself. Savoring prestige is a purely personal affair: so is acquiring it.

But we also see that by virtue of the same logic, the acquired prestige (the accomplished exploit) only assures the warrior of temporary satisfaction, ephemeral enjoyment. Each exploit welcomed and celebrated by the tribe obligates him, in fact, to aim higher, to look beyond, to start again at zero, in a sense, by renewing the source of his prestige, by constantly expanding the series of his exploits. The warrior's task, in other words, is an *infinite task*, always incomplete. He never attains the goal which is always out of reach: no rest for the warrior, except at the end of his quest.

Thus, his is an individual enterprise, and one that is increasingly unprofitable: the warrior's life is perpetual combat. But that still does not say everything. In order to respond to this at once personal and social demand of reconquering prestige through an exploit, it is indeed not enough for the warrior to repeat the same exploit, to settle peacefully into repetition by bringing an enemy's scalp back to the camp: neither he nor the tribe would be satisfied by this facile (so to speak) solution. Each time, the undertaking must be more difficult, the danger confronted more terrible, the risk run more considerable. Why? Because this is the only way for the warrior to maintain his individual difference in relation to his companions, because there is competition between the warriors for prestige. Each warrior's exploit, precisely because it is recognized as such, is a challenge to the others: let them do better. The novice tries to equal the veteran, thereby forcing the latter to maintain the gap of prestige by demonstrating more bravery. The cumulative effect of the individual point of honor, the tribe's social pressure and the group's internal competition is to fling the warrior into the escalation of temerity.

How does this escalation translate concretely in the field? For the warriors it is a matter of seeking out maximal difficulty which would bestow upon their victory even greater valor. Thus, for example, they will undertake longer and longer expeditions, penetrating further and further into enemy territory, renouncing the security offered by the proximity of their own territory. Or else they will confront an enemy group known for its courage or ferocity and whose scalps are therefore more esteemed than others. They will also risk their lives by leading raids at night, which Indians never do, because of the added danger of souls, spirits and phantoms. Similarly when an attack is organized, the warriors will move ahead of the front lines to launch the first assault themselves. This is because there is more glory in beating the enemy on his turf, in his camp or in his village, dashing through arrows or *arquebusades*. Explorers' testimonies, missionaries' chronicles, soldiers' reports all contain a great number of stories that illustrate the bravery of the savage warriors, sometimes deemed admirable,



more often, senseless. Their bravery is of course undeniable. But it stems less from a warrior's individual personality than from war's own logic as war for prestige. From the point of view of the Europeans (in North America as well as in South America), who were blind to this logic of glory, the Indian temerity could only seem senseless, abnormal. But from the indigenous point of view, it simply corresponded to the norm common to warriors.

War for prestige, the logic of glory: to what ultimate degree of bravery could these lead the warrior? What is the nature of the exploit that procures the most glory because it is unsurpassable? It is the individual exploit, it is the act of the warrior who *alone* attacks the adversaries' camp, who in this major challenge, where the most absolute inequality is inscribed, equals himself to all the power of his companions, who claims and asserts his superiority over the enemy group. *Alone against all*. This is the culminating point of escalation in the exploit. Here, the experienced warrior's skill is hardly worth anything, his cunning is of little help to him; henceforth he finds himself starting from scratch in this confrontation where the only thing in his favor is the overwhelming surprise of his solitary presence.

Champlain, for example, tells of trying to convince a valiant Algonkin warrior not to leave by himself to attack the Iroquois and he answered:

...that it would be impossible for him to live if he did not kill his enemies and did not avenge himself, and that his heart told him that he had to leave as early as possible: which he was indeed determined to do (p.165).

This is also what the Iroquois do, as the French Jesuits staying with the Huron were surprised to find:

...and sometimes an enemy, totally naked and with only a hatchet in hand, will even have the courage to enter the huts of a town at night, by himself, then, having murdered some of those he finds sleeping there, to take flight for all defense against a hundred and two hundred people who will follow him one and two entire days (III, year 1642, p. 55).

We know that Geronimo, failing to lead the Apache into the constant war he desired, did not hesitate to attack Mexican villages, accompanied by only two or three other warriors. In his very beautiful memoirs (cf. bibliography), the Sioux Black Elk recalls how a Crow warrior was killed when, alone during the night, he attempted to steal the Sioux's horses. Black Elk also reports that in a famous battle against the American army, a Cheyenne horseman charged alone, ahead of his brothers, into the rapid fire of the fusillade: he was killed. Among the Amazonian Yanomami, more than one warrior died in a combat that he led alone against an enemy tribe, such as the famous Fusiwe (cf. bibliography). The Chulupi still celebrate the end of one of their people, a Kaanoklé of great renown. Having reached the peak of glory, he thus had no choice: mounting his best war-horse, he penetrated the territory of the Toba, alone, for several days, attacked one of their camps and died in combat. In the memory of the Chulupi remains the vivacious figure of Kalali'in, the famous Toba war chief. They told me how, at the beginning of the century, he would come into the sleepy Chulupi camps at night, alone, slitting the throats and scalping one or two men each

visit, always escaping. Several Chulupi warriors resolved to capture him and managed this by trapping him. Kalali'in's exploits are evoked with hatred, his death, with admiration: for he perished under torture without uttering a sound.

What good is multiplying the examples? It is enough to read the texts: swarms of anecdotes all converge to show that among the warrior, the disdain for danger always accompanies the desire for glory. This conjunction explains moreover the behavior of the warriors which confused the Europeans: namely, that a combatant captured by his enemies *never tried to escape*. Now, in numerous cases, the future of the prisoner of war was all laid out: at best he survived the terrible tortures that his masters inflicted on him, at worst (and this was the more frequent destiny) he was killed. But let us listen to Champlain narrate the consequences of a battle which he won over the Iroquois in 1609, allied with the Algonkins, capturing a dozen of them:

Yet ours lit a fire, and as it was well aglow, each took an ember and burnt the miserable wretch little by little to make him suffer more torment. They left him for some time, throwing water on his back: then they tore out his nails, and put fire on the tips of his fingers and his member. After scorching the top of his testicles, they made him eat a certain very hot gum: then they pierced his arms close to the fists, and with sticks pulled the nerves and tore them with force: and as they saw that they could not have them, they cut them (p. 145).

More than thirty years later, nothing has changed, as the Jesuits contest in 1642:

one of the prisoners not showing any sign of pain at the height of his torments and agonies, the Iroquois, infuriated to see his constancy, which they took as a bad omen, for they believe that the souls of warriors who disdain their rage will make them pay for the death of their bodies, seeing, as I say, this constancy, they asked why he was not screaming: he responded, I am doing what you would not do, if you were treated with the same fury with which you treat me: the iron and the fire that you apply to my body would make you scream out loud and cry like children, and I do not flinch. To these words the tigers throw themselves on the half-burned victim; they skin his testicles, and throw sand that is all red and burning with fire onto his bloody skull; they rush him to the bottom of the scaffold, and drag him around the huts (III, year 1642, p. 42).

We know that among the Tupi-Guarani a prisoner of war could be safe and sound, even free, in the village of the victors: but sooner or later he was inevitably executed and eaten. He knew this and yet did not attempt to flee. Where would he find refuge, anyway? Certainly not among his own people: indeed, for them, the captured warrior no longer belongs to the tribe, he is definitively excluded from the community which only waits to learn of his death in order to avenge it immediately. Should he attempt to escape, the people of his village would refuse to welcome him: he is a prisoner, his destiny must thus be fulfilled. In fact, the flight of a prisoner of war, as the Jesuits write in regard to Canadian Indians, is "an unpardonable crime" (III, year, p. 42).

Here, then, on all sides, this irreducible affinity, this tragic proximity between the warrior and death becomes clear. Victorious, he must immediately leave again for war in order to assure his glory with an even greater feat. But in ceaselessly testing the limits of the risk confronted and forging ahead for prestige he invariably meets this end: solitary death in the face of enemies. Vanquished, that is, captured, he ceases through this itself to exist socially in the eyes of his own people: an ambiguous nomad, he will henceforth wander between life and death, even if the latter is not granted him (this is the case of the tribes of the Chaco where prisoners were rarely executed). There is no alternative for the warrior: a single outcome for him, death. His is an infinite task, as I was saying: what is proven here, in short, is that *the warrior is never a warrior* except at the end of his task, when, accomplishing his supreme exploit, he wins death along with absolute glory. The warrior is, in his being, a being-for-death.

This is why, on this point at least, Dobrizhoffer is half-mistaken when he writes:

The Abipone seek glory, but never death (II, p. 360).

Warriors, Abipone or others, do not seek death in and of itself perhaps, but it inevitably comes at the end of the path they have decided to travel: seeking glory, they meet death. One cannot be surprised then by the very high rate of mortality among the warriors. The ancient chronicles have retained the names and figures of the best among the warriors, namely the war chiefs: almost all died sooner or later in combat. We must also remember that these losses decimated a specific age group: men between the ages of twenty and forty-five, that is, in a sense, the prime of this savage chivalry. So much perseverance in this being-for-death suggests that perhaps the passion for glory acted in the service of a more profound passion, that which we call the *death instinct*, an instinct which not only traversed the warrior group, but more seriously contaminated society as a whole: did not the women, in effect, refuse to have children, thereby condemning the tribes to rapid disappearance? A collective death wish of a society no longer aspiring to reproduce itself...

One last point is illuminated here. I indicated above that only a segment of the men in the Chaco tribes aspired to be warriors, that is, to be called such after having brought back an enemy scalp. In other words, the rest of the men went to war, but killed the enemies without scalping them, that is, did not aspire to the title of warrior. They renounced glory deliberately. All that precedes would henceforth allow one to anticipate the reason for this somewhat unexpected choice. Nevertheless, let us allow the Indians to explain it themselves: one will thereby be able to observe in their discourse the absolute freedom of their thought and of their action, as well as the cool lucidity of their political analysis. The men of these societies each do what they want and know why.

During my stay in the Chaco, I had the opportunity time and again to converse with old Chulupi combatants. A few among them were institutional warriors, the Kaanokle: they possessed the heads of hair of enemies they had killed. As for the others, they were not veritable warriors, for they had never scalped the enemies. In the group of old combatants, the Kaanoklé were rare: most of their companions had long since perished in battle, which is expected in the warrior world. Yet it was the non-warriors who explained to me the truth of the

warrior. For if they were not Kaanoklé, it was because they did not want to be. Why would valorous combatants not desire to be Kaanoklé? This was the case of Aklamatsé, a shaman of high repute, and of Tanu'uh, immensely knowledgeable about mythology, among others. Both around sixty-five-years-old, they had led countless battles against the Bolivians, the Argentinesans, and the Toba, especially Tanu'uh; but neither of them were Kaanoklé. Tanu'uh's body, studded with scars (from steel blades, arrows and bullets) indicated sufficiently that he had narrowly escaped death more than once. Tanu'uh had no doubt killed one or two dozen men. Why aren't you a Kaanoklé? Why haven't you ever scalped your enemies? In his ambiguity, the answer was almost comic: Because it was too dangerous. I didn't want to die. In short, this man who had almost perished ten times had not wanted to become a warrior because he was afraid of death.

It was thus obvious for him: the Kaanoklé, as such, is condemned to being killed. To insist on the glory attached to the title of warrior amounts to accepting the more or less long-term price: death. Tanu'uh and his friends described the movement that propels the warrior. To be a Kaanoklé, they said, you must bring back a scalp. But once he has taken this first step, the man must leave again for war, bring back other scalps: if not, he is no longer taken seriously, he is forgotten. This is why the Kaanoklé die quickly.

We could not have a clearer analysis of the relations that link society to its warriors. The tribe accepts an autonomous group of men of war forming in its breast, encouraging their vocation by a generous recognition of prestige. But doesn't this prestige group have a good chance of becoming a pressure group, then a power group? Now it is too late for the warrior: either he renounces his status and shamefully loses face, or he finds himself irremediably trapped in his own vocation, a prisoner of his desire for glory which leads him straight to death. There is an exchange between society and the warrior: prestige for exploit. But in this confrontation, it is society, mistress of the rules of the game, that has the last word: for the ultimate exchange is that of eternal glory for the eternity of death. Ahead of time, the warrior is condemned to death by society: no joy for the savage warrior, only the certainty of sorrow. But why? Because the warrior could cause the sorrow of the society by introducing the germ of division, by becoming a separate organ of power. Such is the defense mechanism that primitive society erects to ward off the risk that the warrior, as such, bears: the undivided social body's life for the warrior's death. The text of tribal law becomes clear here: primitive society is, in its being, a *society-for-war*, it is at the same time, and for the same reasons, a *society against the warrior*...

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Here let us recall not the discourse of Westerners on primitive man as warrior, but that, perhaps less expected but which stems from the same logic, of the Incas. The Incas said of the tribes that stirred at the steps of the Empire that these were savages *in a constant state of war*. which legitimated all attempts to integrate them by means of conquest into the *pax incaica*.

<sup>2</sup>This logic concerns not only intercommunal relations, but also the operation of the community itself. In South America, when the demographic size of a group goes beyond the threshold considered optimum by its society, some of the people will establish another village further away.

<sup>3</sup>Such is the absolutely exemplary case of the Tupi-Guarani of South America, whose society, from the moment of the discovery of the New World, was wrought by centripetal forces, by a logic of unification.

## Editor's Introduction to "Complementary Power" and *A Nation of Women*

I first came across these two pieces after seeing them cited in the book *Movement for No Society*, an excellent insurrectionary history of Philadelphia I'd highly recommend reading. They offer powerful and challenging views of a conception of 'gender' which is in many ways hostile to civilization, as well as the ways this concept morphed into a more civilized form in tandem with the progressively encroaching, and often indirect influence, of the European settlers. It might not really be accurate to consider this, at least in the earlier years described, as gender in the form critiqued in the previous writings. The colonial period Lenape are an interesting case: as a semi-sedentary, horticultural people they seem on the verge of civilization without quite crossing over (perhaps similarly to some others discussed here like the Māori, and Tukanoan and Arawakan peoples in Northwest Amazonia). In particular, the form of slash-and-burn, polycultural, and shifting cultivation practiced by the Lenape was quite sustainable when practiced by low-density populations. Emerging in relative proximity to mound-building cultures with possible archaeological signs of stratification such as the Hopewell tradition in Western New York (considered possible descendants of many Iroquoian cultures, including the Susquehannock immediately to the West of the Lenape with whom they interacted frequently, and the nations of the Haudenosaunee aka the Iroquois Confederacy), the Ohio river valley (also the site of a colonial period mound-building group known as the Fort Ancient culture) and Western Pennsylvania (the site of another colonial period monumental and socially stratified group known as the Monongahela culture), it seems reasonable to at least consider that many aspects of Lenape society functioned specifically to counter the emergence or influence of such a (proto)civilization. Considering that as the authors point out, the Lenape world was already facing strong pressures resulting from regional European colonization before any significant direct contact with settlers, and that these pressures increased centralization and nation-identification, we can consider pre-contact Lenape culture likely fairly egalitarian and anti-civilized as supported by the earliest European observations, occurring even as they did during this centralizing period.

'Chiefs' had little to no power to compel, command or coerce, everyone participated fairly equally in subsistence activity, an ethic of 'leveling' compul-

sion to share resources predominated, people identified primarily with their kin, friends, and local band, personal and collective freedom was highly valued and maintained through a localized dynamic balance of disordering violence and harmonizing kinmaking, and the natural environment was understood as a complex web of animate and morally fluid interactions with humans as just another component.

To return to *Musings on Nothingness*,

A given human couple may present itself as tending toward homosexuality to the extent that its members are extremely similar to each other in appearance. To the extent that this similarity is performed in the manner that heterosexuals perform difference, it is a farce. But while to the heterosexual imagination the importance of intercourse is understood as (re)productive and strengthened by polar difference, intercourse understood queerly is a narcissistic endeavor that proceeds in spite of the tremendous variations between different individuals.

Similarly, a paradoxical Lenape cosmic principle points to how the conflict between good/harmony and bad/disorder is necessary for the world's existence, and that neither the 'good' or 'bad' spiritual principles are in themselves good or bad in any stable sense. The Lenape framework appears as one of divided but malleable, illusory, and complementary 'gender' roles, which function against the hierarchical, patriarchal system of civilized Gender. Given the influence of more civilized cultures in the region, including but not limited to Europeans, it's possible that aspects of this gender system do reflect the influence or repurposing of domesticated gender roles. There is 'alienation' and prescription here; certain actions are sometimes rewarded or punished based on one's gender, but this separation and obligation is a component part of a broader (dis)organizing principle in which separation, union, obligation, and choice combine into a harmonious, deeply enmeshed, free whole. This real whole includes real part, and the harmony is one between harmony and disharmony. As my fairly uninformed speculation on the functioning of the Lenape situation, and a possible hint towards alternatives in our context, I'd venture that gender is not seen in essentialized fashion as independently 'real', biological characteristics of people, but as something only existing through the other and in order to facilitate the close, swirling interplay between the two. It is performed as if it were a real separation of two in order for people to 'touch' the knowing that the edges of the two are touching contiguously all over, across an infinitely small gap, and that this gap is but one of infinitesimal others separating/connecting everything, all constantly shifting. The overall obligation is one towards freedom, and there is choice in assenting not to choose. A choice, in a sense, always destroys possibility by any given act's particularity; it is made because others were not. This is at the same time that choice always creates possibility by the uncontrollable array of chaotic effects every event causes. Choice itself is inevitable, including the choice not to choose.

This is to say that while Lenape conceptions of gender may in some ways appear parallel to civilized conceptions of gender, and are certainly unpalatable at first glance to many of our frameworks, they still functioned, at least

initially, toward an opposite end. We must remember that the binary of civilization and the wild is itself partly a symptom of civilized thinking (as well as the binary of binary and non-binary). One came from the other and they are not unconnected, opposite as they genuinely are. After all, civilization does (partly) function and draws much of its power from the wild itself, inside and outside its structure. Two things can indeed, and often do, appear as mirror opposites while still being genuinely antithetical to each other.

At the same time, this is not to advocate this specific form of gender and social organization. The context of any two historical-temporal situations are always different, and in this case, the difference in contexts is quite apparent.

The second piece, *A Nation of Women*, does at times seem to suffer from a vaguely pacifist and second-wave feminist sentiment. This can be seen in the occasional intimations that if only the female peacemaking national ethic could have been preserved that the over-influence of hierarchical war captains and large-scale conflicts of domination might have been prevented. This seems to underemphasize an awareness that this female national role also became a factor weakening the Lenape position. While at times motivated by a reaction against hierarchical gender structures, it was brought into increased importance by the dependence of early settlers, inter-indigenous wars of conquest and an increased regional practice of national identification and organization precipitated by European subsistence disruption, trade, and geopolitics. This inflation of the 'female' mode was over-stabilizing and facilitated the growth of unresolved regional contradictions, and a proportional over-importance of hierarchical male conflict as well, through war or otherwise, where the deployment of power became more highly centralized. War leaders, including those purporting to act as peace chiefs, began to act like they were attempting to hold on to coercive power, instead of systematically dissipating it as before. Stricter internal ordering was justified as necessary for conflictual as well as peaceful national maneuvering, and the unconditional promotion of peace required an over-acceptance of actors warring with a civilized scale and character.

The assertion by many of these women-coded peacemakers that the Lenape never made war originally, or should never make war, also seems problematic. These are very similar statements in particular to those spoken by converted Lenape, and in what we are told was demanded by the Moravians of converts: that the men not go to war and not practice Native customs. This clearly is an imbalance with respect to 'traditional' Lenape gender structures, where 'masculine' warring was valued along with 'feminine' kinmaking. From other contexts, it's also clear that some Lenape assertions of traditional values in this later colonial period were often paradoxically quite tangled up in Christian values. The example of the Lenape prophet Neolin shows this, who claimed to preach a rejection of European goods and lifestyles, and a return to traditional indigenous practices. Neolin promoted sexual monogamy, rejection of witchcraft and strife, and a path to heaven, even writing and selling a book of his beliefs he referred to as a bible. While influential in generating anti-colonial sentiment, Neolin would later oppose the plans for coordinated violent uprising put forward by Pontiac and others influenced by him, unsuccessfully calling for the indigenous combatants to lay down their arms.

These pieces also deal with just the early chapters in an almost continuous

series of conflicts in what is now Pennsylvania, Ohio, and the rest of the Old Northwest, which stretched past the periods described here to as late as the War of 1812.<sup>1</sup> Many of the dynamics discussed here regarding changes in the nature of peacemaking and war via the erosion of subsistence and cultural practices figure heavily into these conflicts. Throughout the French and Indian War, Pontiac's Uprising, the American Revolutionary War, the Northwest Indian War, Tecumseh's Rebellion and the Creek War during the War of 1812, indigenous confederacies were in positions to inflict potentially defeating blows on colonial and American forces. These were not capitalized on though, and indigenous forces repeatedly stopped short of full victory. Often this coincided with negotiations or treaties, which failed to address indigenous people's grievances, were signed by figures without actual claim over the areas or people in question, were blatantly broken by colonists, or were superseded by later treaties no longer involving indigenous people in the region. Strategic alliances with the French during the French and Indian War, and with the British during and after the American Revolutionary War led to betrayals and dependencies on unreliable and ultimately antagonistic forces. Increased reliance on trade and agriculture to support demographically and culturally disrupted settlements in the Ohio and Illinois country caused political and military weakpoints. Division between peacemakers, militants, and ego-driven chiefs led to fragmented fighting forces working towards incompatible objectives. Leaders attempted to command large, unwieldy masses of warriors in battles which at times involved more Western tactics of attacking fortifications head on. The significant strengths of decentralized, insurgent-style confederacies were lost attempting these more conventional strategies without the necessary organizational and logistical capacities. Traditions of forcing the enemy to respect one's territory and existence while symbiotically creating each other in disjunctive rejection of hegemony, by mutual force, strategic, conditional kinmaking, or small-scale devastation mixed uneasily with European frameworks of proto-nationalist diplomacy, subjugation, and mechanical genocide. The drift into self-colonizing national frameworks and the mismatch between the two styles of war and peacemaking led to wars lost even as battles were won.

One of these moments of advantage were the raids of the Lenape chiefs Shingas and Captain Jacobs on Colonial settlements and troops in the Pennsylvania backcountry during the French and Indian War. Launched from Lenape settlements located in what is now the far Northwest of Pennsylvania, these extremely brutal and effective raids killed or captured (with captives either tortured to death, ransomed, or adopted into the band) an estimated 2,000 colonists from 1755-1757, sowing terror with the numerous mutilated corpses left behind. Thousands more fled to refugee camps in the east, with warriors boasting the countryside was so depopulated they had to travel several days to find any victims. At their peak, raids were reaching as far east as Reading, only 40 miles from Philadelphia, with little effective response from the Colonial authorities. This position was however only leveraged as a negotiating tool, with a dissatisfactory treaty signed and soon reneged on by colonists.

Later during Pontiac's Uprising, 8 major British forts were destroyed or captured in successive surprise attacks, with thousands more settlers again killed, captured, or forced to flee the region. However, a series of negotiations with



different indigenous groups isolated the militant forces and led to an agreement with the British purportedly limiting settlements to the West, which was ultimately ineffective; the desire for Westward expansion being a major contributing factor to the American War for Independence.

The Western front of the American Revolutionary War was another opportunity to repulse settlement in the Old Northwest, and it was only news of the impending treaty between the British and Americans that ended robust indigenous offensives in 1782. This would be known as the 'Year of Blood' for white settlers west of the Appalachian mountains. In Western Pennsylvania an American offensive was routed, it's commander tortured to death, and significant and effective raids were carried out by British-aided Lenape among others. In Illinois, a French militia force and an American expedition were defeated in quick succession. An army of as many as 1,100 warriors was massed for an invasion of Kentucky, one of the largest forces assembled against Americans in the war, but was called off after false reports of an imminent American invasion of the Ohio Country led the British commander to hold his forces in place, and many of the warriors returned home. In what is now Virginia and Kentucky, however, the leftovers of these British and indigenous forces did end up raiding into the American-settled territories and carried out two devastating ambushes of forces sent after them. The war ended with the British signing a treaty on the other side of the Atlantic which gave away all their indigenous allies' lands east of the Mississippi to the United States without consulting them.

The first war fought by the United States as an independent nation, the Northwest Indian War was also a clash over the Ohio and Illinois Countries. Another anti-expansionist indigenous confederacy formed after the Revolutionary War, resuming raids on American settlements in Kentucky and north of the Ohio River. Two American expeditions sent after them were defeated one after the other, in some of the proportionally worst defeats the US Army has ever suffered. Around a quarter of the entire US armed forces were killed or captured. The worst of these losses was in 1791, known as St. Clairs Defeat, the Battle of the Wabash, or the Battle of a Thousand Slain, it resulted in 656 US soldiers killed or captured and 320 wounded, out of a force of around 1,000, with almost all ~250 noncombatant camp followers also killed. The confederacy, mainly Delawares, Shawnees, Miami, and Potawatomis, suffered only 21 killed and 40 wounded out of a force of around 1,100. Subsequent indigenous offensives didn't take place however, under the assumption the US wouldn't launch another attack with so many dead, and factions of the confederacy began negotiating with the Americans without broader tribal support or knowledge. When the Americans did manage to regroup and build another army, the confederacy attempted an ambush at the Battle of Fallen Timbers, using a tornado-leveled area as their chosen terrain. What was an otherwise well-planned ambush was spoiled by a lack of effective coordination between bands of warriors from different tribes, a lack of sufficient firearms, and critically, the fact that the ambush was initiated by the confederacy's center formation early, when the American advance scouts were only 100 yards into the chosen zone. The subsequent reorganization of the American line and the failure of the indigenous confederacy to do so turned the ambush into a rout, with warriors fleeing to the nearby British Fort Detroit, only to find the doors locked. As many high-profile indigenous

leaders were shot down, their forces were left without sufficient lower level coordination and initiative, and fled the field of battle, even though the actual losses were at that point relatively equal.

These attempts of charismatic leaders to singlehandedly determine strategy, impoverishing effective lower-level choreography and logistics, later led to more losses in the rebellion of Tecumseh's confederacy during the War of 1812, and the Red Stick rebellion to the south in the Alabama territory. Both of these related rebellions were more spiritual in character and involved a nationalist tone of collective redemption or, in the Red Sticks' case, organized terrorism as implicit political statement. Tecumseh's rebellion failed while he was away recruiting followers and left his army in the command of his brother, the Prophet Tenskawatawa, who ordered an uncoordinated last-minute attack on the force sent after them, assuring the warriors that his spells would protect them. The Red Sticks for their part did not always listen to their prophets similar insurances (or perhaps they had better prophets – I'm genuinely not trying to ridicule these practices, which have been crucial), and were able to mount militarily effective actions such as the brutal, complete devastation of Fort Mims, and developed a cohesive fighting society able to regenerate some cultural ties and independent subsistence practices. The Red Sticks were defeated in a static defense of their territory, largely surrounded as it was by settlers and hostile nations such as the Cherokee, Choctaws, and Lower Creek, refusing any negotiation and willingly fighting to their deaths. Instead of becoming more mobile or seeking a closer alliance with the Seminoles or Tecumseh's confederation, most Red Sticks chose to stay where they were, and live out their version of the traditional lifestyle of their people, ultimately choosing death instead of adaptation. We can respect this decision, while also acknowledging the fact that the specific character of this framework of new religious national resistance movement was itself in some ways an adaptation, and that perhaps they could have retained what they valued while still fighting to win, knowing at the same time that personally it would still likely be a fight to die with honor.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>With the displacement of participants and spread of ideas these wars then echoed into later conflicts involving their descendants, such as the Seminole Wars in Florida lasting until 1858, which involved fugitive Creek Red Stick fighters (several hundred Seminole in the Everglades never surrendered and were able to live a traditional lifestyle fairly undisturbed until regional infrastructure construction in the 1920s and '30s brought in more white settlement), the Black Hawk War in 1832 in the Illinois and Michigan Territories involving Fox, Sauk, and Potawatomi, who had fought against the US in the War of 1812, the Dakota War of 1862 in Minnesota (accounts of which were orally recounted by firsthand eyewitnesses directly to people who lived into the 1980s) where a small faction of Ho-Chunk, who also took part in the Black Hawk War fought, the 1898 Battle of Sugar Point in Minnesota, where Ojibwe, who participated in Tecumseh's confederacy, clashed with the US Army, and in 1909 the Crazy Snake Rebellion in Oklahoma when rebellious, traditionalist Creek, who had fought in the Tecumseh-influenced Red Sticks, fought a sheriff's posse.

# Complementary Power: Men and Women of the Lenni Lenape

Margaret M. Caffrey, 2000. In *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 1. Excerpted.

In the 1790s a man named John Burnet witnessed a game organized by the Lenni Lenape chief Buckongahelas in which about a hundred people participated. Men and women played each other on opposite teams. Women could carry the ball in their hands, and men could use only their feet. If a woman had the ball she could be tackled in attempts to dislodge it. Play began with an old chief throwing the ball up between the two teams in the middle of the field. Each team tried to get the ball through the other team's goalposts at opposite ends of the field. Burnet wrote (using offensive language – Editor) that the young women “were the most active of their party, and most frequently caught the ball when it was amusing to see the struggle between them and the young men, which generally terminated in the prostration of the squaw upon the grass, before the ball could be forced from her hand.” The game lasted about an hour, and the women won “by the herculean strength” of a woman who threw the ball for the deciding goal. In an article including various historical and oral accounts, scholar Jim Rementer found this game, called Pahsaheman, still being played in 1993.<sup>1</sup>

The continuation of this game, in spite of the vast changes the Lenni Lenape have faced over time, suggests that it reflects an important element of pre-European-contact Lenape society. This game, in which the women's team faces the men's and each has an equal opportunity to win by using complementary methods to move the ball (women's arms, men's legs), suggests in the Lenape past intriguing alternatives to European ideas of gender and their application.<sup>2</sup> To explore these differences, it is necessary to look at the role gender played among the Lenni Lenape as Native Americans met Europeans. Since the accounts from this period are European, one must read and compare them critically to gain insight into Lenape life.

**A GENDERED SOCIETY** The Lenni Lenape, called the Delaware people by the English, lived predominantly in New Jersey, Delaware, southeastern Pennsylvania near the Delaware River, and southeastern New York state at the time of first European contact. They were pushed into western Pennsylvania, then to Ohio by white settlement, and then to various other western areas. Today there are four major Delaware groups, living predominantly in Oklahoma and Ontario,

Canada, and numbering approximately sixteen thousand people.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Lenni Lenape were a highly gendered society with defined markers of male and female identity. Physical appearance, clothing, work roles, and even behavior marked one as male or female. Women grew their hair long, often until it reached below their hips, whereas men plucked the hair from their heads until only a small amount remained, “forming a round crest, of about two inches in diameter.” Men wore a plume of feathers in their hair, which stuck straight up or hung downward, while women did not. Men daily decorated their faces elaborately, creating designs such as streaks or the outlines of animals. When dressing up, women painted more discreetly, using round spots of red on each cheek, reddening their eyelids and the tops of their foreheads, and some women reddened the rims of their ears and their temples.

Clothing easily distinguished the genders – men wore “breechclouts,” or loincloths, women knee-length skirts, which, although short by European standards, allowed them to move through the forest without hindrance. After European contact, when dressing up men would wear a small blanket called a matchcoat over a shirt, a loincloth, leggings, and moccasins; women would wear a “petticoat,” a piece of cloth about two yards long that was fastened around the hips and hung a little below the knees, along with a shirt, leggings, and moccasins. To go dancing, men fixed deer claws to garters or knee bands and women used bells or thimbles, each making their own distinctively gendered sounds. In dancing itself, men leaped, shouted, and stamped, while women acted “with decency and becoming modesty,” moving “one foot after the other slightly forwards then backwards, yet so as to advance gradually.”

Men and women also had gendered work expectations, although, as in the case of face painting, they differed from European expectations. Women were the principal farmers, growing predominantly corn, beans, and squash, while men hunted and fished. There was some overlap in daily life – when women made maple sugar, men would “occasionally assist their wives in gathering the sap and watch the kettles in their absence.” But while women made maple sugar, men’s principal occupation at that time was hunting bear. It was also expected that women would provide wood for fires and keep them going year-round. The proper person to work in the fields was also clearly the woman, to the extent that men were embarrassed to be seen doing this work. Indeed, Lenape men mocked European men for doing women’s work. An early missionary, David Brainerd, wrote, “Hence they will frequently sit and laugh at the whites, as being good for nothing else but to plow and fatigue themselves with hard labour.” He further wrote, with cultural bias, “They have been bred up in idleness, and know little about cultivating land.... I am obliged to instruct them in, as well as press them to, the performance of their work.” For old men, the gender expectations loosened. They worked “a little, chopping wood or doing other things about the house, but the younger do nothing unless driven by dire necessity to build a hut or house or the like.”

Besides hunting and providing housing, men were expected to make canoes and wooden bowls, help women clear the land for planting, and, post-Contact, build fences around it. But men’s identity was tied up in hunting, for which there were various seasons. The most prominent were the deer-hunting season

from approximately September to the beginning of January; the beaver, raccoon, fox, and bear season, from January to spring planting in May; and the summer deer hunt, from the end of June or beginning of July.

While men did their work, women, besides planting and harvesting, cutting wood, and producing maple sugar, were expected to pound corn to meal in mortars or troughs, cook and make bread, smoke and dry meat, tan skins and make clothing and moccasins, store food, gather nuts, tubers, and berries in various seasons, and make mats, ropes, hats, and baskets of wild hemp. Once the Europeans came with different domesticated animals, they also became gendered. Missionary David Zeisberger wrote, "Cattle belong to women, horses to men, though a man may give his wife a pony for her own."

Men and women even carried burdens differently. Women made and decorated the carrying bands, but men's were worn fixed across the chest and were used to carry a deer weighing 100 to 130 pounds, while the women's were worn with the strap around the forehead, the load hanging down the back. When death occurred, men made coffins, but old women dug the graves. Gender differentiation also extended from material life to ways of acting. Zeisberger wrote, "Men deem it a shame to weep," but women wept loudly and bitterly at deaths. There also seems to have been cultural permission for women to quarrel with each other and with men, but men were culturally prohibited from this. Zeisberger wrote that "berating one another" was "rarely the case among men. . . more frequent among women." John Heckewelder wrote of the men, "They are not quarrelsome, and are always on guard, so as not to offend each other." Women also had cultural permission to be more vocal interpersonally, or at least were seen so. Heckewelder wrote, "The women, who everywhere speak more than the men, never want words to express themselves, but rather seem to have too many." He added that the Lenni Lenape had the expression, "Much talking disgraces a man and is fit only for women."

Although the Lenni Lenape constructed their gender system in many ways differently from Europeans of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, both groups expected visible differentiation between men and women in appearance, clothing, suitable work, material culture used or made by each, and certain ways of acting. But was this gender distinction used to reinforce the dominance of men and the subordination of women among the Lenni Lenape? Examination of the relationship of men and women in the multiple aspects of Lenape culture, such as marriage, economics, social status, and religion, reveals that men and women played complementary roles in their daily lives and in their cultural matrix, roles that gave them a relatively egalitarian relationship in which the key dynamic was not domination and subordination between the sexes, but complementary partnership.

**COMPLEMENTARY POWER** In marriage, men and women gave reciprocally to each other what they produced. Zeisberger wrote, "What a man secures in the chase belongs to his wife; as soon as he brings skins and flesh home he no longer regards them as his own, but as property of his wives." He adds, "On the other hand what the woman has gained in planting and harvesting is for the husband and she must provide for him everything that he needs in the chase."

This was not a metaphorical reciprocity. Of the meat, Zeisberger wrote, a

woman could “then do what she pleases with it. He says nothing, if she even gives the greatest part of it to her friends, which is a very common custom.” Heckewelder added that the husband, “if he has suffering friends, may give them as much of it [corn] as he pleases, without consulting his wife, or being afraid of her being displeased.” He added that the maple sugar made by the wife was also “considered as belonging to her husband.”...

Men and women in marriage did not hold goods in common; a man had his property and a woman had hers, over which each had the final say. At death, the property of a person was given away to friends and relatives, and the remaining spouse kept only what belonged to him or herself personally, that is, those items made by him or herself or given to him or her as gifts. Both women and men could contract debts as well, something generally not allowed European married women.<sup>3</sup>

... Women’s lives were worth more than men’s. As William Penn wrote, “For in case they kill a Woman, they pay double, and the Reason they render, is, That she breedeth Children, which Men cannot do.”... Both boys and girls went through distinct rites of passage at puberty, the boys at the killing of their first deer, the girls at the time of their first menstrual period. A girl had to go to a separate hut, built apart for her, where her mother or an older woman “cares for her and guards her so that none may see her.” Generally, the girl stayed in the hut twelve days, the sacred number for the Delaware, during which she was given little to eat, purged through vomiting, and had to wear a blanket over her head. At the end she was brought back home, washed and dressed in new garments, and required to wear a cap with a long shield so she could not see well or be seen for two months, after which she was eligible to marry.

A boy became a man through the rituals associated with killing his first deer. Until a man built a reputation as a skillful hunter, he had little chance to marry. William Penn wrote, boys “go a Fishing till ripe for the Woods, which is about Fifteen; then they Hunt, and after having given some Proofs of their Manhood, by a good return of Skins, they may Marry, else it is a shame to think of a wife.” This event was “the occasion of a great solemnity,” a feast during which the boy fasted and listened to advice and prayers.

There are variant accounts of marriage customs among the Lenni Lenape, but they all reveal the favorable status of the woman. According to Zeisberger and George Loskiel, the Lenni Lenape practiced bride wealth, in which the prospective husband gave gifts to the woman or woman’s family, in contrast to the European dowry system, in which the woman’s family gave gifts to the man or his family. The practice of bride wealth is generally a custom among groups who have a tradition of valuing women. Heckewelder gives an account of marriage customs that emphasizes the reciprocity expected in marriage. He wrote that the bridegroom’s mother negotiated for him, beginning the process by taking meat to the prospective bride’s home and mentioning that her son had killed it. In return, the mother of the bride, if the family and the daughter approved, took a dish of beans, corn, or other vegetables to the man’s house, saying, “This is the produce of my daughter’s field; and she also prepared it.” If the mothers told each other the young people declared the offerings “very good,” the bargain was struck. From this time a series of presents continued to be exchanged between the families, and the friendship between the families

increased daily; "they do their domestic and field work jointly." When the young people decided to live together the parents supplied tools, kettles, bowls, and other goods. A woman could not be forced to marry; the choice was hers, but she usually acceded to the wishes of her parents and relatives.

There is some evidence that suggests the partial or previous use of a long-house and multiple-family dwellings, so it is difficult to say whether the Lenape were patrilineal or matrilineal. Zeisberger wrote of the 1700s that when the decision was favorable, "the girl is led to the dwelling of the groom, without further ceremony." Commonly, the couple would live with friends "until they can erect a dwelling of their own." Zeisberger added that each family preferred to have its own house, and hence, they were small, unlike the longhouses of the Iroquois.<sup>4</sup>

The Lenni Lenape were matrilineal. "Children," Zeisberger wrote, "do not inherit tribal rights from the father but from the mother." Therefore, both men and women owed allegiance to their lineage over their husbands or wives. Thus, divorce, while it could be personally disruptive, leading to great grief or, at the extreme, suicide, was not socially disruptive because the main social unit of society was not the nuclear family but the lineage. Therefore, divorce was common and could be initiated by both men and women. Neither the man nor the woman had dominance over the other in this decision. As Heckewelder wrote, "It is understood on both sides that the parties are not to live together any longer than they shall be pleased with each other. The husband may put away his wife whenever he pleases, and the woman may in like manner abandon her husband." Children went with the mother in cases of divorce, since they belonged to her lineage. The importance of the lineage was captured in a remark written down by Zeisberger: "The Indians, therefore, regard their wives as strangers. It is a common saying among them, 'My wife is not my friend,' that is, she is not related to me and I am not concerned about her, she is only my wife." In 1823 Charles C. Trowbridge recorded a similar remark among the Lenape concerning men: "Children are always considered as belonging to the tribe of the mother, who is the only relative; and the expression, 'He is my father but not my relative' tho' singular, is said to be very common."

In spite of these sayings, there is abundant evidence that men and women in marriage cared for each other or wanted the other to care for them. Both men and women bought love charms, or besons, to try to ensure the love and faithfulness of a spouse. A man showed his love for his wife by displaying his eagerness to hunt for her, by seeing that she was always well dressed, better than himself, by giving her presents, and by going to extraordinary lengths to get her the foods that she wanted when pregnant. A wife showed her love by having food ready at any time her husband asked for it, by supplying him with provisions needed for the hunt and with clothing and moccasins, by carrying out all the duties expected of a wife, by presenting her husband with gifts, by trying not to quarrel with him, and by saving stories about the children while he was gone to repeat to him when he returned.

But husbands did not make decisions for wives. The Lenni Lenape, like other Native American peoples, believed in the freedom of the individual to act, and both men and women shared this freedom. Thus, when one spouse was converted to Christianity, the other did not necessarily follow. There were cases of men and women deciding to live at a Moravian missionary village while their

spouses would not. Men also did not make decisions for women concerning the fields or the household. Zeisberger stated, "The husband leaves everything to his wife and never interferes in things committed to her." Heckewelder also wrote, "The men and their wives do not in general trouble themselves with each other's business." Women apparently did not expect to be protected by men at all times on journeys. At times, women traveled by themselves or with other women for what Europeans considered far distances. Explorer Isaack de Rasieres wrote in around 1626 of three women of the "Sinnekens" (Lenape) who came to trade fish and tobacco and "had been six days on the march." Again, every woman whose child died in a foreign land tried to go once a year, usually with another woman, to make a drink offering on the child's grave. Brainerd wrote that women "readily set out and travelled ten or fifteen miles" to tell friends that he would preach the next day. Loskiel told the story of a woman, upset at the Moravian missionaries' capture by other Indians, who stole a horse and set out to Pittsburgh to get help for them.

Women joined together to make decisions concerning the crops, such as whether to hire a rainmaker when the skies were dry. Both men and women often worked communally with members of their own sex, though they also sometimes worked alone or relied on family help. The men formed hunting parties and also fished together, and the women worked together at caring for and harvesting the crops. <sup>5</sup> As Heckewelder wrote, farming, getting wood, and pounding corn were "frequently done by female parties... the labour is thus and quickly easily performed; when it is over, and sometimes at intervals, they sit down to enjoy themselves by feasting on some good victuals, prepared for them by the person or family for whom they work, and which the man has taken care to provide before hand from the woods.... Even the chat which passes during their joint labors is highly diverting to them."

According to observers, Lenape women had fewer children than European women in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Heckewelder noted that "the Indian women are not in general so prolific as the white race," and in general "seldom have more than four or five children," although Christian Indians had as many children as whites, from six to nine. The difference appears to be that Lenape women breastfed longer than European women, on an average for two years and sometimes longer, to as many as four years in the case of a last child; the average for European women was nine months. While breastfeeding, women apparently did not have sexual relations with their husbands. Zeisberger wrote that during the breastfeeding period "husbands have concubines, though not in the house." Thus Lenape society kept the birthrate down to a level that a subsistence society could support, and, incidentally, gave their women freedom from the European women's constant cycle of pregnancy.<sup>6</sup>

Both old men and old women were accorded the respect of age and at death received similar treatment. Heckewelder wrote, "Women... are not treated after their death with less respect than the men, and the greatest honors are paid to the remains of the wives of renowned warriors or veteran chiefs, particularly if they were descended themselves from a high family." Both widows and widowers were expected not to marry again for a year. Women had cultural permission to mourn more openly than men. Women could become professional mourners at funerals, paid in goods or food for their loud wailing and



lamenting. Zeisberger wrote that in the days before a burial, female relations and friends would mourn together over the body after sunset and before daybreak. After the burial, the mother, grandmother, or other female relations were expected to go every evening and morning to the grave and weep over it. This practice gradually tapered off until the mourning period was over. Widows could give rein to the wildest mourning: sitting in the ashes near a fire, not eating, weeping bitterly, running to the grave with loud lamentations, not eating, drinking, sleeping. These actions calmed down after a while, but for the year of mourning, a woman usually wore no ornaments and seldom washed. When the year was up she washed herself clean, combed and anointed her hair, and resumed ordinary life. Men, without this same cultural permission to mourn openly, were not supposed to weep or outwardly show deep feelings about their wives. However, the lineage of the woman had a claim on the husband during the year of mourning. William Penn wrote that men had to make an offering to the kin of a wife who dies, "For till Widdowers have done so, they must not marry again."

Women played no political role among the Lenni Lenape that Europeans could perceive. According to William Penn, women did not become chiefs: "Their Government is by Kings, which they call Sachema, and those by Succession, but always of the Mothers side; for instance, the Children of him that is now King, will not succeed, but his Brother by the Mother, or the children of his Sister, whose Sons (and after them the Children of her Daughters) will reign; for no Woman Inherits." Zeisberger, writing later added, "Women are never admitted to the council; in matters of public interest they may stand about the house and listen, and they account it an honor when they are admitted, to hand victuals and keep up the fire."

There is no direct evidence of a dual government system among the Lenni Lenape such as those that existed among the Iroquois, Hurons, and Cherokee. All of these peoples had men and women leaders or men's and women's councils, the women usually dealing with problems that concerned women or building a consensus among women concerning issues important to both men and women, with a link to the men's council or the chiefs.

The government of the Lenni Lenape is described, by Europeans who had the knowledge to make comparisons with the Iroquois system, as male, with the usual civil chief and war chief, who alternated authority in times of peace and war, advised by a council made up of old men and experienced warriors. Chiefs could not command, compel, or punish. They ruled by "calm reasoning and friendly exhortations." The Lenni Lenape were described as made up of three groups, the Turtle, the Turkey, and the Wolf, and Zeisberger described chiefs, although members of the group involved, as chosen by the chiefs of the other two groups.<sup>7</sup>

Brainerd noted that women distinguished between events "of a public nature, belonging only to the men, and not what every individual person should concern himself with." But there is indirect evidence that the women, along with the young men and the older men in council, were treated as a constituency with power in the decision-making process. In the ceremony creating a new chief after the death of the old, the wife of the new chief, "attended by several women," was called to be obedient to him. "This is confirmed by means of a

belt [of wampum] and the woman, in the name of all the women, promises obedience.” The young men made this promise as well. In 1758, at a treaty conference in Ohio, Frederick Post reported in his journal that Lenni Lenape leaders again and again warned him not to listen to the warriors, women, and young people while the chiefs struggled to create a consensus. It seems that the women were treated as a constituency who had to discuss and deliberate and come to consensus together with the young men and the mature or older men, although it would be the chiefs who would present their united consensus to another Native American people or the Europeans.

From the descriptions of various Europeans, it seems that this intragroup consensus system, in which women played an important role, complemented the men’s councils. As Zeisberger wrote: “They [Indians] like to discuss affairs of state and communicate their opinions. In fact they are more ready to discuss such matters in course of visits than in the Council House, for there they prefer to let the older people speak. Occasionally visits are made with the purpose of discovering the opinions of others; in a chief’s home, all manner of reports, true and false, furnish material for discussion.”

Loskiel found at least one Lenape woman remembered after her death as a “wife and intelligent counsellor.” Zeisberger, however, had a negative view of the women’s participation. “Stories are carried by women from house to house,” he wrote, “so often manufactured” that men would not believe them until “confirmed by some more reliable authority.” Or again, “The women are much given to lying and gossiping. They carry evil report from house to house. As long as they are observed they appear modest and without guile.” On examination, what Zeisberger meant was that some women resisted European culture and religion by speaking against the missionaries. Loskiel wrote,

The greatest enemies of the missionaries were the old women, who went about, publicly complaining, that the Indian corn was blasted or devoured by worms; that the deer and other game began to retire from the woods; ... merely because Brother Zeisberger preached a strange doctrine, and the Indians began to alter their manner of living and to believe on God. One in particular, who was unusually enraged against him and his doctrine, protested with vehemence, that whoever went to his meetings and believed his words, would be tempted and tormented by Satan, and that therefore all men should carefully avoid the company of the white teacher.

The Lenni Lenape were a society in which social control was maintained by public displeasure or shame before others. Zeisberger wrote, “Indians dislike having their civil conduct or acts uncovered and held up to them. . . It has happened that one openly accused of an evil deed, murder or the like, has, in desperation, ended his life.” Of the women, he wrote, “Fear of disgrace keeps them from open wrong-doing for they do not wish to have a bad name.” Women were the primary praisers and shamers of society. Heckewelder noted that, when a man received visitors, his wife, after feeding them, “will retire to a neighbor’s house, to inform the family of the visit with which her husband is honoured.” Or again, “The more a man does for his wife the more he is esteemed, particularly by the women, who will say, ‘This man surely loves his wife.’” When a husband and

wife quarreled he went off to the woods for a week or two, "well knowing he cannot inflict a greater punishment on his wife," who would be uncertain of his whereabouts. She "is soon reported as a bad and quarrelsome woman. . . she is at once put to shame by her neighbors." Women, Zeisberger wrote, would more frequently berate one another: "They direct words and speeches at one another which would not be considered terrible by other people but are very seriously taken by the Indians."

Historians and anthropologists have studied female gossip networks as a means by which a community's members, both men and women, are praised, shamed, or coerced. Gossip is one of the ways women can influence political decisions as well as relations between people. The picture painted here is of a society that women helped keep stable by their roles as shamers and praisers and in which the men's councils became the final step in a process of consensus in which the women actively participated.

Like Iroquois, Huron, or Cherokee women, Lenape women had the political power to rescue or condemn prisoners. Men, women, and children participated in the ritual of the gauntlet, which prisoners had to run, but Zeisberger wrote, "Female prisoners are frequently rescued by the women who take them between their ranks and carry them to the town." Loskiel added that if a prisoner entered a family and lost the goodwill of the widow, "she soon puts him to death" as a servant to her husband.

It is clear that men and women of the Lenni Lenape shared complementary economic and political participation, accompanied by social activities and relations that indicated high status for women and the egalitarian nature of marriage. What was truly different from European society and what, more than anything else, gave women their complementary power with men was the underlying worldview of the Lenni Lenape, which led them to see the world as a nexus of spiritual power, where, as Trowbridge wrote, "all animals, even animated nature, trees, plants, etc., are considered as beings having supernatural powers." Nor was their spiritual world hierarchical, as the European spiritual world was. Heckewelder wrote that "all animated nature, in whatever degree, is in their eyes a great whole, from which they have not yet ventured to separate themselves." He went on, "They are, in fact, according to their opinions, only the first among equals," between whom "intimate ties of connexion and relationship may exist, or at least did exist in the beginning of time." The universe was a great sacred circle on which men and women, plants and animals coexisted in partnership, and their language reflected this. Heckewelder continued, "Hence, in their languages, these inflections of their nouns which we call genders, are not, as with us, descriptive of the masculine and feminine species, but of the animate and inanimate kinds. Indeed, they go so far as to include trees, and plants within the first of these descriptions." Both men and women were within the category of animate beings. The earth was given jointly to all and each was entitled to a share. From this, Heckewelder wrote, "Hospitality flows. . . with them it is not a virtue but a strict duty."<sup>8</sup>

The Lenape believed in a gender-neutral idea of God. Heckewelder wrote that the Indians looked to an all-powerful Mannitto, which he translated as "Being, or Spirit," thus "the Great Spirit." Within the Lenape religious belief structure there were both male and female creators and male and female powerful

spirit beings. There were at least three different creation stories, all directly or indirectly celebrating female creation. One set of stories had the Lenni Lenape coming out of the earth, as out of a womb. Heckewelder wrote, "The Indians consider the earth as their universal mother." A widely spread second Lenape version seems to be similar to the Iroquois story of Sky Woman:

a woman fell down from heaven, who, for a long time, hovered about in the air, but could not find a resting place anywhere; that the fishes in the sea had compassion on her, and a large tortoise raised her back out of the water and offered it to her for her abode. Since that time, the scum of the sea and a quantity of shells and weeds gathered around the fish, gradually became solid earth, and at least grew into that large country which is now called America.

The third version had the world created on the back of a giant turtle brought up from the depths by the Creator and included the idea of complementary creation – men and women created together – not, as in Christianity, woman from man. As the water fell from the turtle's back, a tree took root. The tree sent out a sprout that grew into a man and another sprout that became a woman. The Lenni Lenape believed they were descended from this first human couple. The turtle became a sacred symbol of Mother Earth and the twelve plates on its shell became the sacred number for the Lenape.

The Great Spirit gave power to various manitowuk, or spirits: for example, the four quarters of the earth went to four manitowuk, three Grandfathers and a Grandmother. The Grandmother had power over the south, from which balmy winds blew and where it was warm, aspects associated with the coming of spring and new growth. Another important manitowuk was the Corn Goddess, known as Mother Corn. One of the Turtle legends says, "It was God's will that the Corn Spirit abide in the far heavenly region in the image of an aged woman, with dominion over all vegetables." The Corn Mother was symbolized in sacrifice by corn itself. Zeisberger wrote, "Corn is said to be the wife of the Indian and to it they sacrifice bear's flesh. To the deer and bear they offer corn." The complementarity of this sacrifice, related to female and male sacred powers, is obvious.

Women seem to have had charge of religious ritual for the well-being and health of the family. Families had sacred figures, carved out of wood, which were passed on from generation to generation, that they called mother or grandmother. Women cared for them, making new clothes and new moccasins for them. Once a year they would hold a ceremony and dance. There are two different reports of how the dance was held: one emphasizing complementarity and the other, the women's power. In the first, which occurred in the spring, the figure, dressed in new clothes and moccasins was be put up on a pole and prayed to, participants asking it to ensure good health to the owner's family. The dancers made two circles, with men on the inside and the women on the outside. Men carried the figure through six sets and women carried it through six more sets, making the Lenape sacred number. Then a feast of hominy and venison was served to everyone. In the second, which occurred in the fall, again the figure received new clothes and moccasins, but this time the owner danced around, carrying the figure and leading other women who wished to participate, with a feast following.<sup>9</sup>

Either old men or old women could mediate for spiritual power and blessings. When a boy killed his first deer, if it was a doe, it was given to an old woman, if a buck, to an old man. During the feasting the recipient prayed for and gave counsel to the boy. In day-to-day life, old men were thought to have spiritual power concerning the work of hunting, women to have spiritual power concerning love and relationships. They made magic charms, called besons, out of various things, for example, roots, herbs, and seeds, which they sold to support themselves and which were carried by younger men and women to promote success in hunting and in love. They also sold besons to bring many presents to the buyer.

The most important religious festival for the Lenni Lenape was the Big House Ceremony, which lasted the sacred twelve days. The Big House represented the universe; the floor was the earth, the four walls, the four quarters of the world; the roof, the sky where the Creator lived. There was a center post with two carved faces, one facing east and one facing west; two posts at each of the two doorways and six posts along the walls also each had a carved face, making twelve carved faces in all, all painted half red and half black. The intent was to thank the Creator and Spirits for their past blessings to the whole people and to pray that they would provide for the year to come.<sup>10</sup>

The Lenni Lenape, when asked later by anthropologists, were aware of the complementarity built into the sacred performance. George Anderson, or Rustling Leaves, a Lenni Lenape, according to anthropologist Frank G. Speck, "pointed out that the balancing of functions between the male and the female elements of human society was implied in the Delaware ritual performance." He cited the equal number of male and female attendants, a ceremonial honor. One fire was in the charge of women and one was in the charge of men attendants. One door and the image on half of the center post "belonging" to the men, the other, the opposite, to the women." He went on to note the complementary sweeping of the dance floor with turkey wings by the attendants to purify it. One of the fans was associated with the men and one with the women, but they continually switched the fans from one sweeping to the next. From the ninth to the twelfth nights of the Big House Ceremony, drumsticks, a male face on one and a female with breasts on the other, were used. At the end, the attendants received the same amount in payment. Both men and women danced throughout the twelve nights. Both men and women also recited their visions, but not equally. The twelfth night was set apart for the women's visions, and there were special ceremonies that evening. Cedar leaves were added to the two fires at the beginning so that people could breathe in the smoke and purify themselves. Two women took around a bark dish of red paint and one of grease, starting on the north side, and put a spot of red paint on each person's left cheek and a little grease on the head. Men attendants painted and greased the twelve faces on their posts and the drumsticks, prayer sticks, drum, and turtle rattles. Each woman who told her visions received "a share of the venison, if there is any - the biggest and fattest buck the hunters kill - and the attendants cook it for them at the fire outside." This suggests that not as many women had visions as men, but that, when they occurred, their visions were taken as seriously as the men's.

The Lenape, like other eastern Native Americans, believed in the power of

dreams. As Brainerd wrote, "They give much heed to dreams, because they suppose that these invisible powers give them directions at such times about certain affairs, and sometimes inform them what animal they would choose to be worshipped in." Examples of women's dreams and visions appear in the historical literature. Brainerd wrote of a woman who declared "she was dead several days, that her soul went southward, and feasted and danced with the happy spirits, and that she found all things exactly agreeable to the Indian notions of a future state." Captain Pipe's wife around 1775-76 spoke of having been in a vision to the "mansions of the spirits, where the strawberries and bilberries were as large as apples, and in great plenty."

Like men's dreams, women's dreams or visions could turn them into witches or prophets. Old women in particular could be accused of being witches, and there are accounts of men and women being put to death on the basis of this accusation. But women's visions were also respected. Moravian missionary Abraham Luckenbach wrote in 1805 of more than one vision by women that were received by the chiefs positively, including one in which a woman predicted a dead chief would return to teach the traditional way of life, a vision that met "with the utmost approval of the chiefs, for which reason they had all the Indians come together these last days, in order to make it known to them, and admonish them by all means to do everything that the woman said." Women's visions were taken as seriously as men's, and women's spiritual power was acknowledged.

Every aspect of Lenape life – hunting well, farming well, gathering herbs – involved the invoking of spiritual power, the calling on the spirits of the deer, the corn, the herbs, and the performing of the correct propitiatory rites to appease these spirits. To be a doctor among the Lenape also involved the calling upon of spiritual forces. Heckewelder wrote of "physicians of both sexes, who take considerable pains to acquire a correct knowledge of the properties and medical virtues of plants, roots, and barks, for the benefit of their fellow-men." The female physicians in particular had cures for "complaints peculiar to their sex," as well as skill in curing wounds, bruises, and other ailments. Most Native Americans, Loskiel wrote, believed that a medicine would not work unless given by "a professed physician, which many persons of both sexes pretend to be," indicating the spiritual power involved.<sup>11</sup>

The mixed complementarity and spirituality in Lenape life is visibly symbolized by the game described at the beginning of this essay, a game men and women played together that was, in addition to being entertaining, a part of the spiritual cycle. Anthropologist Frank Speck in 1938 wrote of this game as part of an important ancient religious rite. Played from the beginning of spring through June, it was both a celebration of the spring and a protection against bad weather that would destroy the crops.

From all of the evidence, the complementarity and relative equality of Lenape men and women is apparent. The case of the Lenape in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries shows that a society that acknowledges a distinct gender difference between men and women is not necessarily a society in which one gender dominates and the other is subordinate. Lenape men and women shared decision-making power in their culture.

Scholarship on different Native American peoples of this time period has focused on politics and economics as the key factors that allowed Native American

women to have more power and status in their societies than European women had in theirs. What this essay reveals is the complex interweaving of economics and politics with other equally important factors: the principle of autonomy for men and women that gave women more independence than European cultures allowed; the effect of living in a society in which the lineage was the most important social unit, which allowed more egalitarian marriage between men and women; and, most especially, an idea of spiritual power to which both men and women had equal access coupled with a belief system that included female co-creators and the creation of men and women as co-equals. All of these elements of the cultural matrix worked together to create a society in which the woman's role was highly respected.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The game was played in a Shawnee town.

<sup>2</sup>*Gender* is defined as the social construction of men's and women's roles and relationship.

<sup>3</sup>European women became *femmes covert* at marriage, were "covered over" by their husbands, and in general lost their rights to own property, keep wages, make contracts, and have credit in their own names.

<sup>4</sup>Peter Lindstrom describes each Lenape sachem as building a longhouse for the winter use of all the people, which would imply matrilocality. William Penn's description of housing resembling an English barn in the 1680s could be interpreted as a longhouse as well. But Pastorius, in 1700, wrote of the small, one-room house even of royalty. The Moravian missionaries' accounts show that by the 1700s the Lenape lived patrilocally in family units. Matrilineality does not necessarily dictate longhouse-style living. The type of house described is reminiscent of those of the Powhatan, a matrilineal people who also lived in family units, not longhouses. In 1766, missionary Charles Beatty, described the chief's house as a "council house," "a long building" with characteristics reminiscent of the later Big House. Possibly the chief's house was a remnant of a matrilocal past.

<sup>5</sup>Schonenberger, appendix 1, 291-93, identifies three women's names on two Esopus land deeds from 1677, which suggest that women might have had some power over land decisions as well as crop decisions.

<sup>6</sup>European colonial women gave birth, on the average, every two years after marriage, unless some circumstance like a husband away for a long period intervened. The women became pregnant, on the average, almost immediately after ending breastfeeding.

<sup>7</sup>Zeisberger also says the "principal captain" could elect and depose chiefs (98). Neither of these methods seems to allow a matron of the lineage to elect or depose chiefs, as Huron and Iroquois matrons could. The idea of a Delaware chief matron as a chiefmaker came into the anthropological literature in Frank Speck's *The Celestial Bear Comes Down to Earth* (Reading PA: Reading Public Museum and Art Gallery Scientific Publication 7, 1945), 3-6. He gained this information from Delawares on the Six Nations Reservation in Ontario. This is not mentioned in any early source or corroborated in any other source, and it seems possible that the Delawares living there had adopted the Iroquois model. Anthony F.C. Wallace uses this information in "Women, Land and Society: Three Aspects of Aboriginal Delaware Life" (*Pennsylvania Archeologist* 17 [1947]: 14), citing Speck. Both of these sources are often cited over this controversial point.

<sup>8</sup>The Bible also called for men to rule nature and women.

<sup>9</sup>Harrington calls this the Doll Being, but the use of this word diminishes the ritual in Western eyes. He also refers to it as a minor ceremony. This is true if one thinks of a major ceremony as involving greater numbers of people and time, but it gives a false message in terms of potential spiritual impact for the family and others involved. The spiritual power of women in the family was not minor, as this ceremony shows. Harrington commented that most early writers overlooked these ceremonies "since they were matters of personal and not of public concern, and their rites were held in private" (46). On 170-71, he quotes an account of such an "idol" written in 1839, in which a Munsee Indian (Wolf group of the Lenni Lenape) had had the figure in his family for over a hundred years, he himself being of the fourth generation to worship it.

<sup>10</sup>Jay Miller, in "Old Religion among the Delawares: The Gamwing (Big House rite)," *Ethnohistory* 44 (winter 1997): 113-34, sees the Big House ceremony as an ancient expression of Delaware religion and not created post-Contact by 1805, as Anthony Wallace had thought.

<sup>11</sup>Tantaquidgeon (8, 12, 13) talks of the spiritual rites of herbalists, and adds that "It is said, however, that women, through spiritual guidance, are more adept as a rule in the art of preparing and administering herb medicines than men" (8).

# A Nation of Women: Gender and Colonial Encounters Among the Delaware Indians

Gunlög Fur, 2009. Excerpted.

## Chapter One: The Power of Life: Gender and Organization in Lenape Society

... While this division of labor was by no means unusual in the coastal Atlantic region, it is important to emphasize that even though responsibility chiefly lay with one gender, much subsistence labor was carried out communally in family or village groups. Children learned tasks by imitation, but when very young both boys and girls followed their mothers. In old age the distinction between gender-specific tasks blurred and old men could help in the fields or fashion wooden bowls and ladles. At times male and female work complemented each other in a very direct way, such as when women and old men spun thread from hemp, which other men knitted into fish-nets, or men cleared the forest so that women could plant their corn. While gender complementarity best describes this division of work, the categories were not absolute and both men and women could perform tasks that were the responsibility of the other gender. For instance, women sometimes hunted (particularly small game) and fished, and men helped in the fields. Gathering clams and oysters, and building lodges were also communal labors in which both men and women participated. In fact, it is possible that strict gender differentiation regarding chores is more the result of European expectations and reporting than the rigid nature of actual practice. Nevertheless, gender-specific obligations, such as women's labor in the fields and men's hunting in winter, demanded much time and women and men thus spent considerable parts of the year in different locations in their toil to provide for the village...

Nowhere is the connection between food and ritual more apparent than in the accounts colonists gave of Indian feasting. No ceremonies or negotiations between Indians and whites could be concluded without a meal, and at these occasions particular women, called "wives" of sachems, "matrons," or "queens," played prominent parts. Just as Jasper Danckaerts had noted, Andrew White, a Jesuit in Maryland, found that in his mission to convert the king of Patuxent, "the queen" was not "inferior to her husband in benevolence to their guest, for with her own hands she is accustomed to prepare meat for him and bake bread."



When visiting the Indians the Christians are always treated to abundant meals, wrote Peter Lindeström, and made clear that it was the wife of the sachem who was the matron of the whole village. She was in charge of organizing the cooking and serving of food to all visitors in the town. In 1654, upon Lindeström's arrival in the country together with the new Swedish governor Johan Risingh, Lenapes gathered to renew their links with the colonists along the Delaware River. For some years relations between the two peoples had been rocky, and Lenapes particularly resented Swedish lack of trade goods and insistence on bypassing them to trade with Susquehannocks further inland. They were also concerned with the occurrence of deadly diseases connected with the new arrivals. Their spokesman, Naaman, stressed the Indians' desire to establish a treaty of friendship that would require each side to watch out for the other. To emphasize the closeness of the relationship Naaman stroked his arms and clasped his hands together around his head, and said that "as a calabash is a round growth, without a fissure or cut, so should we hereafter also be like one head without fissure." The meeting then ended in a feast as large kettles of corn mush and meat, sapan, were placed among the people.

Were there Lenape women present at this solemn occasion? The Swedish sources are silent. But Lenapes have preserved in oral memory a story that bears resemblance to Lindeström's and Risingh's account. The story was collected from Delawares by Truman Michelson in Oklahoma in 1912 and recalls how Delawares and white people ceased fighting one another and made a lasting compact. The story tells of hostilities that increased until there was a general war and they "killed so many that the blood on both sides in the ditches ran like water." But just as there were brave and mighty warriors on both sides, there were also "women who were brave on both sides." They got together in a council and agreed "that it was too bad they were fighting one another the way they were." Both groups of women called their men "their children" and decided that "we'll just stop this war between our children." The women then went around among their people and told them to stop fighting and the war ended. The following day the Delaware war leader invited the white people to have dinner with the Indians and sent out his young men to hunt for bear meat. The old women who had stopped the war prepared bread for the meal. Then all sat down and ate together. After the meal the men conferred about how to make the peace last. The Indian leader suggested a treaty that would last as long as the sun showed its face, the water ran, and the grass grew, and that the two peoples would be friends, "friends the same as brothers." They promised to warn one another against enemies and to seal the agreement they clasped hands and the Indian knotted his fingers together in front of him to demonstrate the closeness of the bond. Since that day, the story ends, the Delawares have never violated the treaty. The story makes specific links between (mature or old) women and peacemaking, and between peaceful relations and meals. But it also makes a third connection—between the making of peace and people becoming as closely connected as siblings. Increasingly, as war and diseases ravaged Indian communities they saw the need to make strangers into relatives, both as a way to stop hostilities and as a means of strengthening the population. Adoption became an important way to replace dead members of the kin group and the need for developing rituals that accomplished that only grew with greater contact and

friction over the eighteenth century. The task of ritually introducing strangers into the community fell on women, as a number of captured white people could testify to. John McCullough spent eight years as a captive among the Delawares in the 1750s. He arrived in one town in the company of his new female relative who informed the people there who he was and in whose stead he stood. Colonel John Smith recalled being forcefully stripped of his clothes and bathed by the women of the village who then adopted him.

The links between female gender and life- and kinmaking rituals were strong among the Lenapes and the upheavals following European settlement and the loss of homeland along the Delaware led to an increase in the importance of undertakings assigned to women, while other changes threatened and altered women's traditional subsistence practices. Hungry white colonists sought the Indians' aid to get food and learn how to prepare it, and it has been suggested that during the middle of the seventeenth century Swedish and Finnish colonists' constant need for foodstuffs influenced the Lenapes to put larger areas of land under cultivation than previously. Maize production for sale brought women into contact with the newcomers and it is likely that this augmented women's influence both in terms of labor organization within villages and in interactions with white settlers. But the colonists were also responsible for developments that threatened Lenape subsistence patterns. During the summer months preceding the ripening of the corn, a type of turnip (called *kättniss* in Swedish sources) growing in marshes made up the staple of the Lenape diet, and women gathered these roots as part of their labor. As white settlements proliferated, the pigs that the colonists brought severely threatened this source of subsistence. Swine ran wild in the woods and displayed a particular preference for turnips, making them scarce. Lenapes compensated by killing and eating pigs, but in doing so a food that women gathered was replaced by one that men hunted. However, women sought alternative ways to complement the diet and began picking fruit in the colonists' orchards, resulting in other kinds of conflicts.

Subsistence work thus had already transformed by the mid-seventeenth century. Physical labor altered in an ongoing dialectical process with cultural meanings, which peoples in contact and conflict with one another brought to bear on that meeting. Gathering was a woman's responsibility and the subject of plans and prayers. Altered conditions, such as those that resulted from swine grazing, were handled within the same framework and women continued their gathering, this time picking apples from Swedish orchards. Colonists on their part, while acknowledging the complications the pigs brought, considered apple picking theft and punished trespassers in a humiliating manner, as they undressed women they suspected of carrying fruit in their clothing.

Rituals, feasts, and celebrations formed important recurring events in the Lenape year. These ceremonies and celebrations in a sense constituted the engine that propelled the cycle of human life. Without proper ceremonies crops would not grow, game would not appear in reach of the hunters' bows and arrows, and the health of the community would not be maintained. Ceremonial responsibilities were handed down in different lineages or could come to individuals in dreams. If no one who knew how to carry out the ceremony remained or if people no longer were receptive to dream messages, then the ceremony would vanish. The gravity of such a loss should not be underesti-

mated. Ceremonies and celebrations constituted a sort of remembering ahead, a memory that contained the future. In some ways Lenapes perceived history as circular, unfolding through continuing repetitions, requiring human ritual activity. Yearly recurring situations could and ought to be planned for with the aid of myths and rituals. People “remembered” some of the events that were going to occur and within the framework of this knowledge dealt with new or unique events. Maintaining traditions thus meant looking forward as much as defending the past, attempting to retain “maps” that made it possible to find one’s way in a new environment. The cultural reservoir of memories, knowledge of rituals, and access to visions, was vital for the continuation of Lenape life and their ability to remember ahead. This was stored in the knowledge of healing herbs, in stories told to the young, in recapitulations of treaties and accords that were sewn into belts of wampum. Destruction of these reservoirs, through death or loss of faith, meant that the future would become a journey into an uncharted morass.<sup>1</sup>

### **Rank, Political Influence, and Gender**

The subsistence pattern and gender division described here suggests that Lenape society was relatively egalitarian during the seventeenth century. There is little colonial evidence of any sort of permanent or inheritable social distinctions among the Lenapes and we find no class of people who were not directly involved in subsistence work or who could command the labor of others. This basic egalitarian structure also manifested itself in the Lenape mode of clothing. Appearances have much to say about who we are, as seventeenth-century Europeans and Indians both knew. In a drawing from 1654, Peter Lindeström depicted a Lenape family consisting of a man, a woman, and a small boy. While the child is practically naked, the woman and man are dressed in a similar manner. Attributes, such as the gourd for the woman and the bow and arrows for the man, rather than clothes distinguish gender. A particularly interesting feature of the drawing is that both the man and the woman are pictured carrying long-stemmed tobacco pipes. The observation was expanded in the text and Lindeström stated that the “habit of the women is the same as that of the men, the only difference being in the adornment of the hair.” While hairstyles may have been an obvious discriminator between men and women, it apparently did not signify vertical stratification, as Lindeström’s continued description also makes clear.

To Lindeström, distinctions in rank were not immediately obvious through clothing and adornment. Similarly, burial practices witnessed by white visitors did not reveal rank in the manner common in Europe and excavated gravesites show no such differentiation. Both Powhatans to the south and New England Indians to the north observed rank in a manner more obvious than Lenapes did. This does not mean that Lenapes did not recognize any distinctions between individuals and groups, but those that existed were not readily apparent to European observers. Prominent lineages may have been more likely to supply sachems and influential matrons, but it is almost impossible to catch a glimpse of these processes through the sources that we have. What is clear is that influence and rank in Lenape society were much more connected to spiritual power, as evidenced in dreams and knowledge of songs and healing rituals, than to

material goods or command over others...

Whether obedience as a term carries the same connotations as in European usage is debatable. Other descriptions make clear that women continued to control all the foodstuffs and their distribution and could use this control to influence vital decision making...

After more than a century of contact between Delawares and Europeans, Zeisberger explained that the responsibilities of the sachem lay in the maintenance of peace, both within the tribe and externally, and therefore it was necessary that "a chief is beloved of his people." The paramount responsibility of a chief was to "prevent all disorders in his town, have an eye to justice, and seek to do away with strife." This must be accomplished, not by using force, but through quiet reasoning and encouragement. It followed that he must be prepared for much entertaining and therefore large quantities of corn were needed in the chief's household. The chief should also act as keeper of the council bag and the archives in the form of wampum belts.

Zeisberger's discussion must be placed in a context of change. He describes a cohesive tribal structure, a Delaware nation. This represented a development that had escalated in response to outside pressures and population decline. Heckewelder emphasized that by the time of his acquaintance with Delawares, in the late eighteenth century, social distinctions were commonly recognized and his discussion of leadership suggests a more hierarchical structure. While the sachem led by reasoning and exhortation, just as in earlier times a state of war changed the usual patterns of decisionmaking. During such periods war leaders took over and gathered warriors for expeditions who pledged to follow the lead of the captain. Heckewelder described how the Peace Chief gave way to War Chiefs when aggression against the "Nation, by another Nation, cannot be settled, or adjusted by him, in a fair and honorable way." This happened in consequence of the principle that stated that "good and bad cannot be together in one heart," and involvement in war and bloodshed would hinder the peace chief's ability to negotiate a cessation of fighting. Conflating the two would lead to disastrous consequences, Heckewelder asserted, alluding to such an example from the 1770s. If the peace chief went to war, or was forced to do so, "not only the reputation and power such Chiefs had been clothed with, would be destroyed, but all confidence would be lost; and this gone everyone would be at liberty to do as he pleased." Mixing these principles thus heralded anarchy. Heckewelder and Zeisberger with their much more intimate knowledge of Delaware practices knew to differentiate between peace chiefs and war captains, while earlier Dutch and Swedish colonists often confused the two. The increasing friction between Indians and colonists over the course of the eighteenth century also led to a strengthening of the hierarchical position of the war leader over the more consensus-oriented peace chiefs...

The establishment of European settlements in the Delaware River Valley toward the middle of the seventeenth century forced Indians to work out modes of engagement with these strangers. A small and dispersed Swedish population, balancing precariously between better-equipped Dutch and English competitors to the north and south, found themselves dependent on Lenapes for subsistence, land, and trade. This allowed Lenapes to develop and hone practices of relatively peaceful interactions that involved the responsibilities of women as peace-

and kinmakers, and men as civil sachems rather than war captains. When in 1655 the Swedes lowered their flag on Fort Christina, at present-day Wilmington, in deference to a superior Dutch force under the command of Stuyvesant, the Lenapes' primary interest in the matter concerned the continued supply of trade goods. Within two years of the conquest of New Sweden, the colony passed into the hands of city merchants in Amsterdam. They rechristened the area New Amstel and hoped to enter into profitable tobacco trade with Maryland. A decade later the colonial settlements changed hands again, falling under the English at New York until 1680, when the duke of York recognized Quaker claims on the east side of the Delaware River. In 1682, William Penn arrived to take possession of his fealty.

Changes in colonial administrations did not appear to have immediate impact on the Lenapes. Relatively few colonists resided in the area until the close of the century, and the stranded Swedish and Finnish population for several decades served as a buffer and intermediary between Indians and other European colonists. In fact, relations with resident Swedes and Finns improved after the last years of Swedish colonization, which had been marked by increasing friction as Swedes favored trade with the Susquehannocks and sought to bypass the Lenapes with their trade goods. A continued Swedish need for foodstuffs ensured that Lenape leaders were able to hinder young hot-blooded warriors from attacking settlements. In other ways, life in the villages continued much as it had before. Lenapes continued to harvest their corn, stage large fall hunts, and travel to the coast to fish. As formerly, they gathered to perform ceremonies and affirm their ties to the land that still gave them sustenance, and they continued, as during the time of the Swedish colony, to hunt and trade locally with white neighbors. Swedish sources affirmed that until the turn of the century Lenapes followed their yearly migration routes to the river or seashore to fish, pick clams, and gather berries. Through these three decades from the end of official Swedish colonization to the establishment of Pennsylvania, Lenape life proceeded in important ways along familiar trails. Some movement of long-house villages higher in the country was discernible, and occasional outbreaks of small-pox continued to take their heavy toll. Yet village structure, kin groups, and ceremonial and medicinal knowledge functioned and were passed on to the next generation.

Still, this was not a period devoid of change. Quite the contrary, I suggest that it was during these decades, before the heavy influx of white settlers in the wake of Pennsylvania's founding, that Lenapes forged from their initial experiences with Swedes and Dutchmen practices and rituals that protected the region from large-scale violence and interethnic conflict. Until the end of the century the Indians remained numerically dominant, and ensuring their support, or neutrality, became a necessity for subsequent Dutch and English colonists. While relations improved with Swedish settlers, tension grew and flared up in relation to the Dutch and the noticeably more aggressive English administrations. Trade conflicts in the area also affected the Lenapes. Wars concerning control of the beaver pelt supply as well as superiority in the trade network embroiled Susquehannocks (with whom the Lenapes were allied) and Iroquois (particularly Senecas) in several devastating battles. In 1661, the dreaded smallpox struck, not for the first time, but with more disastrous consequences than pre-

viously. Seneca war parties descended on Lenape villages as well, and at later times Lenapes sheltered Susquehannock refugees. In that way the same violent conflicts concerning the fur trade that instigated the Dutch attack on New Sweden involved Lenapes from another direction. In 1661–62 fighting disturbed them from their winter hunt and thus they had little to trade with in the following spring. Throughout the 1660s irritation brewed between individual Indians and white settlers and resulted in killings on both sides. Seeking to stem the violence and establish communication with colonial administrations, Lenapes (and Susquehannocks) increasingly used their contacts among Swedish colonists, who had some understanding of both their language and culture, as intermediaries.

Increasingly, Lenapes emerged as emissaries on peace missions in various conflict situations, demonstrating the intertwining of gender and politics. At a battle between Susquehannocks and Senecas in 1663, one hundred Lenape warriors were said to aid the Susquehannocks at their fort. Apparently they had chosen to side with their Susquehannock allies out of anger at the English (Maryland) support for the Senecas. But in the fall Lenape women were part of a delegation that visited the Mohawks to offer gifts and propose peace. The Mohawks rejected the proposition and killed five of the delegates, among them two women. Later that year, an Esopus war party attacked Manhattan and asked for support and assistance from their southern relatives, the Lenapes. Erwehong, a sachem, used his Swedish contact Peter Cock to relay a message to the Dutch that they would not participate in the war but instead do their best to arrange a peace agreement. Treaties and councils became arenas both for establishing distinctly Indian cultural practices regarding peacemaking and arbitration and for challenging these traditions. Lenapes and their Susquehannock allies began to fashion treaties of friendship and mutual support with New Sweden and continued to honor pacts with individual Swedes throughout the seventeenth century. These connections were used to establish channels to following administrations and were essential in negotiations with later Quaker arrivals. When the Lenapes framed their memories into wampum belts and oral accounts they emphasized their mission as facilitators for peaceful relations with white settlers.

Memories, however, are frequently incomplete. Although neighborly cooperation and colonists' dependence on Lenape support characterized some of the relations with surrounding colonial and Indian settlements, Lenape groups increasingly became embroiled in struggles for dominance in the region. Iroquois Six Nations claimed overlordship over the area, particularly after the weakening of the Susquehannock stronghold. Representatives of the Pennsylvania colony found the Lenape groups to be necessary as sources of land, but preferred to treat them as subsidiaries to the Iroquois. The infamous Walking Purchase of 1737 divested the Lenapes of their last remaining contiguous lands in eastern Pennsylvania and forced the majority of their number to resettle west of Blue (Kittatinny) Mountain. Life there would prove different in many ways. Increasingly, the diverse Lenape-speaking factions became identified as Delaware Indians, yet paradoxically, the Pennsylvania government no longer treated with them as an independent people, and for the first time Christian missionaries approached them in earnest and attracted large gatherings...

### **Chapter Three: Powerful Women: Disruptive and Disorderly**

... In the ideology of the European elite, perceptions of sexuality, marriages, and child rearing were inevitably linked to issues of power. Not only did marriage involve recreating a divine hierarchy on a smaller scale on Earth, but it was directly linked to the transfer of property to legitimate heirs. Control over sexuality and marriage as a way to influence alliances and hierarchies became an important part of European attempts to alter Lenape culture. It is in these areas that Delaware women's influence becomes visible in a wide range of colonial sources. When Europeans condemned Delaware sexual and gender practices, it seems that as well as recognizing a spiritual challenge, they feared an alien construction of power.

Early visitors to the Delaware Valley described an uncontrolled sexuality among the "wild people." Peter Lindeström wrote about the Lenapes that they "have their mixing together with father and mother, brother and sister like soulless beasts, no one quite knowing, who is the father of the child." In Lindeström's version the Indians hardly differed from animals, and the proof was their lack of social barriers to define and maintain a civilized society, such as the institution of marriage and a hierarchical order in which everyone knew his or her place. The lack of proper marriage institutions, then, marked the Delawares as inferior, as belonging to a disorderly or chaotic realm, far from civilized life. Almost universal was the assertion (hope, perhaps?) that Indian women were "unchaste" before marriage but once they were married they remained faithful to their husbands. The judgmental tone in these descriptions did not preclude an openly sexual gaze. Lust and fear often combined in depictions of uncontrollable female sexuality. In much of Europe, women were considered unlimited in their sexual appetites and therefore threatening to male order and societal stability. Quite predictably what was regarded as wanton behavior by Indian women is often censored in the texts, at the same time as it is mentioned that their husbands were allowed to seek pleasures elsewhere. Pehr Kalm, who visited eastern North America between 1748 and 1751, wrote in his journal that although Indian women were generally modest and chaste there were also whores among them: "When a man comes to a place or their village, he will make an agreement with one of the women there, who will be his wife as long as he is there." Kalm also added an insight into how Lenapes may have viewed European marriages. "An Indian often divorces his wife and takes another; they smile much at the practice of the Europeans to have and to hold until death the spouse they have begun living with, and think that this tradition is quite harsh, and completely in opposition to the freedom, that they love so much."

These accounts of Lenape sexual and marital customs can hardly be taken as reliable descriptions of Indian conventions, but they do reflect European expectations and fears concerning Native behaviors. They also reveal European assessments of the contrast between their own social order and that of Indians. Delaware sexuality was certainly not something amply discussed in the sources, and when it received mention it was rarely an Indian expressing him- or herself on the subject. How men and women personally experienced sexuality in their daily lives remains obscure, as we have no descriptions or specific examples of how Delawares conceived of various aspects of eroticism. But such

information is not necessary to analyze the intersections between sexuality and power in Delaware society or the change over time in relationships that altered with other upheavals in Delaware conditions. Social manifestations of sexuality, rather than its personal and intimate expressions, are easier to track in the documents. For this we have circumstantial evidence and linguistic clues: indications in the vocabularies of what missionaries considered important topics to talk about and how Indian languages accommodated these discourses—or not. We also have evidence of separation, of particular periods in which there were prescribed taboos against sexual intercourse, or of reactions against incestual relations. Family organization, too, can say something about various conceptions of sexuality, though this is by no means the only context in which human sexual relations occur. Sexual taunts, incidence of sexual violence and rape, and how these are treated may also be indicators of connections between sexuality and power in any given society.

Fundamentally, Lenape marriage customs were not designed to create liaisons between male-headed families and were not concerned with transfer of property. Instead, kinship and ceremonial responsibilities were transferred through the lineage and inherited matrilineally. Children always belonged to their mother's lineage and most often stayed with the mother and in her lineage's house if or when the father moved out. Delaware children often had closer relationships to their mother's brother than to their own father, and siblings (brothers and sisters with the same mother as well as maternal cousins) viewed each other's children as their own. This would have differed sharply from patrilineal European practices where children almost always belonged to the father in cases of divorce or remarriage. Marriage appears primarily to have served to regulate and balance everyday subsistence labor, where men and women contributed reciprocally. Responsibilities of work, defense, or ceremony influenced Delaware decisions concerning proper sexual behavior. Young girls were ritually separated from the rest of the village during their first menstruation and from then on they would spend their monthly periods at a separate hut where they were in the company of other women and did not participate in their regular chores. In particular, they avoided having anything to do with the preparation of food. Hunters and warriors would abstain from sexual relations with women during certain periods as well, and some individuals also refrained from heterosexual cohabitation for spiritual reasons. Temporary sexual unions could occur between Native women and visiting men.

There are some major problems associated with a cross-cultural discussion of marriage. The word in itself carries cultural connotations that make it problematic. As we have seen, European chroniclers invoke it, whether they are writing in Swedish, Dutch, German, or English, when describing Lenape culture (or any culture alien to them), and judge the lack of recognizable institutions as both a moral and legal deficiency. Likewise the terms husband, wife, and widow are used in the records to designate relationships that were not conceived of in a like manner among Indians...

Vocabularies offer clues to cultural perceptions, although we must keep in mind that we only have partial lists and compilations that have more to say about the persons making them than they do about Indian speakers. There are two dictionaries that offer information on Lenape language. David Zeis-



berger prepared one manuscript in the late eighteenth century that was printed in 1887; the second came out the following year and was based on a manuscript found in the Moravian archives in Bethlehem and edited by Daniel Brinton with the aid of Albert Seqaqkind Anthony, a native speaker of Munsee Delaware. The lists do not offer an abundance of words relating to marriage and sexuality; in fact, Zeisberger's dictionary, which specifically introduces a variety of words in English and German regarding improper sexual behavior, often does not report an equivalent in Lenape. There seem to have been no words for adultery, bastard, bawd (identified in German in the feminine form *eine Kuplerin*), immodest, prostitute, molest, seduce, or "the Wives shall be Subject to their Husbands." Zeisberger does offer a word for whore, *paalóchqueu*, but the same word is reported in the other dictionary to mean "coquettish girl." Fornication and debauchery are rendered as *kimiwipengeen* in Zeisberger's list, but Anthony adds that it literally meant "to sleep secretly together." The Brinton-Anthony dictionary adds words for desire, lust, and sexual jealousy. Words indicating married relationships are few—and interesting. The word translated as *wikimak*, and Anthony elaborated on this by stating that this word was no longer in use and literally meant "he or she who lives with me in the home, my house mate." The word for "to marry" meant "he (or she) copulates." The Lenape language thus seemed to lack a legal vocabulary for marriage relations as well as a language of chastisement for sexual misbehavior—at least in the English or German variety. This would not indicate that sexual relations and unions formed around them were of little significance, only that they were organized and thought of in a manner that sharply diverged from Protestant European (even pietistic) practices.<sup>2</sup>

One aspect of Lenape—and Algonkian in general—marriage customs, which stood out as a representation of their wild character, was that women often appeared to initiate sexual contacts that could lead to cohabitation. Strict observances regulated sexual relations between related individuals; for instance, in contrast to European customs, marriages were not allowed between cousins. Descriptions of Lenape marriage customs do not support the conclusion of a "lawless" society, but rather one that differed in fundamental ways from the ideology of northwestern Europe. Heckewelder observed that marriages were not expected to be lifelong and that they were not established with vows or promises of any kind...

Ritual obligations and responsibilities for the lineage influenced the life of each Delaware person and tied him or her more closely to members of their own lineages than to sexual partners. Men also abstained from women's company and from sexual relations with them when preparing for war or hunting. Male friendships were common among the Delawares. "Two comrades who have been reared together or have become attached to one another will be very close and constant companions... It seems almost impossible for either of them to live without the other." The Moravian towns proved fertile ground for such friendships. The convert Michael lived for many years in the house of unmarried brothers in Bethlehem, and took every opportunity to express his great pleasure in this arrangement. He developed a particularly strong bond of friendship with one of the Moravian assistants, Andreas.<sup>3</sup>

To Europeans, same-sex loyalties, though not unknown, contained a threat-

ening possibility of what were regarded as some of mankind's darker secrets. Same-sex sexual acts ought not to be discussed openly, but vague allusions were recognizable to all educated readers. Thus, when Zeisberger lamented that men did not love their wives as friends and deplored the close connection between male friends, his readers would have understood his concern. Zeisberger also ascertained that his intimate knowledge of Delaware culture and individuals had taught him that among them were those who practiced the most unnatural sins.

Indian sexual relations and marriage did not require the same domestic arrangements as among the whites. Women and men spent large parts of the year in separate activities, and same-sex workgroups were often the norm. But while missionaries may have fretted over men's tendency to cleave to one another instead of to their wives, the major concern with Native domestic relationships focused on the influence and independence of women. While disorderly, dangerous, and sexually licentious women are found in the sources on countless occasions, there are only one or two such connections between men and carnal lust. The diaries note at least twenty references to women behaving in an unacceptable and licentious manner, while I have been able to find only one such reference to an Indian man. In contrast to the admonitions directed at women, which explicitly or implicitly mentioned sexual behavior and thwarting of authority, men were forbidden to participate in wars and practice Native customs. When men could not concentrate on the words of the Spirit it was because women tempted them, as the convert Joachim preached to an unmarried man from Pachgatgoch...

Moravians could not conceive of proper marriage relations without the subjugation of wives to their husbands. Women's individual and independent initiatives in sexual matters were construed as uncontrollable sins. This behavior clearly came to be seen as an obstacle to conversion itself. Hanna, a Mahican woman, expressed that she had found in her heart that the reason she had not yet been converted was that she belonged to more than one man, and she believed that to be the work of the Enemy.

The discourse about good and evil also pointed to one of the most powerful shapes the devil seemed to take in the Moravian imagination—that of a fornicating woman, a shape both gendered and connected to the powerful force of sexuality. The Moravian material is filled with references to the workings of the devil in the world and in interactions between converted and unconverted Indians. Thus it forms a useful focus for study as it reveals rifts of tension and as such may shed light on reasons for conflicts and misunderstandings. Some of these were rooted in cultural concepts and many of them display gendered dimensions that need to be explored. Satan, in pietist theology, represented the forces of dominion that did not allow or recognize God as ruler over the world. Satan was the antithesis of God and stood in direct opposition to the Almighty. To Zinzendorf, who professed to an entirely historical understanding of the Gospel and the continuous unfolding of God's work in the world through the participation of the church, history was a catalog of the struggle between the "forces of evil and the kingdom of God." This theology was expressed by Zeisberger in an answer to an Indian who had traveled a long way to ask about the faith: "Briefly our doctrine is this: that we through the faith in Jesus Christ are

blessed, who with his blood has bought and delivered us from eternal death and from the dominion of Satan under which all humans stand as a consequence of their nature.” Satan in this way appeared as a personified and supremely evil force that held people captive until they were bought by the blood and delivered by the grace of Christ. This force took concrete shape in specific human situations, and then it became a figure with gendered dimensions. If nature placed us all under the influence of Satan, there was nonetheless a difference between individuals. “There are two kinds of people on this earth,” Zeisberger continued, “there are good and bad, children of God and children of Satan and destruction.” Satan thus became humanized and personalized and at loose in the world, wreaking havoc on all godly human endeavors. Satan was a presence in the language of faith as well as a necessary element for understanding faith’s conditions in the world.<sup>4</sup>

How were concepts such as “Satan” or “evil” understood among the Delawares? Tschanxehs and Hanna referred to these terms when describing their failure to follow Christian standards. We do not know what words or abstractions Delawares used to capture the image of Satan. Using the Moravian sources to throw light on this is a treacherous exercise, since we only have, at best, Moravian renderings of Delaware words. The missionaries may have translated concepts into terms they believed portrayed the actual battle between good and evil in the world, regardless of what Indians themselves said. Nonetheless I choose to elaborate on this usage because there are indications of differences that suggest that Delawares attempted to communicate their beliefs to Christians, as well as used the vocabulary in debates with other Indians. Studies of early Lenape religious concepts tell us that they recognized both an Almighty Being as a creator and as a troublesome counterpart, “the Devious One.” According to seventeenth-century sources Lenapes knew of a Creator God who stayed in the heavens and did not further meddle in the lives of humans, while they prayed and made offerings to lesser spirits who had the power to influence their earthly activities. Europeans deemed these gods evil and thought Indians sacrificed to them in order to be spared from misery. Peter Lindström wrote that they “believe and know well, that the evil one exists, who can cause them that which is evil, but they do not want to believe or understand, that there is an almighty and good God, who can show them all that is good.” Yet equating these with God and the devil missed the point, as the Creator and the Devious One represented paradox rather than oppositionary forces. According to Herbert Kraft the Delawares viewed the Creator “as being predictable, constructive and obviously good” while his brother the Devious One “was perverse, individual and unpredictable, accomplishing one end by appearing to do precisely the opposite.” The world could not exist without both of them, “the rivalry and competition between them made the universe possible.”...<sup>5</sup>

## **Chapter 5: Metaphors and National Identity: Delawares-as-Women**

Flickering firelight illuminated the walls of the longhouse and the solemn faces of the men lining each side of the building. The images of our grandmother and our grandfather, carved into the central post, seemed to come alive in the dancing glow from the

fire, the vivid black and red patterns undulating in the light to produce the impression of moving eyes and mouths. Under their watching gaze one man seated on the [east] side stood up, held forth a long strip of wampum in his hands, and turned to the elderly man seated directly opposite the post. Carefully he lifted the string and broke the silence:

- Sister! Here is help, support, and peace; we come to you to speak to you Words from God, brought by people who God undoubtedly has sent to us. Many of your relatives, here as well as in Friedenshütten have already accepted the Words of God, and are living among the believers. To show you that we will aid you and support you in all works that are good we offer you this string of wampum! Sister! Here is a man who will tell you that we are coming in peace and will not do that which is hurtful or bad, but that which is good and will not hurt the peace. I beg you that if there is a war you should not look at these people as other white people and kill them, but you should look at them as your adopted kin.

The man bent down, placed the string of beads at the feet of the sachem, and returned to his seat by the wall. From his place next to the sachem, a man who had already lived past the prime of his life but still possessed an imposing presence rose to respond. He turned to the visitors on the other side of the room and his voice rang out, strong and commanding:

- My Sisters and relatives! It gives me great joy that these people have come among us, it is as if a door had been opened, and I look out onto a prospect of people who are happy together. Before this, our People did not go to War, against white people or against other Indians. It is not for us to do, we should not go to war, but we have strayed from the right road. We see that the believers, both Indians and whites, will have nothing to do with war, and you can help us find the right road again, and this is the only way ahead towards a lasting and continuous peace.

The visitors now conferred with one another and there seemed to be some disagreement as to the procedure. Suddenly a man of slight build, the only white person in the company, stood up and let his fiery eyes sweep the room before turning to the sachem:

- Brother! I have more things to tell you. I think you are unfamiliar with us white brethren, so I must tell you some things about what kind of people we are. We preach the Gospel to the entire World, to Christians and Heathens, to white, black and brown people and make no distinction between them, all people are called to salvation, and God does not want anyone to be lost . . .

Murmurs and shouts greeted this speech; some in agreement while some voices seemed to express consternation. The Speaker rose again and told the visitors that they would discuss this thor-

oughly in their Council and send a messenger to all the neighboring villages and gather the nation together to talk about how they could forward this message of peace. Turning directly to the white man, he said:

—We are Women who stand by our pestles, plant corn, and tend our plantations, and our hunting and fishing. Our maternal Uncles have told us not to take an axe into our hands, and not to cause injury through wars. Instead it is our task to concern ourselves with that, which is good. But recently we have not been able to restrain our young people. They live scattered in so many places, but now we hope that we will be able to bring them onto the right road again.<sup>6</sup>

This abridged and imaginative account of a meeting between different Delaware contingents in the presence of Zeisberger held in one of the Ohio Delaware towns in the year 1770 introduces us to an astonishing and challenging world of gender metaphors. This chapter seeks to tease apart the meanings conveyed in the metaphor that proclaimed Delawares to be women to see how it related to Delaware perceptions of themselves and of their society. It will demonstrate how some men found it appropriate and even advantageous to label themselves and others as “sisters,” “female cousins,” or other feminine designations, while other men chose to emphasize that proper men related to one another as “brothers.” Briefly, the events agreed upon are that in the 1690s notations began to occur in the diplomatic records of early Pennsylvania that refer to Delaware Indians as “women” or “queens.” By mid-century this appears to have been common practice, and Iroquois spokesmen invoked the designation in a manner that established themselves as men who had authority over women and thus they proceeded to officially order Delawares off their land. Delawares used the metaphor to argue for nonintervention and a role as peaceful mediators, but volatile frontier conflicts led to outbreaks of violence that in stages led to new designations of Delawares as warriors.

Ensuing debates among scholars have hinged upon whether the Delawares had indeed been conquered by the Iroquois and whether the position as designated women was one of honor or disgrace. One line of argument suggests that it was a sign of defeat, and that the abusive language used by Iroquois speakers clearly indicates that the purpose was to put the Delawares in their place. Another side of the debate argues that Delawares and Iroquois shared a culture in which women were highly revered and wielded considerable power and that the position as women was meant to indicate a particular relationship to the Iroquois League with peacemaking responsibilities and concludes that the derogatory language concerning the status entered as a consequence of European misogyny. From a perspective of gender analysis two things become readily apparent. First, during two and a half centuries contemporary authors as well as historians have expressed ambivalence toward conflating the categories of men and women. Second, the manifest need to salvage the reputation of Delaware males hinges on denunciation of women.

A pivotal moment in the practice of designating the Delaware people as women took place at the statehouse in Philadelphia in July 1742. This event illustrates the stakes involved in the usage of this description and consequently it

has also been central to scholarly interpretations. In the presence of Pennsylvania governor George Thomas and colonial secretary James Logan, with Conrad Weiser as interpreter, the Onondaga speaker, Canasatego, proceeded to deal with disagreements concerning land transfers in the Wyoming Valley in eastern Pennsylvania. Turning to Governor Thomas, he said: "The other Day you informed Us of the Misbehaviour of our Cousins the Delawares with respect to their continuing to Claim and refusing to remove from some Land on the River Delaware." After perusing several letters and deeds the Six Nations had come to the conclusion that "We see with our own Eyes that they have been a very unruly People, and are altogether in the wrong in their Dealings with You." After this introduction Canasatego turned to the assembled Delawares and said while holding out a string of wampum: "Cousins: Let this Belt of Wampum serve to Chastize You; You ought to be taken by the Hair of the head and shak'd severely till you recover your Senses and become Sober."

He told them that the Pennsylvanians' case for rights to the land the Delawares disputed was fair and charged the latter with being "maliciously bent to break the Chain of friendship." Canasatego then delivered the following scathing order: "how come you to take upon you to Sell Land at all? We conquer'd You, we made Women of you, you know you are Women, and can no more sell Land than Women. . . . Your Ears are ever Open to slanderous Reports about our Brethren. You receive them with as much greediness as Lewd Woman receive the Embraces of Bad Men. And for all these reasons we charge You to remove instantly. We don't give you the liberty to think about it. You are Women; take the Advice of a Wise Man and remove immediately." He finally deposed the Delawares present, warning them that the ceremonial string of wampum would "forbid You, Your Children and Grand Children, to the latest Posterity, for ever meddling in Land Affairs, neither you nor any who shall descend from You, are ever hereafter to presume to sell any Land."

Canasatego's speech was followed by the governor's response. He congratulated the Six Nations on their sense of justice and laudable character, and joined in disparaging the Delawares by suggesting that they had been fooled: "we believe some of our own People were bad enough to impose on their Credulity, and engage them into these wrong Measures." The Delawares were not given an opportunity to respond...

To understand these particular proceedings we must go back six years in time, to what is known as the Walking Purchase deed in 1737. Delawares living in the Lehigh valley were pressured into signing an agreement that stipulated that they must relinquish the amount of land measured by how far a man could walk in a day and a half. Provincial agents hired relay runners who on the morning of September 18, 1737, set course into the heart of the Valley; by noon the next day these runners had reached fifty-five miles from the starting point in Wrightstown. Furious Delawares protested the fraud that took away all that remained of Delaware land and large parts of Munsee homeland between the Delaware and Lehigh Rivers. Refusing to remove, they became a thorn in the side of Pennsylvania land agents who turned to the Six Nations for support in clearing this section of the territory for white settlement. The Walking Purchase was indicative both of the land policies pursued by William Penn's sons and of their reliance on Iroquois cooperation, which they received only after promising

to pay a high price. It is apparent from the extract above that Canasatego and the Pennsylvania officials achieved the purpose of establishing themselves as the legitimate partners in further negotiations on the Pennsylvania frontier, while excluding the Delawares from any formal positions within this network.

Metaphors of male conquest and landless and lewd women worked well in this particular interaction between the Six Nations and the representatives of the Pennsylvania proprietors. Through Canasatego's outburst and authoritative order and the governor's seemingly placating suggestion that vile white men had simply fooled the Delawares, Iroquois and English diplomats construed the rhetorical category of woman as subordinate, incompetent, lacking in influence, and passive. The ultimate purpose of Canasatego's speech was to convince English officials of Iroquois power and influence in the region and in this context the Delawares-as-women metaphor served to emphasize their weakness and dependency, an idea that suited both Iroquois and Pennsylvania diplomats... The Six Nations for their part did not find it easy to pretend to dominate Delaware land, and Canasatego's bluster may well have covered intense concern for the effects of this alienation on the Delawares. Conrad Weiser confided in a letter to Logan at the time of the Walking Purchase that he had found it difficult to ensure Iroquois signatures on a deed to Delaware land. "It went very hard about signing over their Right upon Delaware because they said they had nothing to do there about the Land + they were afraid they should do anything amiss to their Cousins the Delawares."

Gendered language such as Canasatego's abounds in mid-eighteenth-century sources, in interactions between Delawares and Iroquois and with other participants. Iroquois warriors could also level this accusation at whites. In 1754 Hendrick, a powerful speaker for the Mohawks, told the English to act forcefully against the French, and that by not arming themselves they were "all like women, bare and open and without any Fortification." The most cited example of such sexual taunts, however, was against the Iroquois themselves. During bitter controversies between Iroquois and Catawbas in the 1740s, an attempt to negotiate a peace was thwarted when the latter sent a message suggesting that the Iroquois "were but women, that they were men and double men for they had two P-s: that they would make Women of Us, and would always be at War with us."<sup>7</sup> ...

Zeisberger's account of how the Delawares were established as women is telling in its detail concerning the ceremonial context of the institution. At some meeting, not witnessed by a European, the Iroquois ceremonially declared that the Delawares should now be women and "dressed them in a woman's long habit, reaching down to the feet." Here Zeisberger added one of his characteristic asides, that this was done "though Indian women wear only short garments that reach but little below the knee," indicating that this was not a matter of common women's clothing, but something containing symbolic meaning. The long habit was "fastened... about their bodies with a great, large belt of wampum," further emphasizing the ceremonial and spiritual significance of this alteration. Then "they hung a calabash filled with oil and beson [medicine] on their arms, therewith to anoint themselves and other nations. They also gave them a corn-pestle and a hoe. Each of these points was confirmed by delivering a belt of wampum and the whole ceremony observed with the greatest solem-

nity.”... The Delawares “were great and brave warriors, feared by the other nations,” but the woman’s garment “signified that they should not engage in war... corn-pestle and hoe that they should engage in agriculture.” Other items illustrated the solemnity of the undertaking of becoming peacemakers. “The calabash with oil was used to cleanse the ears of the other nations, that they might attend to good and not to evil counsel. With the medicine or beson they were to heal those who were walking in foolish ways that they might come to their senses and incline their hearts to peace.” Again, this is not indicative of acts of subjugation.

There are good reasons to give this version credence, not only because aspects of it occur in other European sources, but because of a parallel to another Delaware ceremonial encounter with a people with whom they wished to create a special bond. In 1654, at the arrival of a new Swedish governor to the Delaware River colony, a delegation of Lenapes expressed their desire and understanding of the relationship between the two peoples as one of a particular friendship. The imagery invoked was a feminine one—a calabash—and the meeting ended with a meal consisting of corn. Ceremonial food made from corn, the gourd as a symbol for friendship, and its content of good medicine to anoint themselves and others suggest that this was a ceremony known to the Delawares long before the English became aware of their role as women in the early 1700s.

In many descriptions of this ceremony it is emphasized that the Delawares were clad in petticoats...

What did it mean that the Iroquois put a petticoat on the Delawares? The whole idea seemed incongruous when one considers Peter Lindeström’s engraving of a Lenape family from the 1650s. In his image the woman does not wear anything that could be described as a petticoat, and the text corroborates the visual evidence. Lindeström described a wide wampum belt from which hung a piece of cloth or hide decorated lavishly with wampum beads and hemmed with a fringe of wampum. Nowhere in the early sources are there any indications that Lenape or other Indian women wore clothing that could be described as petticoats. And yet it is a frequent feature of mid-century accounts of how the Delawares came to be held as women and the struggles to remake them into men again.

The long garment is puzzling, not only because it has been given the distinctly English appellation petticoat, which does not have a direct corollary, but also because it has been connected to certain notions attached to the word in eighteenth-century vernacular, such as petticoat regiment. The word petticoat had in itself multiple meanings over the century. Hyphenated it could refer to a man’s small jacket, but the more common usage was as a garment worn by women, girls, and young children... Why would the Iroquois require the Delawares to wear not only women’s clothing, but European women’s clothing at that? If that were the case, then conquest—in the European sense—and humiliation suggest themselves as possible motives... However, Zeisberger’s account makes it clear that the garment in this case was not a petticoat, nor was it the common female habit. It was a special vestment, perhaps created for the occasion, or perhaps signifying another special position, known to both Iroquois and Delaware society, namely that of man-woman or berdache.



The connection between dressing a man in a petticoat and the various traditions reported from around North America of more than two genders, or two-spirit people, seems quite obvious, and it is somewhat startling that it is often absent from discussions of the Delawares-as-women... But according to Daniel Brinton, writing in the 1880s, some young Delaware males “apparently vigorous and of normal development, were deprived of the accoutrements of the male sex, clothed like women, and assigned women’s work to do.” This differed distinctly from the otherwise highly honored work and comportment of women, said Brinton, who claimed that these men “were treated as inferiors by their male associates. Whether this degradation arose from suspicious rites or sodomitic practices, it certainly carried to its victim the contempt of both sexes.”...

Brinton’s text makes obvious that it was gender crossing (or gender mixing) that he thought Indians abhorred, not women fulfilling proper feminine occupations. He made an explicit connection between effeminate behavior in men and unmanly and immoral subordination, demonstrated through inverted sexual acts. Significantly such a connection emerged in England at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Randolph Trumbach identifies a marked shift in the perception of the effeminate fop in which the word effeminate underwent an alteration and became exclusively associated with adult sodomites. By the first decades of the century English observers described men who desired other men sexually as “a new society” of “men worse than goats, who dressed themselves in petticoats.” Many men judged the purported sexual passivity of the sodomite as a deplorable sign of femininity, and dress and mannerisms seemed to emphasize this connection. The later part of the century saw a simplification of men’s clothes and a restriction on physical familiarity between men. Trumbach argues that a new masculinity now required of all males “to be active at every stage of life” in order to avoid any contamination of feminine or sodomitical passivity.

Again I am intrigued by divergent discourses on gender, one deployed by some Iroquois and English participants, which seems to fit neatly with Trumbach’s conclusions, while the other fell back on a tradition of gender roles that were not ontologically connected to either biological sex or sexual desire. As noted previously, the gendered language in question (particularly that used by and between Delawares) is not a language of oppositionary relations between sexes, not a language describing unrelated males and females, and not a language of copulation. Instead it is primarily a language of family and kinship. But the ceremonial language of the institution of the Delaware role resembles the definitions given of the role of berdache, or two-spirit gender.

Anthropologist Will Roscoe found that minimum conditions for the emergence of a third (or fourth) gender role consisted of a gendered division of labor and productive responsibilities that offered women a possibility to specialize in the production and exchange of goods and food, a system of belief that did not view gender as determined by physical sex, and specific historical occurrences that opened the opportunity for the construction of multiple gender roles. Such conditions existed for both Delawares and Iroquois, and it is likely that both recognized berdaches among the possible gender roles open to individuals. However, it is doubtful that the Delawares were perceived as berdaches en masse. The third gender role was—among the peoples who recognized it—a

distinct and separate category, not perceived as males doing female things or becoming women. The metaphorical language of the councils emphasizes that the Delawares were women, not berdaches or hermaphrodites. In this case the Delaware Nation as a whole filled a role that was deemed feminine and could be connected to actual female matrons. However, the occurrence of gender roles other than male and female, and an understanding that gender followed not only biology but also dreams and visions, facilitated the adoption of a female role by those with other-than-female bodies.

Delawares-as-women reveals that gender and sex could have many different meanings. It suggests a subtlety of gender movements not easily comprehended in a binary universe. One understanding was that the combination of genders—such as when a male individual adopted female habit—gave powers that transcended either of the two genders'. Yet, it is also clear that this notion was not uncontested. The status of ritual women was deeply entwined with ideas concerning lineage, kin, belonging, friendship, and connection, while a corollary (or opposite) status as men incorporated notions surrounding war, individual courage, killing, and death. The Delawares contrived to maintain the balance by gendering their universe to the extreme. By mid-century, accounts of ceremonial division of meat and bread followed a strict complementarity—six men and six women were required to partake. Yet this was a losing battle in the face of a world where war, death, and disease filled Delaware as well as English and Iroquois every-day experiences, and the scale easily tipped in favor of patriarchal notions of maleness, connected to prowess and war. The surface similarity between third gender roles and the emerging English discourse on sodomites in petticoats also lent itself to a ready condemnation of the berdache role, even though in Native understanding it carried a far different meaning...

### **A National Identity**

Many Delawares framed their interpretation according to another template, one that cast relationships between men and women in terms of brothers and sisters, rather than as sexual partners, or as fathers and sons. They considered themselves to be part of a nation of peacemakers, deriving their chief standing from the connections between powerful lineage matrons and their role in upholding and arranging for peace. As a people, the Delawares guarded the central council fire and negotiated for peace in the entire region. This strategy sometimes took the form of a gendered perception in which “woman” or “sister” stood for peacemaking, while “man” and “brother” stood for preparations for hostility. The complementary relationship between genders in Lenape ceremony and cosmogony ensured that this was a possible construction that did not strip either category of power, but rather made them objects for negotiation. To be named sister, sister's daughter, or sister's son suggested not a designation along a vertical axis but a sign of one's primary undertaking in life, perhaps one's “national identity” as a peace broker. Lenapes used the Swedish colony as a test case to develop strategies of diplomatic interaction with Europeans, policies they perhaps had used previously in interactions with Native American strangers and neighbors...<sup>8</sup>

It worked well for quite some time, and the Atlantic seaboard along the Delaware River was an unusually peaceful region well into the eighteenth cen-

tury, so it is no wonder that the voices advocating just such a policy could prevail. Continued white infiltration and conflicting land demands increased the pressure and forced more and more Indians, Delawares included, to question whether the honorable role as village matrons with peacekeeping responsibilities was functional or viable in their new world. By mid-century, Iroquois representatives used a term translated as “woman” in a decidedly derogatory manner, perhaps to tell the Lenapes to wise up to the realities of European interaction, or perhaps (and more likely) as part of establishing closer links with the English as their most important ally. Through such language the Iroquois and the English were constructed as virtuous men and bearers of honorable characteristics such as courage, sense of justice, generosity, temperance, and purity. That left only undesirable categories for the Delawares to fill. Some Delawares reacted violently to this division, while others such as Tamaqua, Netawetwees, and Packanke evoked and emphasized the older understanding of a diplomatic balance between sister/brother, woman/man, in a period of strained relations with both English and Indian neighbors and perhaps in direct contrast to Iroquois claims. For these men, a Delaware national identity as female peacemakers and grandfathers with a first and foundational contact with whites dovetailed neatly into the woman/queen metaphor, and thus they sought to maintain a specific Lenape tradition... They sought to preserve what they perceived as a Delaware cultural practice distinct from European influence, in contrast to, for example, Teedyuscung. To this end they used “sister” among themselves and “female cousin” to other neighbors, but this position became increasingly untenable as Delaware autonomy decreased.

Why did it end? A language of cross-dressing became less and less viable in an America dominated by European perceptions of gender, sexuality, and morality, while a language of peace still remained attractive. For Iroquois who continued to have alliances with whites that hinged on the deployment of military power, the language of peace quickly became co-opted by the language of male power. Other nations persisted longer in an older usage. Even so, by 1800 a male representative could no longer present himself as a queen. Yet this language still held sway with other Algonkian neighbors for a long time. Ritual mediated the divide between male warmaking and female peacekeeping. This was a role with indigenous traditions that could be used by some men to advance policies of balance and independence, perhaps to boost their own influence. But it only worked in a context in which gender was conceptualized as a role attached to a cluster of responsibilities rather than an equation of gender and sex. War, strife, hunger, removal, and death of individuals of all ages threatened all established ways of handling crises. Hegemonic interpretations of masculinity among Shawnees and Delawares emphasized a progression in a man’s responsibilities from brave warrior to sane peace leader, but conflicts with Europeans and other Indians elevated war captains, offering young men other models based on sexual domination. The breakdown in the cohesion of kin groups must have aided this process. There was nothing subservient about Delaware women. Male and female roles were different but they did not constitute categories of a set asymmetry.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Interviews with Delaware elders indicate the disappearance of ceremonies as a consequence of a loss of dreams.

<sup>2</sup>The dictionary drew upon his more than fifty years of experience as a missionary. His linguistic skills were impressive. Apart from German he was fluent in Dutch, English, Mohawk, and Lenape, and he understood Onondaga and Shawnee.

<sup>3</sup>The description of these friendships is made in positive terms and not, for instance, linked to his assertions of women's practices of unnatural sins.

<sup>4</sup>During the so-called sifting-period in the early years of Moravian expansion, sexuality and sin were not conflated, as was the case in most other Protestant denominations.

<sup>5</sup>Cave states that the "Evil One" had no counterpart in previous Lenape beliefs and represented an incorporation of a Christian idea of a supreme evil force. The same goes for the idea of hell.

<sup>6</sup>Freely adapted from several Moravian sources.

<sup>7</sup>A similar belligerent taunt came from Osages, who had claimed that all other nations were women.

<sup>8</sup>Some authors have argued that there are no sources to prove that the Delawares in actuality acted as peacemakers among their Indian neighbors and in relation to the colonists. That, however, is incorrect. A Delaware tradition as peacemakers persisted into the late twentieth century: "The Delawares more than any other tribe had served as peacemakers, and as ambassadors between various Indian tribes and the United States. Their leaders because of their inclination towards peace, and also because of their special abilities as interpreters and as scouts for military and civilian expeditions, had always been on the cutting edge of the frontier expansion of the United States," Hale, *Peacemakers on the Frontier*

# A Blend of Blood and Tobacco: Shamans and Jaguars among the Parakanã of Eastern Amazonia

Carlos Fausto, 2004. A chapter in *In Darkness and Secrecy: The Anthropology of Assault Sorcery and Witchcraft in Amazonia* - Edited by Neil L. Whitehead and Robin Wright. Excerpted.

... The association between the shaman and the jaguar, whose capacity for killing measures only with that of humans, has been known since the first centuries of colonization. . . As Reichel-Dolmatoff writes, “shamans and jaguars are thought to be almost identical, or at least equivalent, in their power, each in his own sphere of action, but occasionally able to exchange their roles”. Another author affirms that “if one concept cutting across geographic, linguistic, cultural boundaries among South American Indians can be singled out, it is that of qualitative identity between jaguars and shamans and accordingly their interchangeability of form” (Furst 1968:154; Wilbert 1987:193).<sup>1</sup>

We also know that the jaguar haunts another important semantic domain and social practice in Amazonia: warfare and cannibalism (literal or symbolic.) This is also a well-known fact since the sixteenth century. Consider now that “this same Konyan Bebe had then a great vessel full of human flesh in front of him and was eating a leg which he held to my mouth, asking me to taste it. I replied that even beast[s] which were without understanding did not eat their own species, and should a man devour his fellow creatures? But he took a bite saying, *Jau wara see*: ‘I am a tiger; it tastes well,’ and with that I left him”. In this event, narrated by the German seafarer Hans Staden, a Tupinambá chief identifies itself with a jaguar while savoring a human leg. Perhaps he does it only to tease his unwilling guest (and future food). But there is something else about this odd dialogue – a revealing misunderstanding: Staden thinks of cannibalism as eating the same, whereas Cunhambebe equates it to eating like the jaguar and occupying the position of a predator, not of a prey. Modern ethnographies contain many examples of the identification of warriors with jaguars, and of killing with (symbolic) cannibalism. One may thus ask: What is the common thread that links warfare and shamanism to the jaguar? And what is it to eat like the jaguar?

**A Stench of Blood** ... Among the Parakanã, the main way for a man to develop his capacity for dreaming is to follow the road of the jaguar; that is, to be a predator (not only of animals, but above all of humans). Killing is conceived as a form of symbolic hematophagy because it is said that it “makes

the killer's mouth smell of blood" (*mojoropyji'o*). This stench never disappears: the killer can only resort to the tobacco to "perfume his mouth" (*mojoropi'e*) and counterbalance the taste of blood.<sup>2</sup> However, as we will see, it is precisely this combination of blood and tobacco that potentializes the dreaming, that makes someone have shamanic power.

**The Faithful Enemy** Dreaming is a form of interaction with all the entities of the cosmos in their condition as persons – that is, as subjects endowed with intentional agency and perspective. What qualifies an entity to be dreamt about is to have a different perspective from that of the dreamer's. In other words, all oneiric interlocutors are "others" (*amote*), or more precisely, "enemies" (*ak-wawa*).<sup>3</sup> But in the dream these enemies do not act as enemies but as allies or, better, as a very particular kind of ally: they are termed "pets" (*te'omawa*) and "magic prey" (*temiahiwa*). They are faithful enemies, prey turned into adopted pets that are under the control of the dreamer.

As I have shown elsewhere, this conversion of fierce others into familiars by means of an idiom of adoption is a central feature of both shamanism and warfare in Amazonia. In warfare, there is a widespread notion that the killer establishes a privileged relationship with the victim's spirit, which gives him a surplus of agency and creativity. This surplus manifests itself as a capacity to name or rename people, to produce new songs for the rituals, to favor the hunting or even to fertilize the women and produce new children. Shamans also have a special creativity that stems from the relationship with their auxiliary spirits, the majority of which are animal spirits – that is, as kinds of "magic prey", as the Parakanā would term them. The shaman's and warrior's power and job are very similar, although shamanism focuses mainly on the relationship with non-human others, whereas warfare concentrates on that with human others. The interesting fact about the Parakanā is that they have conflated these two operations. A dreamer interacts with all entities of the cosmos, be they humans, animals, plants, stars, natural objects, or artifacts. There is, however, a hierarchy: not all people dreamt about the more powerful others, among whom are human enemies (sometimes described as monstrous), the jaguar, and thunder. The most ordinary dreamt enemies are animals, which the Parakanā call *ma'ejiroa*, a collective noun that designates both a set of objects ("stuff"), and the animals in their condition of prey ("game"). Objects and prey can be classed within the same category because they are not credited with much agency. They are at the ground level of a hierarchy whose organizing principle is the capacity for predation. Humans and the jaguar (or jaguarlike beings) occupy the ceiling. . .

The jaguar is, of course, one of the Amazonian shaman's most praised auxiliaries and the source of a very powerful shamanism. Among the Parakanā, dreams about jaguars are always associated with metamorphosis, and sometimes are directly connected to a jaguar killing.<sup>4</sup> Some dreamers are capable of "bringing in" a real jaguar during their oneiric experience and, subsequently, of transforming themselves into one. The metamorphosis is termed *jyromonem*, which literally means "to put a continent on," that is, "to dress." The dreamer brings the jaguar and enters its skin, and, endowed with all its abilities, he goes to the forest to hunt and eat. He may also employ his newly acquired "natural" tools to cure himself or to kill an antagonist. . .

*Whose Eyes Are Mine?* The Parakanā attribute intentionality to various entities of the cosmos. Some persons are capable of interacting with these entities through the dreaming, where they establish with them a special relationship of adoption. As we have seen, the dreamer is the master, the dreamt enemy is the pet. The former seems to control the latter, imposing on the enemy his own perspective. This is fair enough: the enemy familiarized in dreams does not act as an adversary, because he surrenders a part of himself to the dreamer and asks for nothing in exchange. Nevertheless, the actual relationship is more ambivalent than that, as is the figure of the shaman in most Amazonian indigenous societies. It is not difficult to understand why.

All dream narratives that I have registered concerning the “bringing in of the enemy” contain the following theme: the pets may act as captors and keep their master as a pet, which means adopting and turning him into one of them. In other words, they reverse the sense of familiarization. This is a very common motif in Amazonia...

To be a killer or a shaman in Amazonia unavoidably implies the cumulating of more than one perspective, and a certain capacity of alternating between them or employing both at the same time. Not all perspectives are equal. Because agency is variously distributed among the entities of the cosmos, and the capacity for predation is a hallmark of powerful agency, the shaman, as the warrior, is commonly associated with predators like the jaguar. To become a puissant shaman one must entertain a special relationship with ferocious beings, eaters of raw meat and blood. This relationship implies a sharing of perspectives. The shaman's ambivalence stems from his serving, in person, as a point of articulation between his perspective and that of his ferocious familiar spirits...

The alteration of perspective, the intimate rapport with dangerous spirits, the capacity of magically killing people, the cannibal connotations of the initiation and the healing practice, and the going-jaguar – all these facts contribute to making the Amazonian shaman a redoubtable figure.

**Conclusion** Amazonian shamanism is not a loving animism, as its middle-class urban vulgate want us to believe. It is better understood as a predatory animism: subjectivity is attributed to human and nonhuman entities, with whom some people are capable of interacting verbally and establishing relationships of adoption or alliance, which permit them to act upon the world in order to cure, to fertilize, and to kill. As I suggest elsewhere however, the capacity of familiarizing other subjectivities, of having them as allies, depends on predation in warfare and hunting.

Whereas neoshamanism is turned on the remodeling of individual subjectivities, indigenous shamanism is concerned with producing new persons and social relationships from the stock of human and nonhuman subjectivities existing in the cosmos. The question is, then, how can one acquire a surplus of intentionality and agency, and avoid being deployed of his or her own? If there is no ontological difference between predator and prey, how can one maintain oneself in the position of predator and not of prey? Amerindian warfare and shamanism seem to revolve around this question.

Understandably enough, the predatory act is the lost fact in modern, urban, middle-class shamanism, which purged the phenomenon from all its ambiguous attributes. It is thus no wonder why the jaguar, although a recurrent

figure, is depicted as an endangered species and not as a dangerous predator. Neoshamanism subjects others' thoughts to Western thinking and moral standards: there must be good and bad, both a light and a dark side, and a clear-cut frontier in order to demarcate a basic contrast of ethic. There is no such dichotomy in South American shamanism, which thrives on ambivalence.

One of the difficulties of the sixteenth-century missionaries in translating Christian texts to indigenous languages was to find a suitable equivalent for God, because there was no such thing as an indigenous supreme divinity to be translated into a unique (although trine) God. Further, to make things worse, once the missionaries had chosen one among various possibilities, they had to rid him of his ambiguous attributes. If God were a jaguar, their task would have been much easier.

What does it mean not to base a cosmology on a clear-cut opposition between good and bad? What kind of society does so? These are questions that have haunted Western thinking since the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, the answers have always been a mere repetition of the very dichotomy that causes the questioning. Choose your side: the noble or the fierce savage? Hobbes himself actually preferred the latter, whereas Rousseau would have favored the former. Nowadays some people make a living by selling one or the other image, while others just comfort their hearts in defending one of them. The choice is less motivated by facts than by the approach one has to one's own society. Again, no novelty here. The "state of nature" had the same function for sixteenth and seventeenth century philosophers: it was a way to distinguish between the original and the artificial in human nature so as to judge European society at the time.

In any case we must recognize one fact: the very culture that bases its ethics in a universal distinction between good and bad has developed (among many other things) an insurmountable capacity for violence and destruction. Indigenous cultures that prospered in ambivalence, on the contrary were not so successful. A famous Jesuit missionary once said, maybe in a burst of despair, that the best form of preaching for people like the Tupinambá was with the sword and the spear. He was only partially right. The Europeans conquered South America with the word and the sword, a mixture that proved to be much more efficient than the fine blend of blood and tobacco that characterizes Amazonian shamanism.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>I would like to thank Philippe Descola, Aparecida Vilaça, and the Parakanã among whom I collected the data presented here. My fieldwork was carried out in 1988-1989, 1992-1993, 1995, and 1999...

<sup>2</sup>Once the Parakanã told me that just after contact some killers vomited whenever they took Western medication, and this vomiting made them lose their *pajé* (shamanic power). They supposed that there was an incompatibility between the drugs and the stench of blood in their mouths, and they believed to have discovered an efficient neutralizer for it.

<sup>3</sup>*Akwawa* is a general category for all entities in their condition as a person, who are not a member of ego's group. In other words, all "real" enemies and all dreamt interlocutors.

<sup>4</sup>A man who has slain a jaguar may bring its corpse to the village and dance with it in order to favor the dreaming about a jaguar.



# To Kill Or Not To Kill: Rebirth, Sharing, and Risk

Rane Willerslev, 2007. A chapter in *Soul Hunters: Hunting, Animism, and Personhood Among the Siberian Yukaghirs*. Excerpted.

**HUNTING AND ANIMAL REBIRTH** The subarctic environment of the Upper Kolyma Yukaghirs is part of the vast and largely unpopulated larch forest that is popularly known as the taiga. The climate is sharply continental, with permafrost and long, icy, cloudless winters, when the temperature can fall as low as minus 63° Celsius. Winter starts with the first snowfall in early October and persists into late May. In fact, there are only seventy to eighty frost-free days in the course of the whole year. Midwinter is dominated by darkness. The sun rises above the horizon for only an hour in late December, but twilight extends the day to six or seven hours. Despite the cold and darkness, people continue to hunt and ice fish throughout the winter. Spring brings very rapid changes in both the light cycle and temperatures, as the sun stays above the horizon eight or ten minutes longer each day. From mid-April until mid-August the sun never goes far enough below the horizon to cause real darkness, and the temperature in summer can reach as high as 43° Celsius.

Among all the animals of the taiga, the elk is by far the most important in the present-day economy and lifestyle of the population of Nelemnoye.<sup>1</sup> Its meat is distributed among village families as a key expression of community ties and is exchanged for fuel and other necessities in the district center of Zyrianka. Elk meat is also considered to be food par excellence, the focal dish of feasts and family meals. Because it comes from large, strong animals, it is thought to be a source of strength and is the preferred diet of hunters who themselves rely on physical strength. This general passion for elk meat, however, along with the growing importance of subsistence hunting, has put an enormous pressure on the elk population, which has undergone a catastrophic decline over the past decade. Old Spiridon's hunting group alone kills an average of forty to fifty elk a year. In comparison, the same group killed only five or six elk yearly during the state farm period. At that time, people had money to buy the imported meat of domestic animals, and elk meat was a delicacy for many families rather than a staple food. I would estimate that today elk meat accounts for 50 percent or more of the total intake of calories in Nelemnoye.

I once voiced the opinion to members of (local elder and hunter) Old Spiridon's group that overhunting was surely the main reason for the decline of the

elk population. The hunters, to my surprise, responded that they did not regard the elk population as having declined at all. The animals, they assured me, had simply “gone elsewhere.” Later, a group of biologists from Zyrianka undertook a survey by helicopter of the number of elk in the district. They reported that the population had dropped by more than 30 percent since 1990, when there was an average of two thousand elk, and said that this was the result of a combination of overhunting and a growth in the wolf population. At a public meeting in Nelemnoye a government official (*okhotoved*) urged the hunters to reduce the scale of their killings in order to conserve the rapidly declining elk population. The hunters sat in silence and listened to the government official prove his point with one statistic after another. Afterward, however, I heard them talking among themselves, saying that the biologists had simply got it wrong: there were no fewer elk now than there had been in the past. The animals had simply gone elsewhere for the time being and would soon come back. At first I regarded their explanation as an incredibly naive attempt to legitimize their large-scale killings. However, I later came to realize that their point is a different one, one rooted in a completely different perspective on the cycle of life and death...

... For the Yukaghirs, the goal of life is not liberation from the endless cycle of rebirth, as in the Buddhist and Hindu traditions, with their emphasis on *nirvána* or *moksha*, the Indic word for “salvation”. Rather, Yukaghirs expect people to undergo continuous rebirth, bringing back the same character traits they manifested in previous lives. Moreover, whereas Buddhists and Hindus see reincarnation as being dependent on the ethical nature of the life lived by the deceased, I did not come across any evidence among the Yukaghirs that wrong behavior (or sins, if you like) in this life would necessarily lead to retribution in the next. One can transform into other creatures or become stuck in certain places, and thereby be prevented from returning “home,” but there is no such thing as a “good” or a “bad” rebirth. Furthermore, not only humans but also animals and inanimate objects are locked into their own cycles of continuous rebirth. Indeed, as Guemple has described with regard to the Inuit, and as also seems to hold true for the Yukaghirs, “the system... is regarded as a ‘closed’ cycle: no new spiritual components can enter, and none are ever lost.” We are, therefore, at least in principle, dealing with a fixed pool of souls that simply go round and round in an endless cycle.

This core idea that no life can ever be lost or entirely destroyed is by no means unique to the Yukaghirs, and is in fact reported throughout the circumpolar north. Frazer, for example, wrote of the Bering Strait Eskimos that they “believe that the souls of dead sea-beasts... remain attached to their bladders, and that by returning the bladders to the sea they can cause the souls to be reincarnated in fresh bodies and so multiply the game which the hunters pursue and kill”. Recently, this belief has also been described among the Cree of the Canadian subarctic: “The nominal death of an animal was only one moment in a cycle: animals live in the bush, are killed by hunters, persist as souls after their bodies are eaten, and return again to the world through birth or spontaneous regeneration” (Brightman 1993: 288).

What is more, throughout the circumpolar region we find numerous cases of “aggressive” subsistence practices, leading to the “pointless” destruction of

entire herds of game. As Krupnik writes, "Massive slaughters took place when caribou were hunted at river crossings, and also when, in summer, netting was broadcast for flightless, moulting birds. At times the community might take so much more than it could use, preserve, or transport that much of the catch simply rotted and went to waste. There is evidence of massive overhunting of birds, and animals killed by the hundreds and thousands, from throughout northern Siberia, the Canadian boreal forest, coastal Greenland, and the Alaskan interior" . . .

The question that naturally arises is why Yukaghirs, like many other groups of northern hunters, kill prey in numbers greater than they can transport and eat. Moreover, since it is these hunting peoples themselves who become the chief victims of any game shortage that results from overhunting, one must wonder why they tend not to see a relationship between the two processes. If we hope to come to terms with these questions, we cannot simply approach the hunter-prey relationship in narrowly utilitarian and functional terms. . . but we must take the conceptual world of the hunters themselves into account. I shall begin this task by pointing out that from the Yukaghirs' perspective their killings are not merely destructive, but also a rite of regeneration. Hunters must slaughter and consume animals so that their souls, their *ayibii*, can be released and subsequently reincarnated. The hunters' predatory activity becomes, in this manner, a life-giving activity, for without the killings the animals would fail to reproduce. Moreover, as Brightman describes with regard to the Cree, and as also applies to the Yukaghirs, hunters can kill prey in great numbers and make selective rather than exhaustive use of their bodies since such behavior is not contrary to the dictates of the animal master-spirits. In fact, the more one kills, the more the herds of the animal master-spirits will enlarge and the more one will be likely to kill in the future. Clearly, this echoes the Yukaghir saying that "one is obliged to take what one is given by *khoziain* [the animal master-spirits]," and if a hunter is offered much, he must take much. Failure to kill all the animals available is to put one's future hunting luck at risk.

Now, while this fits neatly into Krupnik's image of northern hunters as merciless predators blindly destroying their own ecosystems, we find yet another strain in Yukaghir thinking that points in the opposite direction. As we shall see, hunters also entertain a fear of spiritual counterpredation for indiscreet slaughter. However, to understand the principal ideas on which this compelling sanction against overkilling is based and in what way it relates to its opposite – the propensity to kill as much as possible – we need to address what is commonly reported in ethnographic studies of hunter-gatherers under the rubric of "sharing."

#### THE PRINCIPLES OF SHARING

One of the models commonly applied to distinguish "simple" from "complex" hunter-gatherer societies is Woodburn's distinction between "immediate-return" and "delayed-return" systems. In societies with the former, "people obtain a direct and immediate return from their labour. They go out hunting or gathering and eat the food obtained the same day or casually over the days that follow" (Woodburn 1982a: 432). Moreover, people avoid long-term commitments and obligations, the accumulation of possessions, and any substantial investment of time in the productive process. High value is attached to individual autonomy,

sharing, free access to resources, and egalitarian social relations. In delayed-return systems, by contrast, individuals hold rights to valued assets such as labor-intensive hunting technologies, processed and stored food, and other people, as in marriage bestowal. In order to hold and manage these valued assets, people depend on “a set of ordered, differentiated, jurally-defined relationships” (Woodburn 1982a: 432–33). Woodburn classifies almost all hunter-gatherer societies as delayed-return systems, and only a few groups, such as the San Bushmen of Namibia, the Hadza of Tanzania, and the Batek of Malaysia, as immediate-return systems.

Although the Yukaghirs’ social organization, both past and present, has many of the characteristics that Woodburn identifies as common in delayed-return systems (e.g., intergenerational authority, committed kinship ties, and institutionalized leadership), it seems clear from Jochelson’s descriptions and my own observations that Yukaghir society demonstrates many of Woodburn’s immediate-return characteristics, such as, for example, generalized access to knowledge and hunting grounds, and the freedom to select the group of hunters with whom one wants to live and work. Because Yukaghir men are not required to hunt with any particular group, hunting groups are extremely unstable; people are constantly moving in and out of them. What is more, although particular families identify themselves and are identified by others with the rivers where they dwelled prior to their forced settlement in the 1930s, they have no more right to hunt there than anyone else. Anyone may live, hunt, and fish wherever he likes without restriction. A group’s association with a particular territory and river, then, seems to provide a means of identifying oneself and others, a way of mapping out social relations spatially, rather than identifying exclusive rights to resources. . .

Thus, the people of Nelemnoye differentiate themselves from neighboring Russians and Sakha primarily by contrasting their own enthusiasm for sharing against the individualistic greed of these outsiders, who are said to be stingy and unwilling to share. Related to this notion that sharing is virtuous is the notion that the accumulation of wealth is deeply objectionable. Rich people are, by definition, “bad people” (Rus. *plokhie lyudi*). . .

The Yukaghirs’ aversion to the accumulation of wealth and the inequality of its distribution is also apparent in what anthropological accounts of hunter-gatherers commonly label “leveling” or “humility-enforcing” mechanisms. If, for instance, a hunter returns to the village with a large number of sable pelts and starts boasting about his success, people will taunt him mercilessly: “These pelts you got there must be from cats or something. They can’t be from sables. Not a single silvery hair, only filth.” Such insulting remarks have just one goal: to “pull down” the arrogant hunter and make him feel ashamed. Consequently, hunters are usually careful to break the news of their success in a very low-key way. Ivan Danilov, a Sakha hunter with whom I trapped sable, put it this way: “When we come back to Nelemnoye and people ask you how many sables we’ve taken, look disappointed and say: ‘We hardly got any.’ When they ask again, reply, ‘Definitely not more than five or six sables, all of a very poor quality.’ Remember that the correct behavior of a great hunter is modesty and understatement.”

People know, of course, that when a hunter is cautious about semantics in this fashion, it often implies the direct opposite; namely, that he has caught

many sables of high quality. However, the point is that the hunter, by expressing indifference or negativity toward his own accomplishments, “demonstrates... that his success has not gone to his head, that he has ‘leveled’ or ‘humiliated’ himself, maintaining through his display of humility the ethos of equality” (Guenther 1999: 43).

The situation is somewhat different with regard to success in elk, bear, and reindeer hunting. Hunters who are good at these tasks are often publicly praised for their skills. For example, when Yura, the oldest son of Old Spiridon, and I met old people in the street, they would sometimes compliment us by chattering their teeth and saying, “Due to your good [hunting] luck, our teeth are chewing [we are eating well].” This difference in attitude is perhaps explained by the fact that whereas meat is for the most part distributed among the villagers, furs are not. After being divided equally among the hunters in the group, the furs from sable and other fur-bearing animals are considered the private property of the individual hunter. Therefore, whereas meat cannot easily become a source for the accumulation of wealth, furs can be, at least in theory. . .

We often think of sharing as deriving from generosity. Spencer, for instance, writes about the Alaskan Eskimos, “In times of food shortage, it was the successful hunter and his family who might go hungry, since in his generosity he gave away whatever he had at hand”. However, sharing among the Yukaghirs is, as should be clear by now, quite different. Although they *do* emphasize the moral imperative of generosity as the principle dynamic, most sharing in fact takes place in response to direct demands. We are therefore dealing with what Peterson has appropriately called “demand sharing.” People believe that they are entitled to their share and do not hold back when making demands. “The whole emphasis is on donor obligation and recipient entitlement, [and] the donor has little or no choice as to whether his goods are shared” (Woodburn 1998: 49).

Moreover, people are expected to give freely without expectation of repayment, which means that recipients are under no obligation to give back – though of course they, too, must share when they obtain goods beyond their immediate needs. Only the general obligation to share is carried forward over time; specific claims with regard to the quality or quantity of the return are not. . .

Hunters are not obliged to share with everybody, but only with kinsmen of one sort or another. The kinsmen will come to the household of the hunter, usually on the day of his arrival, and simply say, “Give!” in a matter-of-fact, “demanding” way. The hunter or his wife will then give them a share of meat, where-upon they will leave. “Please” and “thank you” are not normally part of the vocabulary of sharing. As Lee puts it with regard to the San, “Since sharing is given, why say thank you?”...

#### THE RISK OF SHARING

When entering the forest Yukaghir hunters often address the master-spirits of the rivers and places where they hunt as “fathers” and “mothers” or “grandfathers” and “grandmothers.” Similarly, they refer to themselves in this context as the “children” or “grandchildren” of the spirits. They will, for example, say, “Grandfather, your children are hungry and poor. Feed us as you have fed us before,” or, perhaps, “*Khoziain*, you are our mother, we are your children, so feed us.”...

They believe that the animal master-spirits, in their role as nurturer, are

obliged to share their abundance of game with them, in much the same way as fellow humans who possess resources beyond their immediate needs are obliged to give them up. In other words, hunters think that they are entitled to prey and that the spirit should give it to them, not in return for appropriate repayment, but unconditionally. This notion, I believe, is reflected in the fact that although hunters often praise the benevolence and generosity of the spirits before hunting, I have never heard them thank the spirits after a successful hunt. From their viewpoint the spirit is doing no more than it should when it provides them with a kill. Moreover, whenever our hunting luck failed us, and when this could not be blamed on our disregard for some ritual procedure, Spiridon would walk restlessly around the encampment, swearing at his helping spirit, the Owner of the Omulevka River: "Stingy bitch! You make me ashamed. Don't come to me again [Stay out of my dreams]. I'll leave you to rot with your meat [I'll move away to another territory]." So, in much the same way that fellow humans who are not willing to share become the subjects of much grumbling and gossiping, Spiridon would openly accuse the master-spirit of being stingy whenever it rejected our request for meat. . .

There is certainly some truth in Bird-David's account of hunter-gatherers as conceiving the natural environment as a source of inherent goodness. As we have seen, the Yukaghirs also represent their relationship to the animal master-spirits as a parent-child relationship, anchored in unconditional giving. Even so, her idea about the "giving environment" ignores the fact that the compassionate ties that exist between the two agencies also give rise to much danger, deception, and manipulation. Yukaghirs recognize in the animal master-spirits not only generosity, but also many of the negative attributes they recognize in themselves, such as sexual yearning, jealousy, and slyness. Thus, even spiritual powers that they regard as "good" are good only in a very relative and dangerously unstable sense. . .

Yukaghirs, like other hunter-gatherers, do not model their interaction with the natural agencies on a principle of balanced reciprocity, but on a principle of sharing. As already pointed out, sharing does not involve a debtor-creditor relationship, with a definite expectation of a return. Quite the opposite, sharing implies that equality is actively promoted and inequality is actively restricted through the principle of demand sharing. People have the acknowledged right to demand that those who possess goods beyond their immediate needs give them up, and the owner of those goods must comply with the demands or risk social disapproval. With regard to the hunter-spirit relationship, this means that as long as an animal master-spirit possesses plenty of game the hunter is entitled to ask or even demand that the spirit share its animal resources with him, and the spirit for its part is morally obliged to comply with the hunter's demands. However – and this is the key point – if the wealth divide between the two agencies somehow becomes altered, their roles as donor and recipient might switch, so it is the spirit that becomes entitled to demand that the hunter share his resources. Such a reversal of roles is exactly what we see in... (a story related to the author – Editor): the spirit provides the hunter with game in overabundance, and the latter takes all the animals "offered." As a result, he is seen as accumulating a surplus of animal souls. This in turn gives the spirit the right to demand that the hunter share with it, and it asserts its claim by striking

him and his son with sickness and death so that it can then drag their *ayibii* back to its dwelling place. Note that the spirit does not kill the hunter and his offspring to balance out long-term credits. It is quite wrong to view the spirit as placing the hunter in debt, as Hamayon does, since the passing along of gifts among hunter-gatherers like the Yukaghirs does not involve any such notion of obligatory reciprocation, exact accounting, or compensation. Rather, the spirit deliberately manipulates the moral principle of sharing to put the hunter in the position of wealthy donor, which justifies it in “demanding” his soul. What is more, the spirit’s predatory violence is not so much economically motivated as emotionally motivated. It sets out to trick and kill the hunter not because it wants to regain its property, but because it “loves him” and wants to “live with him.”

The important point that follows from all this is that Yukaghirs, rather than regarding the animal master-spirits as inherently benevolent, regard them with a great deal of ambivalence. The spirits’ shifting personas, ranging from altruistic to wicked, blend into each other, resulting in trickster figures that, despite their generally benign natures, are deceitful and should never be fully trusted. This, I believe, is exactly what an old Yukaghir was calling attention to when he repeatedly insisted that the Owner of the Earth (Lebie’-po’gil), whom Jochelson places among the highest of the benevolent beings, is the same as the head of the evil spirits, the Grandfather with the Pointed Head (Yiodeiis’ien’ulben). For what we are dealing with is not a pantheon of spirits that is subdivided into beneficent and hostile powers in any rigid sense. Rather, we are dealing with what I shall characterize as a “double perspective.” By this I mean to suggest that nested within the hunters’ perspective of the animal master-spirits as generous parents who are obliged to feed their hungry children is a sort of counter-perspective, the spirits as predators who seek to trick and kill humans in order to satisfy their selfish love for them. Thus, although hunters address the spirits as “parents” and make an appeal for benevolence and active sharing, they never lose sight of the fact that such a sharing relationship involves much danger. For, contrary to what Bird-David asserts when she talks about the “giving environment,” the roles of nature as donor and humans as recipients are neither finite nor fixed in the “cosmic economy of sharing,” but might reverse, in which case hunters face the risk of being struck with illness and death.

#### WHEN THE HUNTER BECOMES THE PREY

... In the case of Yukaghir hunters, they respond to this uncertainty by taking the exchange process with the natural agencies to a further stage, which they refer to as *’pákostit’*, meaning “to play dirty tricks” in Russian, and which I shall later describe in terms of a process of sexual seduction. In short, the hunter seeks to induce in the animal master-spirits an illusion of a lustful play. As a result, the spirits come to believe that what is going on is not a premeditated kill but a “love affair” with the hunter. After killing his prey, the hunter will cover up the fact that he was the one responsible for its death by blaming others for the violent slaughter. As a result, the hunter will not appear to have taken anything from the animal master-spirits, at least not formally, and no sharing relationship was therefore ever established between the two. This in turn rules out the spirit’s right to demand the hunter’s *ayibii*. In other words, *pákostit* involves the hunter seeking to maximize utility at the spirits’ expense while avoiding

the risk of falling into the position of potential donor. In this sense, *pákostit* corresponds in part to what Sahlins has called “theft,” which he characterizes as “the attempt to get something for nothing,” and which he argues to be “the most impersonal sort of exchange,” which “ranges through various degrees of cunning, guile, stealth, and violence.” Although guile is an integral part of the game of seduction, we are talking about neither an impersonal sort of exchange, nor guile as a simulacrum or lying in any strict sense. To seduce an animal and its associated spiritual beings, the hunter must emphatically project himself into their agencies, even to the point where the boundaries between them are blurred and they become of the same kind. . .

In fact, it would be fair to say that we find two polar tendencies in Yukaghir subsistence practices: one in the direction of overpredation, which is believed to increase the future animal population, the other in the direction of limiting one’s killings to an absolute minimum, to avoid putting oneself in the precarious position of donor and risking counterpredation by the master-spirits. Hunters usually seek to find a balance between these two extremes by killing all animals offered, yet ceasing to hunt the moment their good luck exceeds what is considered “normal” hunting success. Thus. . . Old Spiridon, who habitually kills each and every elk he encounters, stopped hunting altogether after falling ill one day in the forest. He ascribed his illness to his helping spirit, the Owner of the Omulevka River, whom he claimed was in “love” with him and had attempted to kill him by providing him with prey in overabundance. An incident I observed while out trapping with a Sakha from Nelemnoye illustrates the same point. We succeeded in taking sable in great numbers, but when my Sakha friend sensed that our good luck was getting out of hand, he insisted that we take a break. To continue trapping, he assured me, would simply be too risky. My point is that overkilling and not killing reciprocally constitute the “side–other side” of two interdependent resource and risk management strategies. Though any hunter may by an act of will reverse the two so that one takes primacy over the other for the time being, the point to keep in mind is that the two aspects belong together as two sides of one and the same ethnographic reality..

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The elk is found throughout the low forest country, especially where clusters of willow bushes follow the winding river courses. Elk entered the Upper Kolyma region in large numbers only in the 1960s, when it replaced the wild reindeer, which had been the mainstay of the local economy. The only other large animals found are the brown bear, wolf, red fox, wolverine, and lynx. Except for the lynx, all of these animals are common, and all are sought after as prey. Until the mid-1950s the most important fur-bearing animal was the squirrel, but when the sable was reintroduced into the area in the 1950s after having been extinct for more than a century, it became the most hunted fur animal.



# Thinking through Tubes: Flowing H/air and Synesthesia

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## Introduction

In this experimental essay I bring together scattered references to tubes that crop up in the ethnography of Amazonia and attempt to think through these tubes in a more systematic way. What arises is the *tube* as an implicit conceptual category and way of thinking, acting, and ordering the world where the tubes of the body, tubular artifacts, and tubular features in the environment emerge as transformations of one another, and where bodily processes of respiration, digestion, excretion, bleeding, hair growth, sex, gestation, and birth merge into one another. Flows of food, bodily fluids, air, water, smoke, speech, song, music, and ornaments appear as manifestations of the same kind of stuff. Analogies between different tubes and the fungibility of that which flows through them also means that, in musical ritual, flute players become one with their instruments, ornaments take on the character of bodily flow, and sound fuses with color in synesthetic play.

The *tube* is all of this, a shorthand for what are simultaneously a set of objects; processes or flows that these objects make possible; procedures that allow people to direct and control these flows for personal, social, and cosmic ends; and a set of understandings about the roles, positions, and relative standings of men and women.

Having identified the *tube*, I revisit features of Northwest Amazonian ethnography by thinking with and through tubes. The burden of Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's (1998) work on perspectivism is that the Enlightenment legacy of our different cultural views on a single immutable nature and rift between animals and humans makes it hard for moderns to understand Amazonia from an Amazonian's point of view. The Enlightenment that brought us nature and culture also brought us men and women as an opposed pair founded on the substrate of their different anatomies. This, too, can make it difficult to recognize the ideas of people who may start from different premises.

To explore this possibility, I investigate an intriguing parallel between Bonnie Gordon's (2004) discussion of Monteverdi's unruly female singers in the light of classical writings on anatomy and physiology and the unruly female flute players of Northwest Amazonian mythology. Amazonia may be a far cry

from Renaissance Italy, but these women's musical activities share two things in common: their musical activities represent a transgression beyond the bounds of bodily control normally expected of them, and both operate in worlds where music has not yet become separate from song and dance. I also draw on Thomas Laqueur's (1990) discussion of ideas of the body, sex, and gender in classical and early modern Europe. Instead of the one culture/many natures of Amazonian perspectivism, here we find a one-sex/two-genders model of the body and, instead of sex as a category that determines what men and women are "by nature," here it is cultural constructions of men and women, their social rank, place in society, and cultural roles that determine the nature of their sex and body. If Viveiros de Castro's perspectivism can push us out of our familiar habits of thought regarding animals, perhaps this pre-Enlightenment one-sex body in its more familiar European setting may help us recognize an Amazonian counterpart.<sup>1</sup>

My essay is divided into four sections. Following a brief survey of previous discussions on tubes, I move first to a more comprehensive treatment that pays particular attention to *h/air* as a concept embracing various material and immaterial flows.<sup>2</sup> In Section 2, I provide tube-weighted summaries of some Northwest Amazonian mythology to illustrate points already made and pave the way for Section 3, a discussion of an Amazonian version of the one-sex body and the ritual control of its apertures and flows. In line with *h/air* as a transformation between different forms of flow, Section 4 deals with synesthesia between sound and light, music, and ornaments, in the context of an origin myth of Yagé, a hallucinogenic vine (aka ayahuasca – Editor) personified as a child. This myth amounts to an indigenous theory of synesthesia in undifferentiated musical, vocal, and visual patterning as a precursor to processes of de-totalization that brought about human culture and society. Finally, the conclusion suggests a possible basis for the similarity between Amazonian and pre-Enlightenment ideas of the body, emphasizes the key role of music in a philosophy of the *tube*, and suggests that the Northwest Amazonian's version of this philosophy is part and parcel of their exogamic, patrilineal, clan-based social order. My focus is on the Tukanoans, but much of what I have to say applies equally to their Arawakan neighbors.

As something simultaneously physiological, psychological, sociological, and cosmological, the *tube* is an example of a Maussian total social fact. The dense cross-referencing between tubes, flows, and senses and their symbolic ramifications in Upper Rio Negro mythology and ritual merit a whole book. This limits the ambitions of a short essay. I have therefore been selective of my data, pushed it in particular directions, and kept comparative references to a minimum...

## 1. Amazonian Tubes: Previous Treatments

Leaving aside Freudian psychology and slang expressions for body parts, sexual activities, and aspects of character, the *tube* as outlined above seems to play a relatively minor role in contemporary Euro-American thought. This stands in stark contrast to Amazonia, where cultural elaboration of oratory, cannibalism, wind instruments, cigars, blowguns, etc. speaks of a particular interest in tubes and their apertures. Note that the following brief survey of relevant literature

does not pretend to be comprehensive.

In general, most works touching on the subject have tended to privilege a particular tube, sometimes linking it to a few others. Prominent here is the blowgun—linked by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1987, 1988) to pottery and a moral philosophy of the digestive tract; by Peter Rivière (1969) to hair tubes; and by Jean-Pierre Chaumeil (2001, 2007) and Philippe Erikson (2011) to palm trees and flutes. However, even Rivière—who comes close to the topic of this essay—stops short of concluding that breath and hair might be manifestations of the same stuff: *h/air*.

Another line of enquiry is represented by some of the papers in Andrew Russell and Elizabeth Rahman's (2015) volume on tobacco. These draw attention to tubular objects and to breath as vitality, and note the capacity of tobacco smoke to render breath visible and suggest the synesthetic dimensions of tobacco use. Finally, much research has been conducted on wind instruments in lowland South America, a topic well covered in Jonathan Hill and Chaumeil's (2015) edited volume.

... while tubes are (only too obviously) about sex and fertility, they are much more than this. This point is well made in Lévi-Strauss's critique of Freud's analysis of myths and dreams in terms of sexuality. He (1988:193–4) notes that meaning in myth is not transferred from term to term but rather from one category or class of terms to another. There are no grounds for always taking one of these literally and the other figuratively, for metaphors work both ways.

Lévi-Strauss criticizes Freudian psychoanalysis for reducing everything down to sex, but he also misses the full implications of his insights by reducing the *tube* “upwards” to a transcontinental exploration of structural transformations between myths, an exercise that comes at the cost of ethnographic depth. Between the extremes of Freud's sex and Lévi-Strauss's transformations there is room for exploring an extensive middle ground where a moral philosophy of the digestive tract is part of a wider philosophy that weaves together an indigenous understanding of human anatomy, physiology, psychology, and perception with wider reflections on human activities and capacities; social arrangements; the cultural, natural, and physical environment; animals and plants; and the workings of the cosmos. This philosophy is better brought to light by intensive exploration of a single ethnographic case—the peoples of the Upper Rio Negro...

Tukanoans' practical, ritual, and mythological focus on these varied “wind instruments” goes in tandem with a parallel cultural emphasis on tubes. This includes a particular affinity with palm trees; the use of an array of tubular equipment in hunting, fishing, transport, and storage and in the processing and consumption of manioc, tobacco, and coca; and the use of *yagé*, a vine that opens the body-tube at both ends by inducing vomiting and diarrhea, and one likened to both an umbilical cord and the marrow inside a bone-like Yuruparí flute. This emphasis on tubes also includes a symbolic elaboration of *maloca* (Amazonian long house) architecture and its assimilation to the human body, patrilineal social organization associated with ideas of durability, hardness, ancestry, and lineal flow, and the mythological-ritual theme of extra-uterine male birth, all these coinciding as aspects of the *tube*.

## The Tube in Detail

This preliminary discussion is intended partly to anchor the tube back into the everyday world of human experience and productive activities; partly to give a foretaste of the density and richness of Upper Rio Negro *tube* thinking; and partly to supply information that will aid an informed reading of the mythology that follows. Before ethnographic detail, I deal first with the *tube* in purely formal terms—precisely because it is above all a “form” that can be put to many uses.

Referring to the semantic field of natural tubes (mouth, nose, vagina, anus, etc.), Lévi-Strauss observes that these can be anterior/posterior and above/below, and that each may be closed/open and, when open, may absorb or eject. However, a focus on “natural tubes” is an artificial restriction for, as Lévi-Strauss (1988:163) observes, objects such as blowpipes or tobacco pipes, animals such as sloths and howler monkeys, and bodily states such as oral greed and anal incontinence are merely empirical realizations of an underlying formal structure. We will get a better idea of this structure and its range of realizations by adopting a more systematic approach.

In the Northwest Amazonian context, a more complete set of permutations might run as follows (examples in parentheses): a tube may be open at both ends (digestive tube, flute, blowpipe); constricted/closed at one end (womb, throat, pot, *tipití* [an Amazonian tubular press used to drain and dry roots, typically cassava, – Editor], fish trap); or constricted/closed at both ends but open to the side (canoe, beer trough). Animal behavior and human crafts may suggest openness (howler monkey, singer-dancer) or closure (sloth, potter). A tube’s sides may be solid (coca mortar, bone) or porous (*tipití*, gut), and a potential tube may be softer than its interior (bark); harder than its interior (bone, palm trunk); or of uniform density (de-barked sections of trees). A wooden cylinder/rod/trunk may become a tube (canoe from tree trunk) or be one by association (house post as person/flute). Flow through a tube may be normally unidirectional (blowgun, gut, river), normally reversible (breathing), or temporarily reversed (vomiting, spitting). Flow through an aperture may produce a tube (smoke blown through mouth, sunbeam). Finally, in bark-cloth manufacture or a snake shedding its skin, the covering of a more-solid core may be peeled back on itself to produce a tube whose exterior and interior surfaces are continuous—like Lévi-Strauss’s Klein bottle (1988:158–9).

## Materials, Artifacts

... In what follows, I introduce some tubular objects that have been ignored and add new details to already familiar examples.

**H/air, Flow, and Basketry** In Tukanoan languages, hair, fur, feathers, and down are all *hoa*.<sup>3</sup> By extension, kapok (*buya*), palm leaves, and palm-leaf fibers also belong to this set, one I indicate as *h/air*. Along with loudly exhaled tobacco smoke and rustling leaves, these light, airy, and mobile materials make flows of air visible and audible. Likewise, kapok as the piston-flight for blowgun darts gives substance and lethal force to breath just as feather ornaments (*buya bükü*, “mature kapok”) lend visual substance to song and dance.

Shamanic spells also draw analogies between flows of hair and feather ornaments that sprout from the top of the head and the fountains of leaves that sprout from the trunks of palm trees, and between these flows of hair-leaves and the flow of potent sound from flutes. In a Tukano myth (Fulop 1956:87–88), wind, blown by a deity, causes an unopened bunch of paxiuba fruit (*Iriartea exhorrida*) to split open with a loud report that splits open the bodies of two young girls prompting them to menstruate.



**Figure 1.** Tuyuka man with pigtail (Koch-Grünberg, 1909–10)

In past times, a pigtail bound with monkey-fur string was the standard dress of adult men (Figure 1). Attached to this pigtail, or to its contemporary banana-leaf stalk substitute, dancers wore, and still wear, a jaguar-bone tube filled with the creature's fur (Figures 2a and b). The jaguar's roar and the connection between hair and air would suggest that this tube is the visual counterpart of a Yuruparí instrument, one containing fur in lieu of breath and sound. Here we have two hair-tubes: a bone fur-tube and a pigtail called *hoa hoti* ("hair spiral-tube"), with *hoti* being a classifier that also applies to cigars, bark trumpets, bark-wrapped blowpipes, and other spiraled tubes. From this double hair-tube hang hanks of sloth and howler monkey fur, the ensemble serving to augment the hair in the pigtail and constituting a downward flow of *h/air*, vitality and energy tempered by the contrasting qualities of closed sloths and open howler-monkeys.



Figure 2a. Jaguar-bone tubes containing fur (photo by author)



Figure 2b. Jaguar-bone tube in situ on dancer's headdress—visible end-on below the red feather (photo by Brian Moser)

**Feathers** *Maha hoa* (“macaw feathers”), the term for the principal ornament, a yellow-red frontal crown, applies generically to all body ornaments. Ornaments of feathers, fur, and bone are a manifestation of the names, souls, and vitality that mark the identities of different human beings—just as fur color and sound mark the identities of animals. *H/air* as soul and vitality (*üsü*) is connected with the heart and lungs (*üsüa*) that produce breathing and sound. By the same logic, the vibrating leaf vane that gives a flute its sound, voice, and soul is also identified with a hawk feather. *H/air* is the substance of breath, wind, and sound.

The same thinking applies when shamans use spells to insert feather down into the ears of babies to make them hear, learn, and respond to advice. Infants chosen to become dancers are given a special dancer's name and receive a special dose of this materialized sound, one that betokens all the songs and ornaments they will later sing and wear. Again, this demonstrates the connections between *h/air*, feathers, speech, sound, and breath.

Like marrow inside bone, the dancer is said to be contained inside a flute and to share in its life and substance, a relation of the contained to container that also applies to the dancer being contained within the ornaments he wears. In the Tukanoan origin myth, ancestors were initially contained within feather ornaments as pure souls but later hatched from these ornaments to become human beings in the manner of chicks hatching from eggs. *Hoa*, the term for "hair" and "ornament," also applies to any bag-like container, including the scrotum, the stomach, and womb—presumably because hair and ornaments enclose the head as hair encloses the genitals, because string made from human/animal hair and palm fiber is used to make ornaments, and because men's carrying bags were once made from palm fiber. The container-contained relation in the visible and audible exteriorization of something interior applies to *h/air* in general and is something we will meet again below in the connection between hair and menstrual blood.

For the Baniwa, the Anaconda is the owner of basketry, with basketry designs as his patterned skin; for the Tukanoans, basketry and designs derive from the person of Yagé, a twin and transformation of Yuruparí (see below). Yuruparí's body has a porous skin that exudes a flow of sound and palm-fiber hair as a tubular basketry tipití exudes a flow of manioc juice—the proximity between *nyukaa* "palm fiber" and *nyuka* "manioc juice" is suggestive here. The legs of dancers are also painted with black designs that reproduce the tipití's weaving. The inference would be that, like the body of Yuruparí, dancers have porous bodies that exude music, song, and ornament.

In sum, *h/air* has to do with various tangible and intangible flows. Its concrete referents point, on the one hand, toward substances such as blood, semen, hair, breath, speech, and sound that flow from tubes and are indices of inner soul, vitality, energy, potency, and generative capacity; on the other hand, they point toward ornaments, basketry, and other skin-like porous coverings made from hair or fibers that are colored or patterned exteriorizations of these flows from the interior.

I draw attention to these other tubes and materials for two reasons. Firstly, because part of the sense of the blowguns, flutes, and tubular cigars already considered in the literature lies in their relation to other, neglected counterparts with which they form a set and, secondly, because crafted objects and the crafts of music, dance, song, and oratory are also like "stuffs" that flow from tubular bodies, arms, and hands of people—just as fruit and leaves appear to flow from the branches of trees.<sup>4</sup> Lévi-Strauss's (1998) observation of an analogical relationship between craft specialization and psychological traits in jealous potters touches on one aspect of this. But the relation between body, craft, and character is as much indexical as it is metaphorical. The stuffs that flow from peoples' body-tubes—what they say, sing, make, and wear—are indices of their capacities, strength, skill, knowledge, ability, beauty, and reputation.



Figure 4. Top/bottom symmetry of paxiuba palm (Wallace 1853)

**Palms** ... (9) Hill (2009b:100) notes the similarity between palm trees and the bodies of the men wearing palm-leaf crowns on their heads and bunches of fruit on their backs as they bring tree fruits into the house to the sound of Yuruparí instruments. The inference here would be an identity between the bodies of these men and the body of Yuruparí, a being whose flesh is fruit, whose bones are flutes, and whose porous body emits loud music and palm-fiber hair.

Yuruparí instruments are made from paxiuba palm. The stilt roots of this palm emerging from a slit in the trunk can look like a penis/clitoris emerging from a vulva..., a feature suggesting ambiguity between male and female. In addition, the leaves and stilt roots of the palm, its “hair” and “genitals,” suggest symmetry between top and bottom (Figure 4). I shall return to these horizontal male/female and vertical top/bottom homologies in Section 3...

Finally, thin strips of the same palm wood used in making Yuruparí instruments and blowguns are also used to make the woven screens that serve both as fish traps and as seclusion compartments in which girls at menarche and boys at initiation are confined and shielded from view.

Below I suggest that the figure of Yuruparí, who swallows initiate boys, is all of anaconda, paxiuba palm, tipití, and fish trap. With *yuru-* as “mouth” and *-parí* as “woven screen/fish trap,” his name alludes to this. This suggests that initiates inside Yuruparí’s belly (in myth) or inside seclusion compartments (in ritual) are, at once, an anaconda’s meal, manioc mash in a tipití, and fish in a trap.



A preliminary conclusion from this exploration of the *tube* would be that all of human life, from individual capacities and personality up to grand cosmology, is encompassed in the relations between whole body-tubes, in the relation between the body and in its tubular parts, and in the apertures and flows of these tubes. The figure known as Kuwai/Yuruparí represents this tubular encompassment of life. The rituals and mythology associated with this figure are about explaining, controlling, and perpetuating life. They do this through two principles working together. The first is a web of analogy between the tubes, orifices, and flows of the top and bottom halves of the male and female body, and between these body-tubes and tubes in the world—artifacts, birds, animals, fish, snakes, palm trees, etc. The second principle is a play of fractal self-similarity or relation between one and many, container and contained, continuity and discontinuity, or the abstract *tube* and concrete tubes. Ritual and mythology are concerned with joint processes of totalization (composing tubes within tubes) and detotalization, and therefore differentiation (when contained tubes become entities in their own right). Both principles are evident in Upper Rio Negro mythology concerning the creation of the first beings, the character of Yuruparí, and the women's theft of Yuruparí flutes to which I now turn.

## 2. Upper Rio Negro Mythology

... to put some of the material discussed above into context, to highlight the recurrence of the *tube* theme, and to pick up some material on the body and the theme of totalization/de-totalization that will be used in the discussion that follows. To further these aims and to alert the reader to the *tube*, I provide explanatory notes [indicated by bold square brackets] with variants/alternatives indicated by a slash.

### Tukanoan Creation

Before people became different from objects and men different from women, the bodies of deities had stools for hips; gourds for hearts, lungs, and womb; gourd-stands for bodies and legs; and rattle lances for vertebral columns (S. Hugh-Jones 2009). An androgynous “female” deity fertilized coca/sweet fruit juice in a gourd (Figure 5) with smoke blown from a cigar held in a holder [cigar holder = female genitals (see below); cigar = penis/fish. Cigars, bark trumpets, and blowpipes with bark binding are all “*hoti*,” objects of spiral construction]. The combined cigar smoke and coca/juice created five deities with bodies as five malocas/compartments within the universe/maloca. One of these deities [a container of ornaments or “feather box”] vomited ornament-bird spirits that entered an Anaconda-Canoe as ornament-fish and travelled up the Milk River, an umbilical tube/yagé vine connecting past with present and ancestors with descendants. The Anaconda-Canoe shed its skin as it swam, creating the river up which it moved. The canoe stopped at many rapids or transformation houses [like joints between bones, rapids are points of access between earth and underworld or present and past] before stopping at the center of the earth, where human beings first hatched from the egg-like ornaments and then emerged through a hole in the Ipanoré rapid as the ancestors of all human groups. [The Anaconda-Canoe is a nested figure of totalization/de-totalization.

On descending scales of inclusion, he gives rise to a tree-like Rio Negro or Milk River with branch-like affluents, to all of humanity, to all Tukanoans, to any one Tukanoan group, to any particular clan and, potentially as a father, to a male sibling-group. As a “house” (S. Hugh-Jones 1995), a clan is a tubular body comprising multiple persons, houses, tubular flutes, and ornaments.]

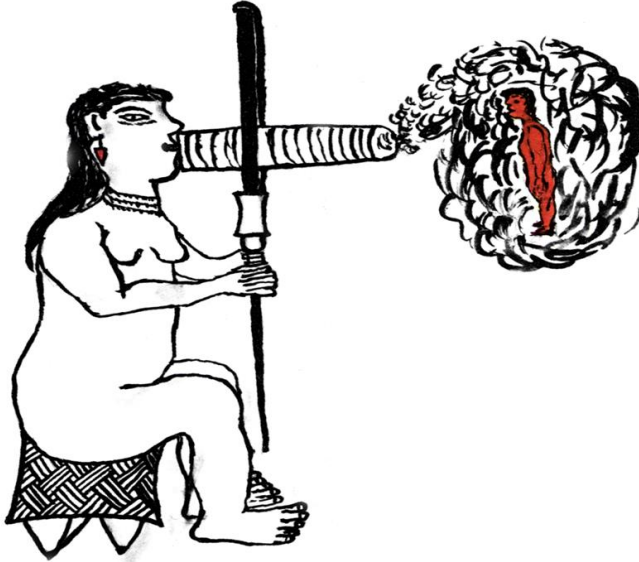


Figure 5. Desana deity Yebá Bêló creates child from cigar smoke (Luiz Lana)

### Yuruparí

A “female” deity was inseminated through her mouth by cigar smoke/caimo juice/coca by a man/men identified as bone. Lacking a vagina, she was opened by a large-mouthed jacundá fish or by a cigar-holder that became her genitals. She gave birth to a child with jaguar fangs, incessant thirst, and loud cries whose body parts correspond to the animals, birds, and fish of the forest and to named wind instruments. Thick hair covered Yuruparí’s body,<sup>5</sup> and music flowed from holes in his body, the sounds expanding the universe. [Yuruparí is both howler-monkey (open) and sloth (closed), animals that supply hair used in dance headdresses and Yuruparí masks. His hair is also palm fiber used to make string. Leaking sound/hair/palm fiber, Yuruparí’s porous body is like a *tipití* (*hino-bü*, “anaconda-closed tube”) that leaks manioc juice. Yuruparí, a synthesis of animals and plants, has particular connections to palms/trees, their wood/his bones, and their fruit/his flesh. The outputs of the skin/bodies of Yuruparí/animals/palms, i.e., their behavior, sounds, and appearance (colored hair, body markings, colored fruits, etc.) are indices of fertility, growth, and vitality. Yuruparí is also a noise-producing, brightly patterned anaconda, the origin of basketry designs and bird colors.]

As Yuruparí’s mother gave birth, the universe expanded and her blood gave

rise to the reddish-black [blood-like] rivers of the region. She did not see her child, as the men took and gave him to a sloth foster-mother who Yuruparí sucked dry, ripping off her breast. [With sloths exemplifying oral/anal continence, this sloth mother's closure would temper Yuruparí's noisy, leaky, greedy openness.]

Sent to live in the sky with his Sun father, Yuruparí later returned to earth, appearing to some boys making music with wasps tethered on strings inside a pot. Yuruparí told the boys that he was real Yuruparí music but, as they had now seen him, they should undergo initiation with seclusion [containment], fasting, and not seeing/being seen by women [continence]. As Yuruparí revealed himself to them, the sound of his body expanded the world from micro-to macro-scale. Sending the women away, the boys' father put the boys in a seclusion compartment.

Yuruparí then appeared to the initiate boys, telling them they could eat raw fruit but not meat, fish, or any roasted food. To temper their hunger, he first offered them japurá fruit to smell, then, appearing as a woolly monkey, he tempted them with uacú fruit thrown from a tree. [The sexual smell of roasted uacú seeds is the subject of ribald comment. This temptation by fruit pre-figures the initiates' need to control their developing sexuality.] The elder boys roasted and ate the seeds as the youngest looked on. The boys' lack of self-control caused a furious Yuruparí to revert to his former hyper-open state. Thunderous noise and saliva poured from his mouth, giving rise to forest vines while floods of tears/rain poured from his eyes, causing the waters to rise and the universe to expand again. His mouth/anus opened as the entrance to a cave/hollow log into which the initiates ran for shelter; the youngest boy returned home to report what had happened. Yuruparí flew up to the sky, his body emitting smelly farts and belches as the initiates rotted within him. [From Yuruparí/the universe as a single, all-encompassing tube or maloca, we now have fractal tubes-within-tubes: initiates within Yuruparí; seclusion compartment within a maloca; maloca within the universe-maloca.]

The boys' father sent a messenger to Yuruparí telling him to return to earth and release them. Yuruparí first refused but succumbed when offered his favorite food/beer. Arriving as a fully ornamented dancer, Yuruparí vomited the initiates into manioc sieves placed on the ground/as bones into a compartment [as tipitís "vomit" manioc pulp and anacondas regurgitate prey]. Yuruparí told the men that he had killed the boys for disobeying him and that should they wish to kill him in revenge they could only do so with fire. The men built a fire and pushed him in.

As Yuruparí's spirit ascended to the sky, his body and ornaments [trees and leaves] caught fire in a universal conflagration [burning swidden]. From his ashes a paxiuba palm sprang up, an umbilical cord/*axis mundi* allowing shamans and dead souls to pass between underworld, earth, and heaven. [Analogues include the rattle lance, a tubular vertebral column that unites heaven and earth; and the Milk River, a horizontal umbilical cord uniting West with East.] The universe then shrank back to its former single-maloca scale.

The Universe People cut sections of the palm as flutes and trumpets (Yuruparí's bones) that they distributed to each human group. [Sectioning and distributing the palm brings about a de-totalization/differentiation of all that Yuru-

pari's body encompasses: of humans, birds, animals, fish, trees, and plants and their diverse appearances/sounds; of animate bodies from artifacts; of different varieties of music, song, dance, and ornamentation owned by different groups. Compare the de-totalization of the Anaconda-Canoe (above) and of Yagé (below).] Tapir threatened to use his trumpet [voice/throat] to stop women from giving birth/eat future human beings; Howler Monkey, initially with a small, feeble whistle, tricked Tapir into swapping instruments. Howler monkeys now use their loud voices to assist life processes, whilst tapirs, with feeble whistles and fastidious shitting habits, threaten to ingest newborn babies into their retentive anuses, a birth in reverse.

Yurupari's burned hair became the hair of the Black Sloth and Douroucoulí Monkey, the Owners of sickness. Sorcery, curare poison, and fish-poison sprang from his ashes and his soul gave rise to sickness in the form of spirit-darts. [In his negative aspect, Yurupari is like a blowgun: he blows darts tipped with kapok ("hair") at one end and poison at the other. Compare Yurupari's mother: first lacking a vagina, she later became a sexually voracious ogress with poison vines for pubic hair, poisonous creatures, in her vagina, and was responsible for creating plagues and sickness. Yurupari encompasses undifferentiated sound, color, appearance, gender, and living entities, and also life-giving/life-destroying powers, persons, and substances.]

### **Women Steal the Yurupari Flutes**

A curious sister overheard her father telling her brother to bathe at dawn. The son remained asleep, but his sister went to the port and found a flute. Trying first with her vagina, she only succeeded in playing it when a jacundá fish used his mouth to show her how. Infused with new powers, she and her fellow women stole the men's flutes and ornaments and staged their own sexually liberated Yurupari ritual. [The women now repossess and re-totalize the body of the child stolen from them and de-totalized as flutes.] As the instruments sounded, the scale of the universe expanded anew to the scale we know today.

The men tried to take back the flutes, but the women shot darts at them from the blowgun-like flutes. The men took up the women's agricultural work and began to menstruate [suggesting a double equivalence between flutes and menstruation and between manioc tubers/flutes and children].

To take back their instruments, the men used piston-whistles made from a vine created from a thread of their spittle. Hidden in a fish trap, the men aimed the explosive sound of their whistles at the women's vaginas, causing them to menstruate. The men took back their flutes, but the women hid some in their vaginas. One woman fled to the East to become the Mother of White People and manufactured goods, another fled to the West to become the Mother of Feather Ornaments. These twin sisters are avatars of the twin mothers of Yurupari and Yagé that we shall meet below.

### **3. Apertures and flows**

Northwest Amazonians know well that the basic body-form is that of one tube, the gut, contained within another tube, the body wall. Further tubes and apertures include the ears, eyes, nose, mouth, trachea, vagina, penis, veins and

arteries, breasts, umbilicus, fontanel, vertebral column, and long bones, with the joints between bones as further apertures. In addition, body hair and perspiration bear witness to countless smaller holes piercing the body's surface.

Entries and exits through joints are regulated by the application of black paint, but the open, leaky bodies of small infants are at constant risk of intrusion by dangerous spirit-forces. To calm babies and seal their bodies, water is splashed on their heads and spell-charged tobacco smoke blown on the fontanel and umbilicus. The umbilicus serves as a two-way channel connecting the body to the rivers, ancestors and sources of origin in the East and allowing inward transfer of personal names. These names also determine personal characteristics such as hunting and fishing skills, beauty and physical attractiveness, and craft skills such as making pottery, weaving, and dancing. Links between umbilicus, river, name, and ancestors explain why the stories of the Tukanooan anaconda-ancestors' travels form the basis of spells used to confer personal names.

The fontanel aperture persists into adult life as the hair parting and hair whorl. The flow of women's hair from this upper exit is associated with the flow of menstrual blood below. Women are said to menstruate when their hair, normally worn at the back of the head, falls in front of their eyes. This parallel between an upper-body flow of unconstrained female hair and lower-body flow of blood chimes in with Rivière's (1969:155) suggestion of "an opposition between virile activity associated with the constrained hair of men and passivity and laziness associated with women's hair," for menstruation is considered the quintessence of laziness and, as noted above, adult men previously wore their hair in bound pigtails.

Inside these body-tubes, processes of respiration, digestion, reproduction, gestation, and birth take place, each one accompanied by entries and exits of food, vomit, air, hair, and body fluids. Anatomy and physiology thus serve to exemplify two key ideas: that the body is at once single and multiple, a tube and many tubes, an idea echoed in the processes of totalization and de-totalization described in the myths above; and that the processes and products of life are to be understood as interconnected flows.

### **The One-Sex body: Galen and Aristotle in Northwest Amazonia**

To push this analysis further, I now draw briefly on Laqueur's (1990) and Gordon's (2004) accounts of a one-sex model of the human body that first appears in the writings of Aristotle and Galen but was still current in seventeenth-century Europe. Because they deal with ideas more explicitly formulated and closer to home, discussions of this European material may help us in recognizing similar ideas that can be deduced from Northwest Amazonian mythology and ritual practices.

For the purposes of this exercise, the European one-sex model can be stripped of its historical and ethnographic detail and reduced to the following propositions:

1. The male genitals are an everted version of their inverted, female counterparts so that cervix/vagina = penis; labia = foreskin; ovaries = testes; and uterus = scrotum.
2. Women's bodies are relatively wet and cold. The everted, more complete genitals of men result from the greater heat, dryness, and vitality of the male

body, a sign of men's superior status and greater moral worth and testimony to a hierarchical social and cosmic order.

3. The upper half of the body is the analogue of the lower half. The female mouth, uvula, tongue, and throat are analogues of the vulva, clitoris, and vagina that connect to a stomach-uterus imagined as a closed mouth. A woman's voice was believed to change when she had intercourse because "her upper neck responds in sympathy to her lower neck" (Gordon 2004:4).

4. Slippage between metaphorical and causal connections between different tubes and apertures means that breath-like, soul-like *pneuma* circulating in the body is implicated in ejaculation and conception. Consistent with this, women singers are less likely to menstruate and more prone to infertility. More generally, it follows that different bodily flows are linked and that the different body fluids, including air, fat, and hair resulting from respiration and digestion are fungible versions of the same material. Health and well-being depend on a balance of fluids and flows with wet and dry, hot and cold as the basis of the humoral system.

In Northwest Amazonia, similar principles are being played out in a very different cultural context, so we should not expect to find exact parallels. What matters is that, taken overall, the principles are sufficiently alike for us to use their expression in one context as clues to understanding their expression in another. Helen King's (2013) caveats about the coexistence of plural understandings of the body in classical Europe doubtless apply in Amazonia too. Bearing these caveats in mind, I think the myths summarized above supply good evidence that something akin to this European one-sex model also applies in Northwest Amazonia.

The stories summarized above describe an initial state where there is no sex. Deities are gendered but have identical bodies that lack genitals. They create other beings through their mouths, insemination being achieved either by blowing tobacco smoke from penis-like cigars into womb-like gourds or by ingesting viscous, semen-like fruit juice. Gestation takes place in stomachs and gourds, and birth is by vomiting and regurgitation.<sup>6</sup> Only later do these deities receive distinctive sexual organs, first in the form of two artifacts, the flute and cigar-holder, and then in the flesh. Finally, in the Yuruparí myth incident where the men recuperate their flutes from the women, we find clear indication that the female vagina and male flute—read "penis"—are inverted/everted lower-body homologues. The female throat and male flute would be their inverted/everted upper-body counterparts.

The story of unruly women who steal men's flutes, become sexually forward, and cease to behave and work as women finds an inverted echo in Monteverdi's unruly female singers. According to Gordon (2004), the currency of Galen's theories in late-sixteenth-century Italy meant that the stream of heated, song-laden breath flowing from the beating throats and mobile, open mouths of women singers was tantamount to a flow of spirit-blood-semen ready to inseminate the eager listener's ears—so much so that the allusive words of their songs and the vocal articulation of the vowels played explicitly upon this idea, something that also cast doubt upon the chastity of female singers. However, whereas late-Renaissance men doubtless found this transgression across bodily and social boundaries both threatening and titillating, Northwest Amazonian

men find the thought of women seeing, let alone playing, flutes as well beyond the pale. Likewise, the spontaneous, improvised songs that women sing at beer feasts and on other occasions mostly lack any sexual or flirtatious content and dwell instead on the lonely predicament of an in-married wife living with relative strangers separated from her kin and natal home (see also Chermela 2003; Hoseman 2013). In Northwest Amazonia, a male desire to control women's "chronically leaky bodies" (Gordon 2004) is clearly reflected in Yuruparí myths. In one, the "perfect woman" is defined as patient, able to keep secrets and not curious (Stradelli 1890:835); in another, women who stole the flutes are rendered speechless as punishment (Duvernay-Bolens 1967:65). With breath, sound, and flute music as semen-like soul-stuff, the musical penetration of female bodies that causes menstruation and pregnancy and turns male children into adults is a strictly male prerogative.<sup>7</sup>

In line with this inverted echo, the Northwest Amazonian version of this one-sex model differs in a significant way from its European counterpart. Whilst the external flute-penis as agent and visible sign of men's higher status is clearly there, in Northwest Amazonia this horizontal homology-with-contrast between everted male and inverted female genitals is overlain by an equally hierarchical, but vertical, homology-with-contrast between the upper and lower body, one also suggested in the symmetry between the roots and leaves of the *paxiuba* palm.

The spatial contrast between upper and lower body also has temporal and hierarchical dimensions. The body's most obvious flows, those of the digestive and urinary tracts, both run from top to bottom—as rivers in Northwest Amazonia run from west to east. With menstruation and childbirth moving in the same direction, this downward flow has female connotations. Like the upstream, east–west journey of the ancestral Anaconda, the generative male countercurrents of ejaculation, vomiting, singing, and music-making through the equivalent structures of penis, throat, and flute, run upward from bottom to top to emerge from the male head. The myths above present this oral mode of reproduction as temporally prior and superior to its female counterpart.

By analogy between the top and bottom halves of the body, the upward flow of hair, ornaments, and musical breath from the male head is like a flow of spirit-semen from the penis just as the flow of hair from the female head is the analogue of a flow of blood from below (see also Karadimas 2010). This adds a new dimension to the oft-remarked association between ritual wind instruments and menstruation in Amazonia and to the fact that women must hear but not see these instruments. What they can see is the upper-body visual counterpart of these instruments, the ornaments on men's heads. To see ornaments is the equivalent of hearing music; to see the flutes would be tantamount to seeing men's penises. The material above also suggests that this control of seeing and hearing should also be seen in the wider context of a general control over the body's apertures and their flows.

### Well-Tempered Apertures

In the figure of Yuruparí we find a character pitched between two extremes. He is "male" yet "female" in his openness, the counterpart of the "female" deities who act as cigar-blowing, fertilizing "men." He also moves between quiescent

closure and terrifying openness accompanied by flowing noise and hair, flooding water, and cannibalistic behavior. The sweet, restrained sounds of Yuruparí flutes and the bellowing roar that pours from open-mouthed trumpets embody these extremes in musical and organological form. Between flute and trumpet lies the whole of life.

Like deities in myth, Northwest Amazonian newborn children are effectively sexless and genderless but soon receive a name from the clan's stock of names. The clan is at once the flute-bone body of a single, named ancestor and also many bodies, this ancestor's children, their names, and their flutes. The name the child receives, the name of an ancestor and of clan members past and present, shares this dual quality. The name and its accompanying spells determine the child's growth and development and its future as a talented adult—a potter, manioc cultivator, and producer of beer in the case of a girl, or a hunter, dancer, or shaman in the case of a boy.

Fetched from a downriver transformation house, the name repeats the journey of the Anaconda-Canoe who swam upriver against the west–east, top–bottom flow of the universe/house/body to de-totalize his body in vomiting his cargo of people, who then emerged through a hole in the rocks like babies at birth. It is only too easy to read all this in terms of bodily functions—but, as noted above, such metaphors work both ways round.

The body of a woman giving birth is in a maximum state of openness. Her child, an extension of her body, a tube previously within her tube and attached to her by a tube, shares her open state—children are super leaky and prone to lose body fluids and souls. To close them up, shamans blow tobacco on their fontanels while mothers splash water on their heads and bodies and paint them to make them invisible to the penetrating eyes and bodies of spirits. But a balance must be struck. Were this closing to be overdone, the child would not eat, grow, learn to speak, heed its parent's advice, nor would it begin to work, to make things, or to dance and sing.

For children of both sexes, the rituals and restrictions of puberty are a process of sexing and further gendering, a controlled opening of orifices and tempering of their flows. People who have any voluntary or involuntary contact with spirit-ancestors risk a state of excessive openness (*wisiose*), where vomiting, diarrhea, and sweating can drain the victim's strength and vitality until they die. This vertical draining fits with wider Tukanoan ideas about the constitution of the individual body and its fractal, contained relation to the lineal, tube-like body of the clan. The chronic instability of a body in constant risk of lateral or horizontal transformation into animal or spirit, so often reported regarding other parts of Amazonia, plays a relatively minor role in Tukanoan mythology and is rarely mentioned in daily life.

If openness is risky, it is also necessary for attaining adulthood—and not just because adults have sex and reproduce. Adults must be open because they must see, hear, and talk to be competent at all. They must also be open because the manual, verbal, and musical skills that make up their personalities, reputation, and capacity to exchange with others require openness. However, as the Yuruparí story indicates, excessive, uncontrolled openness can be dangerous, destructive, and poisonous. To control and channel the potentially dangerous opening of the body, attention is focused on its entries and exits: by seclusion in



a trap-like compartment—enclosure in a tube; by hair cutting—a regulation of flow; by verbal counseling—through the ears; by verbal spells—blown into food and eaten through the mouth; by strict bodily discipline—not looking at the sun or at people and avoiding their gaze; and by a strict diet that avoids signs of openness or excess—eating small mouthfuls from a stick, avoiding animals or fish with evident blood, and abstaining from cooked food smelling of roasted fat.

A number of factors, including their talkativeness, attractiveness to men, and that menstruation and childbirth appear to *happen to* them all seem to suggest that women are, “by nature,” what Gordon (2004:3) calls “leaky vessels.” Hence the “perfect” woman in the Yuruparí story mentioned above—verbally, visually, and sexually continent. By contrast, the opening of young boys requires human intervention. Traditionally boys had their ear lobes and nasal septa pierced for the insertion of tubular cane plugs. At the beginning of time, Ayawa, Yuruparí in another guise, hummed loudly, twirled his patterned earplug and used his breath to create the hair-whorl on the crown of the head, expanding the space of the world as he did so (Trupp 1977:31). The association between hair, hair-whorl, fontanel, ear-piercing, and the bleeding that the latter causes would suggest that piercing the ears is an upper-body equivalent of menstruation, another facet of the male menstruation associated with initiation and Yuruparí instruments. With plugs in his pierced earlobes and down in his ear holes, a newly initiated young man is ready for insemination with the music and ritual knowledge that senior men will pass to him.

Attention to flow from the upper body is reinforced by the initiate’s obligation to rise and vomit water at the river before dawn, an act sometimes accompanied by a flow of water vomited onto his head from the mouths of flutes held by senior men. Bathing and vomiting counteract the laziness associated with menstruation — it was because a lazy son failed to rise early and vomit that his sisters got hold of the flutes and men began to menstruate.

Following initiation, young men begin to chant, sing, and wear ornaments on their heads, activities that all reinforce this upper-body flow. But not too much: initiates eat only small morsels held on a toothpick and must cover their mouths as they eat and when adult men chant they hold a tubular fist over their mouth to direct their breath and speech and moderate their open body. A woman can see and should admire the ornaments on a man’s head, but she should see neither his flute nor his penis. Likewise, a man will see and admire the hair on a woman’s head, but he should not see her pubic hair, her vagina, or blood and infants emerging from there.

The opening of the initiate’s head and upper body contrasts with a more balanced approach to his lower half. When he is first shown the flutes, these are blown over his penis and he is beaten with whips that mark and pierce his skin. From neck down, his body is covered with a uniform coating of black skin dye with no color, no design, and, by implication, no sound. The dye closes the entry and exit points in his skin and joints, rendering his body impervious and invisible to spirits. During rituals in later life, his joints will remain the same uniform black but the areas between are now painted with designs that replicate the weaving of a tipití. Like the patterned, porous Yuruparí, he, too, is now like a tipití.

Menarche for girls and initiation for boys are followed by extended periods of seclusion in special compartments. As time passes, elder men teach boys to make baskets whilst adult women teach girls to make pots. Girls also learn to make beer, spitting out its chewed, starchy substrate to make a product that will later be vomited out from the mouths of men. Advice flows into these novice's ears as crafted objects flow from their hands and fingers and when their seclusion is over girls and boys present their pots and baskets to cross-sex ritual partners who prefigure their future spouses.

The Baniwa once exchanged their exquisite, painted pottery alongside gifts of beer during rituals of ceremonial exchange between affinal groups (Journet 1995:262–3). My guess would be that these pots were exchanged against baskets, as Tukanoans still exchange fish for meat and feather ornaments for bamboo stamping tubes. Between clans, tubular goods flow back and forth in tandem with the flow of sisters and daughters who provide their husbands with a flow of children.

The seclusion, dieting, and other restrictions that accompany this adolescent training add up to a careful control of body apertures and moderation of their flows. Much the same control and moderation accompanies the learning and execution of any craft or productive activity, not only the making of artifacts but also hunting, fishing, chanting, singing, and dancing and the processes involved in the procreation and fabrication of whole persons— infants, children, and adolescents. Lévi-Strauss (1988) may well be right to highlight the analogies that make potters jealous and render making pots (closed tubes) incompatible with menstruation (open tube). However, the restrictions and control that apply to pot making also apply when men make baskets (porous tubes) and even more so when they make feather ornaments, an activity marked by the same restrictions as menstruation. The same seclusion, dieting, and restrictions on behavior apply to such a diverse range of productive activities that the common denominator cannot lie solely in an analogical relation between personal condition and product. I suggest that it also lies in the idea of flow, in production and products as indices of flow, and in the self-making that comes from the making of things.

#### 4. Synesthesia: Vision and Hearing

The body of Yuruparí that encompasses open/closed, male/female, young/old, and fish/bird is also a porous body that emits a stream of music and body hair, two manifestations of the same stuff—*h/air*. I now turn to consider in detail this transformational, fungible relation between music and colored ornament, sound and light.

Strictly defined, synesthesia is relatively uncommon but, loosely understood, it is an everyday experience. The brain combines information from different sensory inputs; we talk of “chromatic scales,” “noisome smells,” “colorful speech and music,” and the “rhythm” of visual designs; we take for granted the interplay between speech, facial expression, and gesture in conversation and exploit them to the full in theater, cinema, and ritual. We also tend to forget that the idea of music, especially instrumental music, as something separate from song, dance, and visual display, is of relatively recent origin and foreign to Amazonian

peoples.



**Figure 6.** Above, Yuruparí as aggressive sloth-jaguar (Wright 2015); below, Yuruparí as musical dancer (Luiz Lana).

Synesthesia is relevant here in three interlinked ways: Firstly, in the interplay of different senses evident in Northwest Amazonian ritual, where song, dance, and instrumental music combine with the strong tastes of beer and yagé, the smells of tobacco smoke, beeswax, incense, and aromatic herbs, and the pain of whipping; secondly, in the oft-remarked transposability between music or song, on the one hand, and graphic designs, weaving patterns, body decoration, masks, and other artifacts throughout Amazonia (an area where, as Severi [2014:46] observes, “synesthesia is everywhere”), on the other; and thirdly, in the explicit separation of the senses in rituals involving musical instruments that women must *hear* but must not *see*.

Implicit in Yuruparí's musical, hairy body is an indigenous theory of the relation between sound and light, hearing and seeing, or music and pattern. This theory is made explicit in the story of Yagé presented below and is directly related to the sensations that men experience as they drink yagé in the context of rituals that are explicitly orchestrated to produce synesthesia *sensu stricto*. The stories of Yuruparí and Yagé both suggest that sound and color are fungible transformations of the same kind of stuff—*h/air* that is all of blood, hair, ornament, breath, energy, vitality, and “soul” or “spirit.”

For Upper Rio Negro peoples, birds and fish are prime exemplars of combined sound and color, their body parts and behavior providing materials and models for ritual. A major concern of these rituals is the coordination and integration of the human life cycle and annual round with various astronomical, seasonal, and ecological cycles marked by the reproductive behavior of birds and fish.

Birds are the prototypes of all wind instruments. Yuruparí instruments, called *minia* (“birds, pets”), were originally colored birds in a cage, and only took on avian form when discovered by women (Fulop 2009:107). The striking songs and mating displays of birds provide explicit prototypes for Tukanoan dance festivals. Dancing is compared to flying, with several dance-songs relating to myths about bird flight and with choreography modeled on the wheeling, soaring flight of wood ibises and some of the dance steps that accompany Yuruparí flute music named after bird displays. In addition, with their engraved designs, feather ornamentation and dancing players, Yuruparí flutes are not merely musical instruments but also instruments of visual display.

These links between sound and vision, between song and dance, are also material. Dance ornaments are made mainly from colored feathers but also incorporate animal fur, bones, and teeth. As we have seen, these are visual icons of animal sounds and other behavioral characteristics that adhere to a dancer's body along with the ankle rattles and elbow bracelets with hanging snail shells and beetle elytra that clash and tinkle as he sings.

Dance ornaments also share the association between Yuruparí instruments and menstruation, generically because menstruation and bird molting are considered to be the same process and specifically because the spectacular white plumes that egrets molt after breeding are incorporated into flowing panaches that form a key component of the ornaments worn on the head. Ideally, the woven base of these panaches incorporates hair shorn from the heads of young girls at menarche.

Egret plumes have specific associations with the rainy season and exemplify a more general link between *h/air* and a series of analogous seasonal or temporal states of transformation, rejuvenation, and periodicity indicated by the term *gamo* (f.)/*gamü* (m.). This term applies to molting birds, skin-shedding snakes and insects, animals in estrous, menstruating women, and boys undergoing initiation rituals, all states that share in common a detachment of blood, skin, hair, or feathers from the body. At puberty, both sexes have their hair shorn and are painted with black dye whose slow disappearance marks a change of skin.

As explained above, the sight of hair causes women to menstruate—just as men are said to menstruate when they see and hear the sounds of hirsute, feather-ornamented flutes.<sup>8</sup> Dimitri Karadimas's (2010:25) observation that

“hair is the visible aspect or part of an invisible blood or the exteriorization of an internal blood, an *extruda* of the body and person” captures the simultaneously internal/external, contained/container quality of *h/air*.



**Figure 7.** Migrating birds become fish (Juvêncio Cardoso/Adelson Lopes da Silva/Instituto Socioambiental)

The connection between birds and flutes suggests equivalence, in the mode of moderation, between birdsong, melodious flute music, and feather ornaments, the latter a form of male soul-stuff or semen. Yuruparí's wide-open body that exudes sound, hair, and smell suggests a further equivalence, this time in the mode of excess, between the loud, raucous, threatening noise of trumpets, body hair, and flowing blood, the “female” counterpart of semen.<sup>9</sup> This contrast between Yuruparí in modes of excess and moderation is well illustrated by two drawings of him, the former by a Baniwa shaman's apprentice and the latter by a Desana artist (Figure 6).

In sum, sound and color, seeing and hearing, are inextricably linked in the human and avian worlds. Birds are color, sound, and movement just as ritual aerophones are birds, as rituals involve music, song, dance, body-paint, and ornament, and as the word *basa* means all of instrumental music, song, and dance.

Much of this also applies to aquatic fish, the counterparts of celestial birds, as creatures who share birds' gregarious behavior and opposition to terrestrial human beings. When the rainy season changes to summer, flocks of migrating birds first appear then disappear again, returning to where they came from in the form of fish (Figure 7). As the rains begin and the waters rise again, shoals

of aracú fish swim upriver to spawn in the flooded forests. Their black and red breeding colors are their body paint, their swirling movements and loud rumbling noises their dances, and the rains their beer.

This cyclical alternation between fish and birds provides a model for the human life cycle. In the Tukanoan origin myth, humans start as birds, then swim upriver as fish-ornaments inside an Anaconda-Canoe. As adults, they spend their time on earth as bird-like beings in a round of ornamented song and dance, ending their days buried along with their ornaments to return downstream to begin the cycle anew.

Like birds, fish are intimately connected with flutes and trumpets and directly identified with them. Stored underwater, these instruments are fish and anacondas in rivers—tubes within tubes. Fish have internal, tubular swim bladders, and it was a tubular, big-mouthed jacundá fish who pierced the vagina of Yuruparí's mother, allowing her to give birth and who told women how to play the flutes they stole. Likewise, the Baniwa use *kulirrina* catfish trumpets with broad mouths and striking black-on-white designs (body paint) in their ceremonial exchanges of food. The sound of these trumpets imitates the sound of spawning catfish; their dances are named after aracú species and, overall, they mediate an analogy between the spawning of fish and human reproduction, song, and dance (Hill 2011a; Journet 2011). These and other associations link birds and fish together as creatures of inseparable color, movement, and sound, a quality they share with human beings and their Yuruparí.

Despite this co-presence of sound, color, and design, discussions of ritual aerophones often make relatively little of the instruments' visual dimension, focusing instead on the contrast between men who both see and hear the instruments and women who only hear them. Jean-Michel Beaudet is the sole author in the Hill and Chaumeil (2011) volume to draw explicit attention to the nonsonorous (visual, motor, verbal, olfactory) dimensions of Amerindian music and to the nonvisual, nonmotor elements (sonorous, verbal, olfactory) of choreographic systems. Beaudet also suggests that women not seeing flutes should be set in the wider context of other things that men and women do or do not do. Men, who play aerophones, do not grate manioc; women grate manioc, make beer, and sing songs but never play aerophones.

We can take this suggestion further in the light of my discussion above, for another thing women do not do is wear feather ornaments; the only exceptions known to me are the Enawenê-nawê's Kateoko ritual and the Xinguano Yamurikuma where women wearing ornaments and enacting the story of their unruly sisters' theft of flutes sing songs that are verbal counterparts of men's flute music. Quoting Viveiros de Castro, Ulrike Prinz suggests that men's flute music and women's song and dance both "activate the powers of a different body." In the Tukanoan case, the power activated by men's flutes and ornaments is also the power of the blood signaled by women's flowing hair. But here flutes are under ritual control. In menstruating, women also "play flutes" and "wear ornaments" but in a manner beyond their control. For Tukanoan women to wear feather ornaments or play flutes would be wholly unruly, at once out of male ritual control, a usurpation of the hierarchical order embodied in the everted/inverted and upper body/lower body contrasts discussed above, and a dangerous form of excess—upper-body *h/air* piled upon *h/air* from below.

### The Story of Yagé

The linkage of music, ornament, and design with female blood lies at the heart of the story of Yagé, a story that is, in effect, a concise statement of the Tukanoan theory of synesthesia. Let us see how.

Yagé is intensely bitter, so you drink it with copious draughts of beer. Once swallowed, you begin to experience vivid sounds, colors, patterns, smells, and bodily movements that run together as each sensation triggers others. You also vomit copiously. The effects are reinforced by your surroundings. Typically, you are one in a line of dancers, each dressed in the same colored, sound-producing ornaments and sweet-smelling herbs, who sing, dance, chant, and play musical instruments in unison as a single body, an instantiation of the Anaconda-Canoe with its linear, human cargo. There will also be other groups of men who chant, dance with panpipes, play solo wind instruments or talk and joke with loud peals of ritual laughter, the assembled company working themselves into the state of collective euphoria. Simultaneous sound production and dense walls of sound are characteristic features of lowland South American music. Here they are also part of a more general pattern of ritualized totalization.

Dancing is a specialized craft, and the figure of the dancer, dressed and singing in unison with others as part of a single body, is the prime aesthetic artifact of the Tukanoan world, a hyper-form who moves between different scales of space and time. Ornament, song, and movement amplify the dancers' bodies and presence and amplify space in which they dance. As they dance back and forth round the four central posts of the maloca, in and out of sight and earshot, their songs fill the air as their feet trace out the meandering, zigzag patterns of basketry.

The increase in scale has several dimensions. At one extreme, the dancer incarnates the totalizing figure of Yuruparí with the cosmic expansion of the world vividly portrayed in stories about Yuruparí, the women's theft of his instruments, and the origin of night. At the other extreme, the developing skills of an individual dancer can fuel a growing reputation as a *baya*, the specialist dancer whose memory lasts across generations. Between these two extremes lie all the economic, political, and social dimensions of Upper Rio Negro ritual.

Condensation of the senses and expansion of scale is encapsulated in the body and person of Yagé. Yagé is Yuruparí in another guise, the former more on the side of color and light, the latter on the side of sound. Sometimes Yagé and Yuruparí figure as the twin children of twin sisters vomited up by two Thunder brothers, but they are also distinguished by their mothers' difference in age and by the different substances that impregnated them—fruit juice/cigar smoke versus coca or yellow versus red body paint.

Without vaginas, these twin mothers were as yet like the men who gave birth by vomiting. They first had to be cut open, an act that brought human mortality as the inexorable correlate of the sex and new form of childbirth the vagina made possible. At the same time, men were told that they should see neither the resulting cut in women's bodies nor what came out from it.

Yagé was born during a Yuruparí rite. Prior to his birth, a shaman painted his mother's body red and laid down sieves and mats decorated with white duck down and woven designs. The birth taking place on the mats also caused the designs to appear, while the men sharing in the mother's birth pains and sweating

experienced these as the patterns, colors and sounds that yagé inspires. Today shamans invoke the names of basketry designs to guide men's yagé experience and to diminish the pains of women's labor.

The birth-blood flooding the house was at once yagé, the effects of yagé, and all the visual and acoustic effects of Tukanoan ritual. Yagé's umbilical cord gave rise to brightly colored snakes, while his placenta became the woven ceremonial shield that is paired with the rattle lance. The blood and cord also gave rise to especially potent varieties of yagé—as Yuruparí's blood gave rise to the Baniwa's potent parica snuff.

The effects of Yagé now set in motion a cascading process of differentiation. The animal spirits at the rite decorated themselves with different ornaments and paint, played different musical instruments, and sang different dance songs, and some ate their tails. Today there are different animals with different colors and cries, some of them lacking tails. At the same time, a deity used a pointed cigar holder to turn some of the men into women so sex could begin.

The newborn baby was a bundle of yagé vines, and his loud cries caused yet more hallucinations. Taking the baby from his mother, the men pulled his body apart, distributing his arms, legs, and fingers to each Tukanoan group as the yagé vines they own and use today. [Compare Yuruparí's loud cries, the dismemberment of his body, and distribution of his bones as flutes. Flutes are to yagé vines as bones are to marrow.]

The dismemberment and distribution of Yagé precipitated a further chain of differentiation, from continuity to discontinuity and expansion from micro- to macrospace. Life became different from death, night from day, animals from humans, humans from each other, and men from women, and the undifferentiated senses in Yagé's cries and his mother's blood now separated out as hearing and vision. Song became different from design and ornament, human language became different from the music spoken by Yuruparí and spirit ancestors, and human languages became different from each other. Speaking in different languages, the brothers in the Anaconda-Canoe, the sons of one Anaconda father, now addressed each other as "brother-in-law" so sex and marriage, affinity, and exogamy could now all commence.

Bound up in this story of de-totalization and expansion of undifferentiated space, time, and sensation is a theory of the relation between light and sound, seeing and hearing, appearance and speech, color and music. Read backwards to the still-totalized body of Yagé, this is a theory of synesthesia and of sensations as flow and substance. Like the music and hair flowing from Yuruparí's body, the story implies that colors, patterns, designs, language, music, and song are the same kind of stuff, substances that derive from the emergence of a child and a flow of blood from Yagé-mother's body. These substances are now *h/air*, the soul-charged breath, song, flute music, ornament, and the vomited beer and yagé that flow from the mouths and heads of dancers.

The play between totalization and de-totalization, the cosmic and the mundane apparent in the story of Yagé can also be seen in the figure of the dancer. On an everyday, human scale, flows from the dancer's body—his appearance and what he says, does, and produces—are subject to constant appraisal by others. Working backward from here, with rattles on his legs, maraca or stamping tube in hand, dressed in ornaments of feather, teeth, and bone, and dancing in



a line of fellow dancers dressed and singing as he does, the dancer is now well on his way toward totalization. Yet further back along this path is the dancer who plays a Yuruparí flute. Now there is not much difference between him and his instrument, for the flute is an extension of his throat and breath, it is ornamented and painted as he is and, like him, it is fed coca, beer, and snuff. As the man blows, the flute takes up his song, the same song that once leaked from the body of Yuruparí along with the hair that now sprouts as feather ornaments on the flute player's head.

The player of a Yuruparí flute is a fractal figure, simultaneously a totalized instantiation of Yuruparí and a de-totalized part of Yuruparí's body, both tube and sub-tube, or body and finger. He is at once the future ancestor of his own descendants, some of whom will bear his name, and the descendant of a past ancestor whose name he bears. In their flute rituals, the men of a clan repeat this play of scale. They gather together as one to remember their origins in the single body of their ancestor, a body they reassemble as the flutes and trumpets that give this ancestor voice.

## Conclusion

From the above we can conclude that what I have been calling the *tube* corresponds quite closely with the indigenous Yuruparí or Kuwai. But these figures, in their guises as person, palm, bone, and wind instrument, are merely particular, tangible signs or indices of the *tube* as idea or concept. This has no particular meaning. It is, rather, something that organizes life and allows reflection on it. The stories I have summarized may guide this reflection, but there is no correct interpretation, only points of view that recast one myth or body of ethnographic information in terms of another. My aim here is not to judge the merits of other interpretations of rituals involving special wind instruments. Instead, in analyzing the *tube*, I have tried to cast these issues in a fresh light.

The implications of that presented here are that the Yuruparí mythology and rituals of Northwest Amazonia (and perhaps other similar lowland South American myths and rituals) may be predicated upon a body different from the post-Enlightenment version we tend to take for granted. This different body goes together with an understanding of sound and light or hearing and vision that differs from the sound and light we also take for granted.

In order to characterize this different body, I have used two key concepts, *tube* and *h/air*, both of them midway between ethnographic data and philosophical abstraction, relating them to Laqueur's (1990) one-sex, two-gender model of the body and Gordon's (2004) discussion of the links between song, blood, and other bodily emissions, both derived from classical authors. I suggest that these points in common between the ideas of pre-Enlightenment Europeans and Northwest Amazonians are less surprising than they might seem at first sight. This is because the body is so very obviously made up of different tubes and because analogies between these tubes and their flows spring readily to mind. These analogies provide ready-made templates for understanding other physiological, psychological, sociological, and cosmological phenomena, with further analogies feeding back and forth between the body and the social order. What is seen in the bodies of men and women is often less a matter of anatomy than

a reflection of what is already known to be true of their social positions.

Some of all this is what Lévi-Strauss has in mind in referring to a “philosophy of the digestive tube.” But, as suggested earlier, Lévi-Strauss’s discussion of this philosophy suffers from several limitations. One has to do with his focus on an artificially narrow range of bodily and artifactual tubes and his choice of the digestive tube and blowgun as linked exemplars of the philosophy in question, part-products of the sub-Andean mythology that forms the principal focus of his study. Had he paid greater attention to the mythology of Northwest Amazonia, he might have chosen the flute instead of the blowgun as the exemplification of a philosophy concerned not solely with the digestive tube but with the *tube* in general. Allied to this, and perhaps most crucially, he would have paid more attention to music, a subject prominent in his other writings but one that figures hardly at all in a work that explicitly analyzes tubes.

In this essay I have been particularly concerned with exploring the role of music in the philosophy of the *tube* and the relevance of this philosophy for an understanding of Amazonian musical ritual. In recent work on this topic, relations between women’s song and men’s flute music and between music and nonmusical forms such as basketry designs, body painting, masks, ornamentation, dance, etc. are often discussed in terms of “translation,” “semiosis,” “code,” and “sign,” terms that point to modern concerns with mind and meaning.

Whilst full discussion is beyond the scope of this already-long essay, tentatively I want to suggest that the story of Yagé and my discussion of *h/air* might put these issues in a different light by pointing to flows, fungible substances, and body tubes as alternative idioms for thinking about song, music, and ornament. In a recent paper, Harry Walker (2018) discusses the Urarina practice of ingesting healing songs or chants sung over milk or other liquids as a critique of our common-sense view of language. In this view, words are not things but rather signs that stand for things, whereas Urarina tend to see speech not as an immaterial representation of substance but instead as a kind of material substance itself. Rejecting the notion of any single Urarina or Western ideology of language, Walker stresses the relevance of context—for Urarina, language is most substance-like in the context of healing. It would seem to me that in the similar contexts of Northwest Amazonian ritual and mythology this critique of a common-sense view of speech and language might also extend to music and ornamentation, and even to pattern and design. The burden of the story of Yagé is that these are like substances, blood in another form, stuff that is imbibed when yagé is drunk.

This is consistent with the classical views of the body discussed above and also closer to the Northwest Amazonian world, where sighting through a blowgun is likened to bodily travel through a tube, where the sound produced by Yuruparí trumpets is felt as a force that shakes one’s guts and bones, where the sounds of flutes and bursting fruit can penetrate and fertilize the bodies of women, and where, as among the Urarina, words are routinely eaten and incorporated into the body in the form of protective spells blown on food.

The conclusion of this case study is that to better understand Northwest Amazonian musical ritual we may sometimes need to step inside a different body, breathe a different air, and see colors and hear sounds from the perspective of the *tube*. Renaissance analogies may help us take this step.

This leads me to a final sociological observation. The elaborated version of *tube* thinking outlined above is part and parcel of a form of mythology and society particular to the peoples of the Upper Rio Negro. This is implicit in Lévi-Strauss's (1973:271–2) intuition that this mythology belongs to a sophisticated and self-reflective priestly society. It is also the mythology of patrilineal clans, structurally because it concerns the fractal self-replication that characterizes the clan as a house (see S. Hugh-Jones 1995), politically because particular versions of the mythology serve to justify relative rank between different clans, and because the objects of which it talks and the spells that derive from it are prestige goods and closely guarded secret knowledge that make up the clan's soul and vitality.

The story of the de-totalization of Yagé makes clear that Tukanoan social order is founded on difference, with exogamy predicated upon differences of gender, language, and clan. But exogamy and gender present a problem. Instead of each man or clan acting as an autonomous and self-sufficient tube that vomits new versions of the self from its own interior, in order to reproduce, men depend on wives and mothers as clans depend on affines: each must first be contained within and pass through the tube of an alien, affinal Other. The story of the theft of Yuruparí instruments tells us that it is Women, portrayed as enemies, who represent these Others in their pure form. The process of sexual reproduction and the flows of blood and infants from the lower body is the obvious model for this enchainment of affinal tubes with women's bodies as its principle sign—you pass through our women as we pass through yours. The self-replicating, androgynous, tubular deities vomiting their offspring from their mouths represent the antithesis of sexual reproduction with ornamented, flute-playing dancers their re-totalized, living avatars.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>In her critique of Laqueur's (1990) thesis that a shift from a one-sex/two-genders model of the body to a two-sexes/two-genders model marks the transition to modernity, Helen King (2013) demonstrates that both models co-existed in classical times... I am grateful to Prof. Geoffrey Lloyd for drawing my attention to King's critique.

<sup>2</sup>*h/air* underlines connotations of breath, wind, and flow versus the concreteness of "hair."

<sup>3</sup>Indigenous terms are given in Barasana.

<sup>4</sup>Tree fruit are *hee rikaa*, "Yuruparí fruit." *Rikaa* "fruit" is a cognate with *rika* "branch" or "arm."

<sup>5</sup>The hirsute appearance of the *piaçaba* palm (*Leopoldinia piassaba*) may be one prototype of Yuruparí's hairy body. "Piaçaba" translates as "hair emerging from the heart of tree" (Meira 2017:129).

<sup>6</sup>The Tukanoan Anaconda-Canoe story also rests on analogies with beer making, insemination by chewing and spitting out manioc pulp, gestation in a canoe-like beer trough, and vomiting beer.

<sup>7</sup>Tukanoan women are even prohibited from whistling.

<sup>8</sup>In addition to ornamentation, the mouthpieces of flutes are associated with pubic hair.

<sup>9</sup>More succinctly, this would be the equivalence between *din* and *stench* (Lévi-Strauss 1973:361ff). Note also the two-sided character of Yuruparí and his mother, both creator-sources of poison on the side of excess.

# Flutes, Fish, and Manioc Tubers

Stephen Hugh-Jones, 2001. A section in his chapter “The Gender of Some Amazonian Gifts – An Experiment with an Experiment”, in *Gender in Amazonia and Melanesia: An Exploration of the Comparative Method* - Edited by Thomas A. Gregor and Donald Tuzin.

I begin with a brief consideration of some NWA (Northwest Amazon – Editor) myths that account for the origins of the flutes and trumpets used in initiation. My treatment is necessarily selective, partly because space is limited and partly because I am concerned to relate these myths to stories about the origins of manioc. Manioc products—raw pulp, cooked bread, and fermented beer—figure prominently in ceremonial exchange and also play a significant role in initiation. In one story, the flutes and trumpets are made from sections cut from a palm tree that springs from the ashes of an ancestor who was burned on a fire. The flutes are the ancestor’s paired bones, while his skull becomes a ritual gourd. In another story, the instruments, now as protohuman ancestors, figure as the segments of the body of an ancestral anaconda who swims upstream from the Milk River in the East, his moving body giving rise to the river up which he travels, and who then vomits up his sons, one after the other. In yet another story, the burned body of this ancestor, now called Manioc-Stick Anaconda, gives rise, not to a palm tree and a set of flutes and trumpets, but to a manioc garden, his flesh as manioc and his bones as the burned logs of swidden cultivation. These stories suggest an analogy between bodily segmentation or vomiting as asexual modes of procreation and the vegetative propagation of manioc from the broken stems of the plant, manioc tubers being the analogues of children.

In various ways, the myths also suggest an equivalence between flutes and fish that reappears in several other contexts: anacondas are the “fathers of fish”; the flutes are stored underwater in rivers; a wide-mouthed fish shows the women how to play the flutes; the Barasana call some fishes and all fish swim bladders *buhua*, a term for all tubes including flutes. A further parallel is drawn between fish and male genitalia: comments on their common form and smell occur in conversation and several cases of transformation or mistaken identity occur in myths. To complete the circle there are many contexts in which manioc tubers are likened to both fish and male penes. Journet’s Curripaco material is especially rich in this regard. In Curripaco myth, fishes are responsible for opening the birth canal of Amaru, the equivalent of Woman Shaman; in ritual exchanges, gifts of fish are said to “call” an abundant manioc harvest; and in their daily lives, like their Tukanoan cousins, Curripaco women alternate between periods with and without fish. During menstruation and after giving

birth, women abstain from sex, from eating fish, and from working with manioc; in fertile periods, when pregnant or not menstruating, sex, fish, and garden work are all recommended. The same ideas figure prominently in the Xingu area. Here, secret flutes are directly identified with fish, both flutes and fish are said to cause menstrual bleeding, fish are considered to be both phallic and vaginal, a largemouthed fish plays a female role in the invention of sexual relations, manioc tubers are directly identified with both male genitals and fish, and the women's processing of manioc tubers has marked sexual connotations.

NWA peoples also tell versions of the "myths of matriarchy" that are equally thematic of male initiation in Melanesia. These myths, which tell how a theft of sacred flutes led to a reversal of the current relations between men and women, also suggest an association between flutes, male and female genitals, and the onset of menstruation. In the Gimi myth, men steal flutes originally owned by women; men now have penises while women menstruate via the wound left by the removal of the flute penis. In the Barasana myth, the theft is more convoluted. Originally male possessions, the flutes are first stolen by women and later recaptured by men. Woman Shaman, the principal thief, is herself explicitly androgynous and also the counterpart of Manioc-Stick Anaconda, with whom she is sometimes identified. Another episode of this myth reflects this androgyny and two-way transfer between men and women, inverting the story of the theft of flutes and the theme of a male ancestor as a phallic, tubular anaconda/palm trunk. Here Woman Shaman, now as a palm-tree womb, gives asexual birth, first to two manioc-tuber daughters and then to flute sons who menstruate like women. Later Woman Shaman invites these sons to eat from a gourd of beeswax and powdered coca that she keeps between her legs. Instead of aggressively recapturing flutes that Woman Shaman has stolen, the men now refuse to accept what she willingly offers them on the grounds that it is something that properly belongs to her—her genitals and the smell of beeswax that emanates from them. Their refusal means they lose the full capacity to menstruate. Later she gives the men a lesser gourd, which they now use in initiation rites along with the flutes and which underwrites their claim to be "menstruating."

As Strathern has shown for their Melanesian counterparts, as an alternative to interpreting them in terms of a zero-sum game in which one sex's gain is the other's loss, myths such as these might equally be seen as a reflection on the bodies of men and women, on the congruence between the form of their genitals, and on their respective reproductive capacities. Like rivers, anacondas, palm trunks, and flutes, the human body and its various parts—vocal apparatus, gut, bones, and genitals—are all tubes. Through couplings of these tubes and the passage of various substances—food, water, air, sound, semen, blood, feces, children—along their interiors, the flow of life is ensured.

Strathern's "Melanesia" is characterized by two major constraints: that all transactions are gift transactions and that all gift transactions are gendered. In this system, theft too is a gift transaction and falls under the wider rubric of exchange. From this perspective, the theft of the flutes appears in a quite different light. Rather than a capture of instruments of domination, a symbolic appropriation of female reproduction, or the invention of culture and society as an exclusive male domain, Strathern sees it as a transaction in which women *retain* as a part of their bodies what they also give up to men in objectified form.

As total tubular persons, the self-reproducing, androgynous figures of the myths described above, and as tokens of congruent inverted/everted body parts, the flutes signify a generalized capacity to reproduce, which men and women share. But in their detached, external, and objectified form as men's ritual possessions, the musical instrument flutes signify a more specifically male capacity to elicit and activate the more internal reproductive capacities of women.

The equivalent NWA myths can be considered in the same light. "Theft," here as a two-way transaction between men and women, is but one of several transactions of flutes that are enacted or evoked during the initiation. Besides teaching the neophytes a myth that is reenacted through the rite itself, the senior men show flutes to the neophytes, give them flutes to play, blow trumpets over their exposed genitals, and "vomit" (i.e., pour) water from the flutes' hollow interiors over their heads as they bathe in the river. These and other actions add up to an understanding that young boys are being endowed with the "flutes" that will later enable them to cause women to reproduce. At the same time, the enactment of their "vomited" birth reminds them where they came from in the past.

What Strathern says of the Melanesian Gimi applies equally well to the Tukanoan Barasana. Through these myths and ritual acts, the neophyte learns "that what he has (his genitals) are signs of encounters with women that have already taken place" and also signs of the future encounters for which he is being prepared. They suggest that, like the ancestors, the "true man is . . . pansexual and capable of reproducing himself without women." They also serve to demarcate boundaries of form and function between the inherently androgynous body parts of men and women, to mark off the limits of their respective capacities, and to recall the union of the parents of whom they are the androgynous product. This androgyny is reflected in the pairing of a gourd of coca and beeswax, simultaneously the womb and genitals of a "female" ancestor and the skull of her "male" counterpart, with musical instruments that are themselves paired as "male" and "female" and that have "male" and "female" origins in different myths.

Strathern's work destabilizes some of the key assumptions—society/individual, male ritual as society, male/female, nature/culture—that lie behind previous analysis of initiation cults in Melanesia... With reference to gender, it is sufficient to say that the NWA material presented above and Strathern's analysis of its Gimi and Sambia parallels both suggest that to view gender difference simply as a fixed and naturally given attribute of men and women does not do full justice to the richness and layered complexity of indigenous conceptions. In the NWA context, it also renders problematic any claim that initiation cults reflect or sustain male dominance in any simple or self-evident manner. Rather than providing clear answers to the question of men's powers, the rituals and myths appear to explore a series of possibilities in something inherently ambiguous and ill-defined—what Biersack describes as "a religious mediation on ultimate matters". It is doubtless for this reason that whereas some Barasana men assert that their rituals exemplify men's superiority over women, others describe them as a pretense.

We now return to manioc and another story of theft and recuperation. A Desana (Tukanoan) story of the origin of manioc begins by describing how Baribo,

the Master of Food, had a magical white stone, the source of all food, which he kept hidden under the bowl used to collect the starch and juice when manioc tubers are processed. The presence of this stone guaranteed an abundance of starch; present-day Barasana keep such stones, the stone axes of their ancestors, in their gardens and in their starch bowls. When Baribo tells his daughter-in-law not to move the bowl, she replies, "You are not a woman. Women are in charge of these things. Why meddle in my affairs?" Later, when Baribo goes fishing, she lifts up the bowl and sees the stone, which she takes and hides in her vagina. On his return, Baribo sees that his stone is gone. He casts a spell on his daughter-in-law, causing her to fall asleep with her legs apart. As she sleeps, starch seeps from her genitals. Baribo introduces his "curved stick" into her vagina and extracts the stone, picking it up from the floor where it has fallen.

In Curripaco versions of the same story, the "theft" of starch is presented as a voluntary transfer. Kaaritairi, Baribo's equivalent, puts starch either directly into his daughter-in-law's vagina or into her mouth, from where it dribbles down to her genitals, to see if she will be good at brewing beer. The indirect variant recalls Curripaco female puberty rites during which starch or manioc bread is placed in the mouths of young girls to ensure their future beermaking capacities. Versions of this myth are common throughout NWA. Taken together, they establish clearly what was already suggested by the myths considered above, namely, that manioc is the body of a male hero, that despite being a woman's affair, manioc is also something "owned" by men, and, more particularly, that manioc starch may be identified with semen. This identification is reflected in the name Kaaritairi, which translates as "the master of white foam, semen or tree-sap," and in the belief that manioc starch is a source of male semen. Mingau, a ubiquitous Amazonian drink made from manioc starch boiled in water, has a glutinous texture, looks like semen, and is the subject of ribald comment.

These extended associations between the fertility of manioc and men's fecundity are counterbalanced by an equally strong association of manioc with women, with their fertility, and with their capacity to grow crops and children. Other myths identify manioc with the bodies of women: women are described as the "mothers" of their manioc-tuber "children," and their processing of manioc and baking of bread is metaphorically associated with conception, gestation, and birth. Such ideas would be immediately comprehended by the Gimi. The stories of the women's "theft" of their brothers' flutes and those of a woman's "theft" of her father-in-law's stone assert that neither flutes nor manioc can be unambiguously assigned to men or women. Each sex retains in one form, proper to themselves, what they give up in another, the retained "portion" providing the source for further transactions between them. Both sexes "have" manioc, but manioc work is properly a woman's affair; both sexes "have" fish and flutes, but fish work and flute work are the affairs of men.

I dedicate this piece to the memory of Alfred Gell, with whom I discovered anthropology as a schoolboy and without whose wisdom this paper would not have been written. For their comments and criticisms, I especially want to thank Aletta Biersack, Tom Gregor, and Donald Tuzin.

# The Variety of Fertility Cultism in Amazonia

Jonathan D. Hill, 2001. A chapter in *Gender in Amazonia and Melanesia: An Exploration of the Comparative Method* - Edited by Thomas A. Gregor and Donald Tuzin. Excerpted.

## A Closer Look at Gender Symbolism in Northwestern Amazonia

The most dramatic single resemblance of the cultures of Amazonia and Melanesia are those provided by exclusive men's cults. Yet Jonathan Hill notes that the everyday interdependence of men and women in ordinary contexts stands in opposition to male separateness. The relative weighting of male hierarchy and exclusiveness in ritual and ordinary relationships has been examined comparatively in New Guinea by Harriet Whitehead, utilizing her concept of "cults of manhood" and "cults of clanhood." Hill adapts this idea to Amazonia in his analysis of "marked" and "unmarked" fertility cults. Marked fertility cults are those, as in the Mundurucú of Amazonia, where male ritual not only excludes women but symbolically preempts their generative powers, separates mothers from their children, and magnifies the contradiction between interdependence and hierarchy. Unmarked cults, such as those of the Wakuénai of the Northwest Amazon, which Hill has studied, conduct rituals associated with initiation and childbirth that link children and mothers through the reproductive process, and make use of a symbolic vocabulary that connects parents and children, and men and women. . .

## INTRODUCTION

Male-controlled ritual cults provide one of the most striking points of similarity between Amazonian and Melanesian societies. Researchers in both areas have noted that constructions of male ritual hierarchy cannot be reduced to mere symbolic reflections of men's dominance over women in secular contexts. Instead, male ritual hierarchy in both regions is better understood as the construction of a "counterideology" of gender-inflected hierarchy "existing in a perma-



nent tension with, or antithesis to, an institutional and ideological bias toward egalitarianism in secular contexts" (Harrison 1985, 424). Like small-scale, horticultural societies throughout the world, those found in Amazonia and Melanesia display forms of sociopolitical organization resulting from complex interactions between hierarchy and equality. What distinguishes Amazonian and Melanesian societies from other regions, or places them in a common set based on strong family resemblances, is that hierarchy is explicitly manifested in male-controlled ritual cults that to a large degree oppose and contradict the egalitarian quality of secular social relations. Analysis and comparison of these contradictions and the various local ways of attempting to resolve them opens up the possibility for productive comparative insights between these regions.

Within both Amazonia and Melanesia, there is a continuum of variability in the ways that specific societies have coped with the contradiction between ritual hierarchy and social equality. At one end of this continuum are societies that construct ritual hierarchies as exclusively male domains through giving maximal expression to pollution taboos and other methods of denying participation to adult females in any sacred activities. In these cases of strongly marked cults of masculinity, collective rituals redefine the boundary between the sexes through imagery and enactments of gender separation, opposition, or antagonism. At the same time, ritual activities are a process of building an oligarchic structure of "complete authority and complete submission" between adult males and young men undergoing initiation. Gender antagonism and extreme hierarchy based on age converge through ritual practices in which adult men symbolically usurp women's procreative powers as a way of taking exclusive possession over social reproduction. Because of the insistence on exclusion and an all-or-nothing hierarchy, adult men must be vigilant in enforcing the boundaries and secrecy of the cult. Supernatural sanctions against female violators are backed with threats of physical and sexual violence against women. The contradiction between gender hierarchy in ritual contexts, and cooperative male-female relations in everyday social life is not so much resolved as dramatized and magnified. In such societies it is not uncommon to find adult male attitudes of moral ambivalence, remorse, and guilt toward ritual activities that promote intimidation and violence against women and children.

At the other end of the continuum are Amazonian and Melanesian societies in which ritual hierarchy is a male-controlled domain that allows, or even requires, adult female participation in sacred activities. Women's procreativity and associated substances and bodily parts (e.g., menstrual blood, breast milk, wombs, and umbilical cords) are portrayed ambivalently as life-giving and life-taking powers that must be acknowledged rather than negated or denied in ritual performances. Collective rituals provide ways of coordinating and balancing male and female contributions to the processes of socializing children into adulthood and reproducing society through exchanges between communities. In such societies men rely less on intimidation and threats of physical violence against women, and public recognition of the interdependency of men and women is given in ceremonial exchanges and nonritual contexts.

Rather than dramatization and amplification of the contradiction between asymmetry and equality of the sexes, the strategy consists of finessing the contradiction through layering and interweaving of separateness and complemen-

tarity between men and women.

My primary goal in this chapter is to demonstrate the complex interweavings of masculinity and femininity in the sacred rituals and intercommunity exchange ceremonies of the Wakuénai, a Northern Arawakan people of the Upper Rio Negro region in Venezuela, Colombia, and Brazil with whom I lived and studied in the 1980s and '90s. Although many elements of strongly marked cults of masculinity are present in Wakuénai sacred myths and rituals, the dominant theme underlying ritual practices is the interdependence of men and women. Before delving into the situated particulars of ritual power and ceremonial exchange among the Wakuénai, I will briefly compare Wakuénai ritual practices with the exclusively male-controlled ritual hierarchy of the Mundurucú of Central Brazil. Prior to the Rubber Boom of the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, collective rituals celebrating male activities of hunting and warfare established clear-cut separateness and inequality between Mundurucú men and women.

The purpose of comparing Wakuénai and Mundurucú ritual practices is to delineate the end points of a continuum between gender complementarity and gender polarity in Amazonian societies having male-controlled ritual hierarchies. Other Amazonian societies, such as the Mehinaku of the Upper Xingu region, have developed patterns of gender relations that are "bimodal," or located in the middle zone between the endpoints of complementarity and polarity. This brief comparison of Amazonian societies is limited to a single axis of power relations, that of gender, and it does not rule out the possibility that other axes of inequality may intersect with gender relations in ways that are not considered here. The Mundurucú materials, for example, suggest that a cultural emphasis on masculinity defined through activities of hunting and warfare may correlate with gender polarization in Amazonia. However, this correlation is cross-cut by other examples from Amazonia, such as the alignment of intercommunal warfare and gender interdependence among the Wari' of Western Brazil.<sup>1</sup>

### **VARIETIES OF FERTILITY CULTISM: MARKED AND UNMARKED**

... Ritual processes are not merely symbolic reflections of a preexisting social order but are part and parcel of the processes through which people make, reproduce, and transform social relations. Given the dynamic, complex, and often contradictory interrelations between ritual processes and everyday sociopolitical relations in Amazonia and Melanesia, it is better to approach the varieties of fertility cultism as a "complex process whereby diverse cultural idioms creatively elaborate a range of sociopolitical affiliations" (Knauff 1993, 113) rather than as a simple reflection of an underlying sociological contrast. . .

In the Purari Delta area, for example, women enjoy relatively high status in everyday social life even though ritual practices emphasize exclusive male control, whereas Asmat women participate in ritual constructions of fertility but have relatively low social status. . .

The following comparison of gender relations and ritual hierarchy in two Amazonian societies builds upon Whitehead's distinction between cults of manhood and cults of clanhood as well as on the refinements and critiques of this

distinction that have emerged over the past 10 years. Replacing Whitehead's functionalist theoretical orientation with a more historical, constructivist approach to gender and ritual hierarchy, the distinction between cults of manhood and cults of clanhood can be retained as a useful tool for generalizing from specific Amazonian and Melanesian contexts to reach new comparative understandings of gender relations within and between the two regions. However, since much of the criticism of Whitehead's model has centered on the problem of linking specific religious forms to the social context of unilineal descent groups, or clans, I find it helpful to replace Whitehead's terms "cult of manhood" and "cult of clanhood" with more neutral terms, "marked" and "unmarked" fertility cults, respectively. In marked fertility cults, ritual power is exercised in ways that define masculinity in opposition to femininity. In unmarked fertility cults there may be isolated expressions of male-female polarization, but the dominant theme is the building of male-female complementarity.

### **Mundurucú: Marked Fertility Cultism in Amazonia**

The Mundurucú are a Tupí-speaking people living along the Cururú and other tributaries of the Tapajós River in central Brazil. By the time of the Murphys' fieldwork in the 1950s, the majority of Mundurucú had abandoned their traditional horseshoe-shaped villages on the savannahs and become residents of riverine mission settlements. Major collective rituals focused on male activities of hunting and warfare had ceased to be practiced during the Rubber Boom (ca. 1860–1920) or shortly afterward. Nevertheless, in the few remaining traditional villages, men continued to live in central men's houses, apart from women and children, who occupied matrilocal extended-family households. In an enclosure beside the open-walled men's house, adult men made offerings of cooked game meat to mythic clan-ancestor spirits believed to live inside sacred trumpets (*karökö*). These sacred instruments were the quintessential symbol of male separateness, and women were forbidden under penalty of gang rape from seeing the trumpets during the men's ritual performances. According to myths, women originally possessed these sacred trumpets, but the men regained possession of them because they alone had the ability to procure wild game meat through hunting in the forests.

By the 1950s, Mundurucú religious traditions had lost much of their sociopolitical grounding, and women generally regarded the men's rituals as a sort of collective male fantasy. Moreover, women formed relatively united household groups that wielded substantial social and economic power through informal mechanisms such as gossip and through cooperative production of surplus manioc goods. Although it may be accurate to characterize Mundurucú ritual hierarchy in the 1950s as the construction of an "all male fantasy world" (Nadelson 1981), it would be a mistake to project this later historical condition back to the Rubber Boom or earlier periods when Mundurucú men still practiced ritual head-hunting against outsiders. The purpose of these head-hunting raids was two-fold: (1) to bring back an enemy trophy head and (2) to capture enemy children. Thus male ritual practices went beyond mere symbolic opposition to, or usurpation of, women's procreative powers to the level of actually negating, or short-circuiting, women's fertility through an all-male ritual process of

capturing enemy children.

Mundurucú head-hunting and associated rituals designed to renew the fertility of game animals ceased to be practiced during and after the Rubber Boom. As warfare declined in importance during the late nineteenth century, Mundurucú men lost their former role as ethnic soldiers in symbiotic alliance with Portuguese-Brazilian military campaigns against other indigenous groups. Prior to the Rubber Boom, Mundurucú chiefs were powerful leaders who inherited their elite status through patrilineal descent. Most importantly, in the early nineteenth century Mundurucú chiefs enjoyed privileges of virilocal residence and polygyny, setting them apart from the majority of commoner, or nonelite, men who resided in men's houses in their wives' natal villages. Ritual head-hunting and warfare against enemy outsiders provided a means for constructing status hierarchies among nonchiefly males through bestowing special ritual powers on successful hunter-warriors, or "takers of the trophy head" (Murphy and Murphy 1974, 80–81). There was, however, always a gap between the acquired status of hunter-warrior and the ascribed status of chiefly leader, and this unresolved tension between elite virilocal "insiders" and commoner uxorial "outsiders" found expression in unceasing ritual aggression against outsiders.<sup>2</sup> The end of head-hunting raids and warfare greatly reduced the power of chiefs in Mundurucú society. The appointment of so-called "friendly chiefs" by rubber traders also did much to undermine the legitimacy of chiefly authority, since in Mundurucú political organization only the sons of chiefs could accede to their fathers' chiefly status.

Mundurucú religion of the pre-Rubber Boom era provides the most clearcut illustration of a marked fertility cult in all of Amazonia. Women of childbearing age were strictly excluded from participation at any level (except perhaps as negative objects) in the ritual reproduction of social institutions. A single strand of practical signification ran through the entire triumvirate of malecontrolled ritual activities. Trophy heads obtained in raids "promoted the fertility of the [game] animals and made them more vulnerable to hunting" (Murphy and Murphy 1974, 81). In turn, the game meat obtained through hunting gave to men, and denied to women, the ability to make ritual offerings to clan ancestral spirits housed inside *karökö* trumpets. For the Mundurucú, social reproduction was an exclusively male process of empowering the social order through reintroducing naturalized social being, or Otherness, into human social space in the form of trophy heads, children, and other tokens of the slain outsider-enemy. Among the Mundurucú, the taker of the trophy head was like a diseased individual who had to observe a number of severe ritual restrictions (seclusion, avoidance of any physical or *even visual* contact with women for at least a *year*, and special diet) and who underwent a series of ritual empowerments, such as hanging the enemy's teeth on a necklace. This transformation of the returning warrior from a source of pollution through contact with enemy Others into a fully adult male person within Mundurucú social organization endowed him with shamanistic powers to attract game animals to the male hunters as well as the power to socialize captured children into the group. As the "Peccary-Owner," the returning warrior initiated young men into the "Order of the Bow" and taught them how to become hunter-warriors.<sup>3</sup>

Hunting rituals, which ceased to be practiced shortly after the Rubber Boom,

can be interpreted as a process of ritually alienating female horticulturalists from the products of their labor. A line of animal skulls was placed across the village plaza, and shamans washed these skulls with manioc gruel in order to attract *putcha si*, the mythic source of fertility in game animals. Only prepubescent girls could participate in the preparation of the ritual manioc gruel, since women of childbearing age (the actual producers of manioc) were contaminated with menstrual blood and would scare *putcha si* away from the village. Female fertility and sexuality were viewed as sources of pollution and disease that threatened the “purity” of all-male activities of hunting, warfare, and worshiping the divine ancestral powers. Menstruation was an unambiguously harmful process that must be kept well away from male-controlled powers of “making” individual hunter-warriors and regenerating the social order through engraving history into the heads of enemy Others. In effect, the procreative, life-giving powers of menstrual blood were appropriated by male rituals of shedding animals’ and human-Others’ blood, and through transforming these losses of blood into the power to regenerate the fertility of nature and society. The Mundurucú fertility cult translated negative reciprocity, or the exchange of violent blows and the taking of outsiders’ lives and children, into a balanced, reciprocal exchange of cooked game meat and shrunken (human) trophy heads for ancestral protection against pollution by menstruating females.

### **Marked Fertility Cultism, Indiscriminate Violence, and Protection Rackets**

The intrinsic connections between violence and exchange have garnered considerable theoretical and empirical elaboration in Melanesian contexts. “In stateless societies, violent responses are themselves a form of exchange inseparably linked to all others. ... In essence, the gift is the positive pole of a continuum that has at its negative pole the blow” (Whitehead 1986b, 279). Warfare and alliance form parts of a more general process of intercommunity exchange of “gifts” (including male and female persons and labor) and “blows” (including not only violence but also material goods intended to insult recipients). The connection between male-controlled fertility and male violence is clearest in New Guinean and Amazonian societies practicing ritual head-hunting. Among the lowland head-hunting cultures of New Guinea, “cultic symbolism often explicitly makes the trophy head (which only men can garner) an agent of fertility” (pp. 274–275). Similarly, the Mundurucú of Amazonia believed that the takers of trophy heads could gain power to renew the fertility of game animals and attract them to human hunters by following prolonged sexual abstinence and other ritual practices.

Where male violence against outsiders was directly linked to the internal construction of male-controlled ritual hierarchies, there was little or no sense in which such violence formed part of an overall pattern of reciprocal giving and taking among groups. Among the Mundurucú, “enemies included every other group save the neighboring Apiacá, who were subservient to the Mundurucú and sometimes joined their war parties” (Murphy and Murphy 1974, 80). The Mundurucú carried out raids against numerous outside groups over an immense area of central Brazil—from the banks of the Madeira River eastward to the Xingu River, and from the main channel of the Amazon River southward to the Planalto of Mato Grosso. Another measure of the degree to which Mundurucú

violence against outsiders was generalized and indiscriminate was the ease with which the Mundurucú shifted to new targets as allies of the Portuguese-Brazilians during the early nineteenth century. "That they should receive axes, knives, guns, cloth, and other avidly desired items for doing what they had always done was probably an unusual boon" (p. 30). For the Portuguese-Brazilians, Mundurucú hostility toward all other indigenous peoples was a strategic tool for conquest and colonization of the Amazon Basin.

The same kind of random, indiscriminate violence against outside groups is found in some areas of Melanesia, especially lowland New Guinea. Writing about the Avatip of the Sepik River, Harrison observes that "any outsiders were suitable victims. That is, these ritual homicides were not carried out under the rubric of reciprocity but as an internal requirement of the village's male cult. . . . The rivalry was principally within the village and a man's opponents in war were simply means by which he sought prestige in the eyes of his co-villagers." Like Mundurucú men returning from raids with an enemy's trophy head, Avatip men coming back with enemy heads gained prestige within their communities but only after they had passed through a ritually restricted period during which they "could not return to their wives and children or resume their everyday subsistence tasks" (ibid.). . .

The comparison of Mundurucú and Avatip as examples of marked fertility cults from Amazonia and Melanesia would not be complete without a consideration of gender relations. For both the Mundurucú and the Avatip, the strict exclusion of women from male ritual practices formed part of a broader pattern of male domination and gender polarization in secular contexts. Citing Whitehead's article on intercommunity exchange in New Guinea, Harrison finds that warfare in lowland New Guinea contains "elements of a male 'protection racket' directed against women. . . and this observation certainly applies to Avatip". Avatip men would stage sham "attacks" by outside enemies in the presence of young female kin in order to frighten these young women into accepting their dependence on their male kin as protectors. "In effect, men in war were . . . using the threat of outsiders' aggression in an attempt to control women" (ibid.). Like Avatip women, Mundurucú women were kept under control through constant threats of male violence in everyday social contexts. According to the Murphys, Mundurucú women "join together for company and also to obtain protection against men. The lone woman is a legitimate sexual mark for a male; her liveness announces her availability and states that she is operating outside custody. The men are thus seen as potentially threatening in a very real, direct, and physical way. They force the women together, make them travel in bands, and actually increase their dependence on each other" (Murphy and Murphy 1974). Thus, among both Avatip and Mundurucú, marked fertility cults based on tightly woven interrelations between hunting and warfare were coupled with broader patterns of gender polarization and threats of male violence against women in everyday social contexts. For the Avatip, these practices promoted women's dependence on their male kin, whereas for the Mundurucú the threat of male violence augmented women's need to rely on other women in opposition to men.

## Wakuénai: Unmarked Fertility Cultism In Amazonia

### Ethnographic Background

The Wakuénai, or “People of Our Language,” are a Northern Arawak-speaking people living along the Guainía and Isana rivers and their tributaries at the headwaters of the Rio Negro in Venezuela, Colombia, and Brazil. About 1,600 Wakuénai lived in Venezuelan territory during the early 1980s, with somewhat larger numbers residing upstream along the Guainía River in Colombia and to the southwest along the Isana River in Brazil. In late 1980 and early 1981, I spent several months doing fieldwork in a village affiliated with the Adzanéni (“Armadillo-Children”) phratry (a phratry is a traditional social group of several clans or tribes based on common mythology or ancestry – Editor), who spoke the Curripaco, or “áh-han,” dialect associated with the Guainía River in Venezuela and Colombia. Later in 1981, I moved upstream to a village where men spoke the Curricarro, or “Óh-hon,” dialect from the Negro and Isana rivers in Venezuela and Brazil. The men of this village were members of a highly ranked patrisib (sibs are sub-units of local kinship groupings, in this case based on patrilineal descent – Editor) of the Dzáwinái (“Jaguar Owners”) phratry, and they included powerful ritual specialists who were my most important sources of knowledge about cosmology, ritual, and ceremonialism.

The Arawakan phratries of the Isana-Guainía drainage area form part of a larger headwater region of ranked patrilineal societies in northwestern Amazonia. Immediately south and west of the Wakuénai live the various Eastern Tukanoan peoples, whose ritual and social organization have received extensive treatment in several recent monographs of outstanding depth and quality. Throughout the region, subsistence activities center around an integrated pattern of bitter manioc cultivation and fishing, with important dietary supplements from occasional hunting and seasonal collecting of wild palm fruits.

Despite the basic socioecological similarities between Eastern Tukanoan and Northern Arawakan peoples of the Northwest Amazon region, there are significant differences in marriage practices and the degree to which local communities are organized into supralocal units of political organization, or phratries. Eastern Tukanoan peoples of the Central Vaupés basin strictly adhere to the principle of language group exogamy, and the ranking of language groups into larger political confederations, or phratries, is not reflected in spatial localization. Referring to these shadowy groupings of language groups as “epiphenomenal phratries,” Jackson finds that members of widely dispersed communities frequently disagree about which language groups belong to the same phratry and how they are serially ranked. Among the Arawak-speaking Wakuénai, however, marriage is between exogamous phratries within the same language group (albeit with significant dialect variation), and marriage preferences are directly linked to rank within phratries. In other words, men from highest-ranked sibs must marry women from highest-ranked sibs in another phratry, and so forth, down to the lowest-ranked sibs. For example, in the second village where I conducted long-term fieldwork in the early 1980s, the senior men were members of a highly ranked sib of the Dzáwinái phratry, and their wives were members of a highly ranked sib of the Waríperidakéna (“Pleiades Grandchildren”) phratry. Although sibs from different phratries were moving into the ancestral territo-

ries of other phratries due to missionization and various other changes during the 1980s, there was still a strong sense that each phratry controlled access to a discrete riverine territory along the Guainía or Isana rivers or one of their tributaries.

### Mythopoetic Context

... The core activity of Wakuénai ritual performances is a complex genre of ritually powerful speech, called *málikai*. Senior male specialists known as *málikai limínali* (“master” or “owner” of *málikai*) are the only individuals who can perform the spoken, chanted, and sung speeches and interpret the nuances of mythic meaning embodied in powerful spirit-names (*nakúna*). Both the musicality of *málikai* and the verbal processes of spiritnaming imbue the life cycle transitions of specific individuals and their families with meanings established in a cycle of narratives about Amáru and Kuwái, the primordial human mother and child.

Profound transformations of the cosmos accompany the birth, death, and rebirth of the primordial human being. These changes include the original coming-into-being of male and female sexuality; the ritual authority of specialists, elders, and initiated adults; brideservice and virilocal residence; and history, or social reproduction, as a process of multiple movements away from and back to a mythic center, or place of ancestral emergence. The significance of these cosmic events can only be understood in relation to the undifferentiated, presexual space-time of the Trickster-creator (Iñapirrikuli, or “Made from Bone”). A cycle of narratives outlines a world of unceasing violence between Trickster and a group of affinal animal-enemies. Trickster and his brothers succeed at evading an assortment of lethal pitfalls, assaults, and deceptions. In effect, Trickster embodies a principle of strategic interaction, or the human ability to interpret underlying motives and act in ways that produce an imagined future that is different from an immediate present charged with danger and difficulty. The original space-time of Trickster establishes this principle of strategic interaction as the raw, undifferentiated potential that prefigures the emergence of specifically human persons and social groups. The space-time of Trickster lacks cultural separateness, for there are no clear boundaries between men and women, adults and children, living and dead, humans and animals, night and day, or past and present.<sup>4</sup> Trickster’s incestuous sexual relations with Amáru, a paternal aunt, set in motion a series of mythic events that give rise to culturally separate worlds of human persons and social institutions.

The life cycle of Kuwái, the primordial human being of myth, outlines a two-fold process of creation. In the first part of the myth cycle, Trickster and his brothers open up a birth canal in Amáru’s womb, allowing the child to escape from death inside his mother to life in the external world. Because of his incestuous sexual origins, Kuwái is considered extremely dangerous and is taken to live in a remote corner of the sky. Nevertheless, Kuwái breaks out of this confined space and flies about the sky, humming- and singing-into-being the species and objects of nature. The world of Trickster’s primordial village at Hípana, the place of mythic ancestral emergence, opens up as Kuwái musically names things into being (“The Powerful Sound that Opened Up the World”). The remainder of the first creation entails the return of Kuwái back down to the ground and inside



the center of social space at Hípana as well as the internalization of his explosively creative musical naming power into human consciousness in the form of ritually powerful speech (*málikai*). The first creation reaches completion when Kuwái has taught the songs and chants of puberty initiation to Dzúli, a younger brother of Trickster and the first master of *málikai*. The undifferentiated world of Trickster has transformed into a vertical structure of power relations between mythic ancestral beings of the sky-world and their human descendants living on the ground below. Individual human beings are defined in relation to these vertical power relations, which are socially mediated by a hierarchy of senior male specialists, elders, initiated adults, children, and grandchildren. The first creation is ritually constructed in the spiritnaming process called “heaping up the names in a single place,” a process of gradual movement between categories of mythic being that signifies continuity (i.e., unimpeded transmission of knowledge across generations) and the power to control movements between distinct stages in the human life cycle.

The first creation comes to a dramatic end when Trickster and his brothers kill the primordial human being by pushing him into a great bonfire, causing the world to shrink back to its original miniature size. Enormous trees and vines grow from the ashes of the primordial human being. Trickster chops down these magical plants, cuts them into sections of varying length, and uses the hollowed out logs to make sacred flutes and trumpets.<sup>5</sup> Amáru and a group of women steal these instruments from Trickster, taking them to a place far downstream where they hold the first female initiation ritual. The world opens up for a second time as the women play the sacred instruments in new locations. Eventually, Trickster and a group of male followers regain possession of the flutes and trumpets and hold a ceremonial dance, called *kwépani* (“Kuwai dance”), to trick Amáru and the women into believing that the flutes and trumpets have transformed into animal species. After teaching men how to construct the massive “Jaguar-Bone” trumpets played only in male initiation rituals, Trickster leaves the world of human beings to live in a celestial paradise.

In the second creation, the closed, hierarchical ordering of a primordial human community opens up, or expands, into new social and geographical spaces away from the mythic center of the world. The struggle between men and women to control the sacred musical instruments has replaced the supernatural force of Kuwái’s musical naming power as the source of life-giving ancestral power. Agency, or the ability to control social constructions of meaning, is strongly rooted in the female figure of Amáru and her powerful movements away from and back to the mythic center. However, this female agency is constrained in myth because it can only be exercised through moving away from the mythic center. Young women undergoing initiation at puberty face a similar dilemma: they are initiated into the local ancestor cult *so that* they can eventually move away to live virilocally in their husbands’ villages. In myth, Amáru and the women have only temporary possession of the sacred instruments, for it is only Trickster and his male followers who share the secret knowledge of how to make as well as play the flutes and trumpets, and it is Trickster who restores them to their proper place at the mythic center.

In ritual performances of *málikai*, the dynamic, expanding world of the second creation is embodied in a spirit-naming process called “chasing after the

names” (*wadzúhiakaw nakúna*). The performative enactment of this process is heavily laden with gendered meanings, deriving from Trickster’s mythic acts of chasing after Amáru and the women as they moved across the landscape. Symbolic oppositions between men and women pervade both mythic accounts of the second creation and ritual contexts of male and female initiation. In the following overview of Wakuénai sacred rites of passage, I will explore some of the major dimensions of opposing male and female imagery as a broader process of building gender complementarity. Although mythic narratives portray gender relations as a relatively simple polarization in which men gain ascendancy over women, analysis of the social contexts and symbolic form and contents of sacred rituals will reveal a more complex process in which descent groups consisting of both men and women are concerned with managing the simultaneous gain and loss of female blood kin through exogamous exchange and virilocal residence.

### Childbirth Rituals

Wakuénai rites of passage at childbirth consist of two elaborate performances of *málikai* chants. A first set of chants focuses on the tools and weapons of the newborn infant’s father, and a second set aims at “cooking” a pot of hotpeppered game meat to mark both parents’ return to a normal diet. Between the first and second sets of chanting, the newborn’s father goes hunting in the forest, and the mother cooks the game meat prior to giving it to a master of *málikai*. The first set of chants is a musically dynamic process of “chasing after the names” of the infant’s ancestral tobacco spirits, whereas the second set of chants is a musically stable process of “heaping up the names” of all the edible species of fish, aquatic animals, forest animals, and birds. The transition from more dynamic to more stable musical and verbal forms in childbirth rituals roughly parallels the mythic transformation of Kuwái’s musical naming power into ritually powerful ways of speaking (*málikai*) during the first creation.

Gender symbolism is explicitly important in the first set of chants. Verbal images of female birthing anatomy serve as an organizing metaphor for the process of “chasing after” the infant’s ancestral tobacco spirits. Spiritnames are invoked in order to neutralize the potentially harmful effects of the father’s return to everyday economic activities on an invisible, spiritual umbilical cord that connects the soft, fleshy parts of the infant’s body to its skeleton. The father’s activities can harm this spiritual cord in numerous ways:

- by using hot, “female” things in the Amáru category of names (shotguns, machetes, and other steel tools), the father can transmit heat to the infant and cause fever;
- by cutting long, thin objects, such as vines and palm fibers, the father can cause the infant’s umbilical cord to bleed or break;
- by making loud, sharp, or other percussive sounds, the father’s activities can frighten the child and cause damage to the umbilical cord;
- by experiencing frightening sights and sounds (e.g., a jaguar’s white beard or the cough-like sound of a dolphin), the father’s fear can spread to the infant and damage the umbilical cord.

Spirit-naming in this set of chants symbolically overdetermines the relations between a newborn infant’s health and virtually the entire male repertoire of subsistence activities—hunting, fishing, gardening, gathering plants, making

and using canoes, and making baskets. The “journey” along the infant’s spiritual umbilical cord is also a movement from the eastern horizon, the fleshy womb of Amáru and source of heat, to the place where the sun sets on the western horizon, the cold, hard bone at the base of the infant’s spine (Hill 1993). Underlying the rich variety of spirit-names is a basic contrast between “female” things, which are hot, soft, and fleshy, and “male” things, which are cold, hard, and bony.

Childbirth rituals are an orchestration of contrasting sets of male and female imagery into an integrated whole of male and female bodily and cosmic “places.” The social context of ritual chanting also aims at an integration of male and female qualities and activities. Both mothers and fathers of newborn infants observe the same restrictions (seclusion, fasting, and sexual abstinence) during the week after birth, and both the male activity of hunting and the female activity of cooking are required to produce the pot of sacred food for the second set of *málikai* chants. The general significance of childbirth rituals is that of transposing the “overly close” biological relations of newborn infants with their mothers into overly close spiritual and emotional connections between newborn infants and their fathers. The ritual process thus supports the infant’s arrival into human society as a member of the father’s patrilineal descent group. The newborn’s social identity, however, is not complete until the overly close relations with its parents have been socialized, or “stabilized,” through the parents’ act of eating the sacred food (*karidzamai*). Much like the mythic transformation of primal (incestuous) sexual relations into imagery of fasting and eating, the second set of chants in childbirth rituals embodies the transformation of sex- and gender-based activities into those of cooking and eating. Sharing of supernaturalized food replaces the sharing of sexual substances as the social means for signifying the biological family’s participation in a local community defined through ritual as a hierarchical ordering of empowering mythic ancestors, powerful chant-owners, and empowered human descendants.

### Male and Female Initiation Rituals

In both male and female initiation rituals, the primary focus of *málikai* singing and chanting is a pot of hot-peppered, boiled meat (*karidzamai*). Unlike childbirth rituals, in which eating the sacred food signifies the stabilizing of parents’ dynamic relationship with newborn infants, initiation rituals are contexts in which eating the sacred food embodies the more dynamic processes of “chasing after the names,” and the mythic creation of an expanding world of peoples, animal and plant species, and geographic places. The second mythic creation is a dynamic transformation of the first creation, a turning inside-out and upside-down of the world created when Kuwái’s musical naming power was brought down into the center of social space and implanted into human consciousness.

Power in the second creation does not reside inside the primordial human being and the first human family but in the external world of plant materials made into musical instruments and the movements of groups of women and men outside the mythic center. In a similar manner, initiation rituals are a dynamic transformation of the biological and culinary imagery employed in childbirth rituals. The significance of sacred food as a source of continuity and shared substance across generations within the local descent group transforms in ini-

tiation rituals into the embodiment of dynamic (ex-)changes and movements between local descent groups.

The transformation from internal to external relations is concretely expressed in the verbal and musical dimensions of *málikai* singing and chanting for the sacred food of initiates. These performances begin with a singing-into-being of the celestial umbilical cord that connects the sky-world of mythic ancestors to the navel of the terrestrial world of human descendants. The use of several different pitches is a musical construction of the celestial umbilical cord, the vertical power relations governing the transitions between developmental stages in the human life cycle, and the turning over of generational time. Chant-owners use a sacred whip to tap out a percussive rhythm on an overturned basket covering the pot of sacred food, adding yet another dimension to the movement from internal to external worlds. After naming the mythic center at *Hípana*, the opening song modulates into a chanted naming of plants and animals in different places. In a long series of chants, the verbal naming of places away from the mythic center is musically expressed through use of different starting pitches, microtonal rising, accelerations of tempo, and loud-soft contrasts. The final chants return to the naming of places near the mythic center, and a closing song using the exact same set of pitches as the opening song returns to the more stabilizing, vertical dimensions of power (i.e., the celestial umbilical cord). Overall, *málikai* singing and chanting in initiation rituals outlines a verbally and musically dynamic set of movements away from and back to the mythic center, or the musically stabilizing movements between distinct, sung pitches.

After the *málikai* singing and chanting are completed, the initiate(s) emerge from their place of seclusion to face the ritual advice of chant-owners and other elders. The initiates' mothers bring the pots of sacred food outside and place them on woven mats where the initiates must stand to receive the elders' advice. The initiates' senior kin, both male and female, participate in these ritually aggressive speeches. At the end of the advice, chant-owners lift a morsel of the hot-peppered food to the initiates' mouths on the ends of sacred whips before lashing the initiates' backs. In effect, the use of loud percussive sounds to signify the transformation from inner to outer worlds has reached a conclusion. The initiates' bodies, in full view of an assembled group of senior kin, have become percussive instruments that, through eating the sacred food, carry within themselves the dynamic, expanding world of the second mythic creation.

*Málikai* singing and chanting over the sacred food and the elders' speeches of advice form a core of activities that is common to both male and female initiation rituals. However, the social organization and symbolic meanings of the two rituals are distinctly different, or even opposing. Female initiation rituals are relatively small, localized gatherings held when an individual girl experiences her first menses. The young woman's loss of menstrual blood is associated with alienation from her ancestral dream soul, and the long set of *málikai* chants for the girl's sacred food is understood as a process of "chasing after" her dream soul so that she will be a healthy and fertile adult woman. Female initiation rituals are called *wakáitaka iénpiti* ("we speak to our child"), a label that highlights the significance of the elders' ritual advice as an arena for attaching sacred moral significance to the individual girl's physical maturation as a fully sexual being. *Málikai* singing and chanting for female initiates begins at noon and ends

at sunset.<sup>6</sup> The naming of places in *málikai* chants starts at *Hípana*, the mythic center, moves across the major river basins in the Upper Rio Negro region, and ends at *Mutsipani*, the mythic home of *Amáru*. The chants outline a process of displacement, or movement away from the mythic center at *Hípana*, a theme consistent with the mythic story of *Amáru*'s invention of female initiation rituals as well as the situation of women who have reached marriageable age in a patrilineal, virilocal social world.

In male initiation rituals, the pattern of place-naming and movements in *málikai* chants reverses and greatly expands upon the movements outlined in chants for female initiation rituals. Chants for male initiates begin at *Amáru*'s mythic home (*Mutsipani*) and end at the mythic center (*Hípana*) after traversing a vast range of riverine territories throughout the Amazon and Orinoco basins. The overall effect of place-naming in the chants is to highlight movements back to the mythic center at *Hípana*, reinforcing the mythic story of Trickster's invention of male initiation rituals as a collective male negation of *Amáru*'s control of the sacred musical instruments. Male initiation rituals are relatively large social gatherings in which chant-owners and elders from two or more local descent groups initiate a group of adolescent males. The name for male initiation rituals is *wakapétaka iénpitipé* ("we show our children"), referring to the period of instruction during which adult men show the group of male initiates how to make and play the sacred flutes and trumpets. *Málikai* singing and chanting for the initiates' food takes place on the final night of ritual activities, and the elders give their speeches of advice just before dawn.

Like childbirth rituals, male and female initiation rituals employ social and symbolic contrasts between the sexes to build an integral whole that not only includes but depends upon female as well as male participation. Ritual activities sometimes require strict separation of the sexes, particularly when adult men teach male initiates how to make and play the sacred flutes and trumpets. However, women are not excluded during performances of *málikai* singing and chanting, and they are active participants in the giving of ritual advice to male and female initiates. Female reproductive anatomy—wombs, umbilical cords, and menstrual blood—supplies much of the symbolic content for male-controlled activities of *málikai* singing and chanting. Ritual appropriations of women's reproductive anatomy do not portray women's fertility as a source of pollution that threatens an all-male realm of purity but as an ambiguously charged, life-giving and life-taking power that must be harnessed to collective processes of producing socialized persons and reproducing the interlocking social realms of adult women and men.

### **Pudáli Ceremonial Exchanges**

The complex genre of *málikai* singing and chanting forms the integrative core of sacred ritual activities embodying the construction, reproduction, and transformation of a sacred, hierarchical ordering of society and history. These sacred ritual performances are concerned with the creation of culturally and sexually differentiated being out of the primordial formlessness of the first world inhabited by Trickster. Although male and female genders are defined in myth as opposites of each other, analysis of ritual performances shows a complex weaving together of interdependent genders. The ceremonial exchange cycles, called

*pudáli*, begin with collective expressions of gender complementarity and gradually tear down the symbolic boundaries between men and women as well as between humans and animals.

The socioeconomic underpinnings of *pudáli* were changing rapidly among the *Wakuéni* of Venezuela during the 1980s. Local people made *máwi* flutes and performed many of the songs and dances of *pudáli* as a form of entertainment or, in one case, as part of a political protest against the predatory economic practices of local merchants (Hill 1994). Nevertheless, by working with senior informants and key historical sources (Matos Arvelo 1912; Nimuendajú 1950 [1927]), I was able to construct a detailed description and analysis of *pudáli* ceremonial cycles as they had been practiced until fairly recent times.

*Pudáli* is a two-part ceremonial cycle set in motion when a local group experiences a brief superabundance of fish and/or game meat. Ideally, *pudáli* begins during late March or early April, when vast schools of *Leporinus* fish migrate into newly flooded forests in order to spawn. Using weirs to block the mouths of streams, groups of men can capture enough fish to fill several large canoes in a few hours. *Pudáli* can also begin at other seasons of the year when large numbers of peccary or other game animals are killed.

In an opening, male-owned ceremony, a local group brings an offering of smoked meat to a host group, who are either actual or potential affines. When the guests arrive, they form large ensembles of male flute and trumpet players accompanied by female dancers. The guests display their offering of food in the cleared public area in front of the hosts' house, playing a standardized *máwi* flute duet in unison and accompanied by the low rumbling sound of *kulirrina* (catfish) trumpets. During these large standardized performances in the opening stage of *pudáli*, hosts watch from a respectful distance and are forbidden to participate in the guests' music and dancing. Just before sunset, the guests' maleowner of *pudáli* (*pudalimínali*) and the hosts' headman (*pantimnali*, or "houseowner") make formal speeches of offering and accepting the gift of smoked meat. As night falls, the hosts put the smoked meat inside their house and invite their guests to come in to drink fermented beverages. The first relaxation of the social boundary between hosts and guests takes place through drinking songs (*pakamarántaka*). These songs consist of highly standardized melodies but personally improvised verses that allow men and women of the two groups to communicate a full range of emotions, experiences, and opinions. The late night, transitional period of male-owned *pudáli* concludes with a final performance of *kulirrina* trumpets in the first gray light of dawn. The guests give their trumpets to the hosts as tokens that signify the obligation to hold a female-owned *pudáli* several weeks later. At dawn, the hosts redistribute the smoked meat to guests and hosts alike, and individual men and women of the two groups join together to perform improvisatory *máwi* flute duets and dances.

In a closing ceremony, a female-owner of *pudáli* (*pudalímnaru*) organizes the production and exchange of a large quantity of processed manioc pulp. The ceremonial events outline the same general process of three stages: (1) large, standardized performances around the display of food, (2) drinking songs during the night, and (3) improvisatory dances and flute duets on the following day. However, in female-owned *pudáli*, the *kulirrina* trumpets are replaced by

collective singing and dancing accompanied by stomping tubes (*wáana*).

Pudáli ceremonial cycles embody the principles of balance, reciprocity, and complementarity between men and women. At a general level, this gender complementarity is expressed through balanced formal recognition of male and female owners of pudáli. Smoked meat and processed manioc pulp are the quintessential products of male and female labor, respectively, and these food gifts serve as symbolic tokens, or “substitutes”, for the exchanges of male labor and wives in bride service. This ideology of gender complementarity works in tandem with a number of symbolic practices that serve to naturalize ceremonial activities. The verb used to describe dancing (*-irrápaka*) in pudáli is the same word used to describe the spawning activities of *Leporinus* and other fish species. The opening performances of male-owned pudáli are named after three different species of *Leporinus* (*táari*, *dúme*, and *dúpari*), and the low rumbling sound of kulirrína (“catfish”) trumpets is said to represent the sound of a stream filled with migrating, spawning fish. Thus, the underlying symbolic theme of pudáli is the metaphorical transformation of natural processes of fertility and abundance into the regeneration of human society through public expressions of gender complementarity.

At a more specific level, each pudáli ceremony (whether male- or female-owned) outlines a collective process of constructing the presexual, precultural space-time of Trickster through gradually transforming gender complementarity and metaphorical comparisons of human and nonhuman reproductive behaviors into the interchangeability of men and women, humans and animals. These transformations of gender and cultural boundaries are embodied in a multitude of performance practices and other activities. For example, máwi flutes are always made and played in “male” and “female” pairs. These instruments are blowpipes with palm-leaf reeds and lacking finger holes. Blowing harder or softer produces an overtone series of wider and narrower intervals. A single flute is thus incapable of producing a melody, so pairs of longer, “male” flutes are played in a hocket style (i.e., alternating M-F-M-F- etc.) with shorter, “female” flutes to make complex melodic structures. Each performance of máwi flute music is an interweaving of “male” and “female” voices, and this meaning is doubled by the fact that each pair of male flute players is accompanied by a pair of female dancers.

Kulirrína trumpets are also richly imbued with gender meanings, since women of childbearing age are forbidden to be present when the woven, resin-covered resonators are closed and attached to hollow palm mouthpieces. It is said that a woman’s future unborn children could become stuck inside her womb, causing death to both mother and child, if she were to witness the sealing together of kulirrína mouthpieces and resonators.<sup>7</sup> In this case, the fastening of “male” palm tubes into the cavernous, womblike resonators to make kulirrína trumpets symbolically expresses a concept of ambisexuality, or the fusing together of “male” and “female” properties into a single object. This same meaning is externally enacted in the use of kulirrína trumpets as gifts from the sponsors of a male-owned pudáli that remind their hosts of the obligation to hold a female-owned pudáli at a later time.

Among the many improvisatory duets played in the final stage of pudáli, the most complete expression of presexual, androgynous sexuality is the impro-

visatory flute-dance called *dzawírra* (*Cicholasoma* sp., a species of small fish). In this performance, one of the male-female dance couples stands still while the other couple approaches and backs off three times. On the third approach, the flute-player who is standing still raises his instrument up high to allow the other couple to dance underneath in small, counterclockwise circles. Immediately following this sequence, the roles are reversed and the couple that had been moving around the others in small circles stands still. According to the Wakuénai, the *dzawírra* duet portrays a female *dzawírra* fish protecting a nest of eggs against an enemy. The approaching and backing-off motions of dancers are said to represent a process of asking the mother fish's permission to "dance" in a circle over her nest. Similarly, the raising of the *máwi* flute is said to be the mother fish's sign of giving her approval to the intruder to enter the nest. The *dzawírra* duet uses the sexual symbolism of the male aggressor versus the female protector to construct the idea of a natural, presexual reproductive process in which gender is reversible and exchangeable. The sexual meaning of the duet is not simply that of a juxtaposition of male and female genders in which two male flute-players alternatively play the role of male aggressor. Instead, the *dzawírra* duet expresses a total blurring of male and female genders by acting out the transformations of male aggressor into male protector and of female protector into female aggressor.

## **Conclusions**

This essay has demonstrated how Harriet Whitehead's approach to the varieties of fertility cultism in New Guinea can, with some adjustment and refinement, be useful for interpreting the varieties of malecontrolled ritual hierarchy in Amazonia. The distinction between marked and unmarked fertility cultism is not a static, taxonomic division between types of social or religious organization but a reflection of different processes of constructing male ritual hierarchies in contradistinction to everyday social relations characterized by relatively egalitarian relations between men and women. In marked fertility cultism, the strong emphasis on gender oppositions and exclusion of women from ritual activities is often backed up by threats of physical or sexual violence against women and accompanied by male guilt about acts of violence against outside enemies or inside women and children. In unmarked fertility cultism, women are ambiguously included and excluded from male-controlled ritual activities, which provide ways of coordinating male and female processes of socialization and of asserting the interdependence of men and women as agents of social reproduction. . .

Biersack suggests that fertility cults in Papua New Guinea and Amazonia can be understood as different kinds of reproductive regimes. This approach has the advantage of avoiding the pitfalls of psychologically reductionist explanations in favor of political models of the different degrees to which men and women are capable of controlling reproduction, both biological and social. Thus, marked fertility cultism among the Sambia or the Mundurucú is not reducible to male feelings of envy for women and their procreative abilities but is better regarded as an instantiation of "male potency and reproductive leverage." "By this reasoning, women's fertility becomes utterly secondary to [Sambia] men's inseminating power (first through fellatio and then through coitus)! Moreover, women



never do bear men; they bear male infants who are converted into men through homosexual fellatio" (Biersack, Chapter 4, p. 80). This same phrasing can be made to fit with pre-Rubber Boom Mundurucú rituals by substituting "killing power" for "inseminating power," "head-hunting" for "fellatio," and "hunting" for "coitus." For both Sambia and Mundurucú, marked fertility cultism is a process of vehemently severing the ties between male children and their mothers so that these heterosexual bonds can be replaced by exclusively male-controlled ritual processes of biological and social reproduction. In short, fertility cultism asserts male potency and reproductive leverage over and above female fertility.

In unmarked fertility cultism, the symbolic weighting shifts from processes of cutting off (maternal bonds, enemy heads, and so forth) and replacing heterosexual ties to the building of enduring connections between parents and children and between men and women. Citing Marilyn Strathern's writings on the symbolism of gift exchange, Hugh-Jones suggests that the prevalence of male and female genitalia as symbols in myth and ritual relates to their tubular shape: penes, breasts, and umbilical cords ensure "the flow of life" through allowing passage of food, blood, semen, and other vital substances. The umbilical cord serves as a unifying symbol for the first set of chants performed in Wakuénai childbirth rituals. In his chanted journey in search of an infant's mythic ancestors, the Wakuénai chant-owner travels along an internal, spiritual umbilical cord, connecting the newborn infant with its father and marking the transition from unborn fetus who receives nourishment inside its mother's womb to newly born child who consumes foods produced by its father. The mother's nurturing role is not denied so much as complemented and expanded to the social and economic connectedness between fathers and their children. It is significant that many spirit-names in these first chants refer to long-thin objects of the father's work activities: vines, palm fibers, leaves, and grasses, which men must cut from the forest in order to use them to tie things up, bind together housepoles, weave baskets, and make fish traps. Like these long-thin materials for binding and weaving things together, the chants themselves are long-thin strands of sound and meaning stretching across an invisible cord inside the infant's body and creating multiple connections between parents and children, husbands and wives, and mythic ancestors and human descendants.

The overriding importance of connectedness between fathers, mothers, and newly born infants is given additional expression in Wakuénai childbirth rituals through the second set of malikai chants. The naming of edible animal species over the pot of sacred food acknowledges the complementarity of the father's hunting and the mother's cooking of game meat. The protective powers of these chants are believed to pass from the mother to her newborn child via her breastmilk after she and her husband have consumed the pot of sacred food. Thus, while the first set of chants extends the mother's biological nurturing of the infant to the father's social role as provider of food, the second set of chants connects this social relationship back to the mother's postuterine role as nourisher of the child during its first stage in the life cycle.

In initiation rituals, the Wakuénai construct a complementary pair of maleness and femaleness as "places," or sung and chanted spirit-names. Females are the prime movers of Wakuénai society and cosmos. Like the primordial female of myth, women can only gain access to mythic ancestral power, or "reproduc-

tive leverage,” through moving away from and back to the center of the world. The onset of menstruation sets in motion the ritual process of searching for the girl’s mythic ancestral spirits by musically going away from and back to the place of ancestral emergence. Initiation puts the young woman into a paradoxical place: she is initiated into the local fertility cult so that she can move away to her husband’s village after a period of brideservice. Male initiation rituals construct the symbolic place of adult masculinity as a collective political and material process of exchange among exogamous phratries. Young adult men do not confront an individual paradox but a collective dilemma of managing the simultaneous inclusion and exclusion, or gain and loss, of their female blood kin through brideservice, exogamy, and virilocal residence.

In male and female initiation rituals, the construction of metaphorical connectedness is projected outwardly into the external world of peoples, communities, species, and regions of the cosmos. The processes of exchange among exogamous phratries require movements across social and cosmological boundaries that both sever and reconnect social ties for men and women alike. Male and female initiation rituals give active expression to the movements of foods, artifacts, labor, and persons across the cultural landscape, yet the ultimate purpose of all these collective exchanges is to reassert the social connection between generations and between mythic ancestors and their human descendants via the celestial umbilical cord. This cosmic cord, musically sung-into-being at the beginning and ending of male and female initiation rituals, forms the prototypic connection that must never be severed: the sacred linkage between lifecreating mythic ancestors and their human descendants, both living and dead.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Bruce Knauft’s regional comparative study (1993) of south coast New Guinea societies demonstrates that a relatively high significance of “successful warriorhood to male prestige” tends to correlate positively with relatively high female status (1993, 107–108). This empirical finding contrasts with feminist theories, which have asserted a strong correlation between male dominance and warfare.

<sup>2</sup>A similar pattern of chiefly political organization was widely reported among large Tupí-Guaraní chiefdoms of coastal Brazil in the early colonial period. In addition to chiefs who inherited their status through patrilineal descent, Tupí-Guaraní leaders included councils of elders, or senior men who had distinguished themselves in warfare. Also, the Tupí-Guaraní had prophets (*karai*) who led movements in search of the Land Without Evil. These religious leaders and movements provide an outstanding example of the antithetical relations between ritual hierarchy and secular sociopolitical organization in Amazonia (Clastres 1995 [1975]).

<sup>3</sup>Symbolic linkages between ritual warfare and human fertility supported the relationship achieved through actual practices of capturing enemy children. Spirits of the dead (*kokeriwat*) were believed to help Mundurucú warriors in battles against outsiders, and these same spirits were believed to transform themselves into tiny birds that could enter the vaginas of Mundurucú women and make them pregnant.

<sup>4</sup>Although the myths about Trickster are described as accounts about an earlier or previous time, this time is also continuous with human historical time, including the social present.

<sup>5</sup>Each kind of instrument has both anthropomorphic meanings, referring to parts of the primordial human being’s body, and zoomorphic meanings (i.e., various bird and animal species). In addition, pairs of instruments are said to have gender meanings, with “female” instruments made longer and thicker than “male” ones.

<sup>6</sup>Afternoon is also the only time of day when shamans (*malírri*) perform curing rituals, because the afternoon sun creates “shadow-spirits” in the eastern sky. There are extensive symbolic connections linking the mythic figure of Amáru, female initiation rituals, the underworld (*ýarudáti*) of recently deceased persons, and shamanistic curing rituals.

<sup>7</sup>This assertion implicitly evokes the mythic birth of Kuwái, the primordial human being, who was stuck inside his mother’s (Amáru’s) womb until Trickster and his brothers freed him to escape to life in the external world by making a birth canal.

# social equality and ritual hierarchy: the Arawakan Wakuénai of Venezuela

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Excerpted.

The social organization of Eastern Tukanoan peoples in the Northwest Amazon region shows a dual tendency toward egalitarian and hierarchical relationships. This paper provides new data on the neighboring Northern Arawakan peoples of the Isana and Guainía rivers. It explores the equality-versus-hierarchy contrast as a pair of distinct, yet interconnected, modes of structuring that create adaptive flexibility in response to extreme seasonal fluctuations of basic riverine resources...<sup>1</sup>

... The purpose of this paper is to provide the first systematic analysis of phratries and sibs of the Arawakan Wakuénai<sup>2</sup> peoples of the Northwest Amazon region by demonstrating how these two forms of social organization serve as alternative modes whereby social and economic behavior is oriented to ongoing events and processes in the natural environment.<sup>3</sup> The Wakuénai respond to a relative abundance of aquatic resources in what I call the *natural-social mode of structuring behavior*, or Mode 1. This mode is the basis of everyday social and economic life, and it orients behavior to two sets of ecological events: (1) seasonal availability of fish and aquatic animal species, and (2) the annual cycle of agricultural activities. A distinctly different mode, or Mode 2, orients behavior to (1) the extreme scarcity, or near absence, of basic riverine resources in wet seasons, and (2) the availability of an abundance of wild fruits in these same periods. I refer to this second mode as the *ritual-hierarchical mode of structuring behavior*. These two modes of structuring are differentiated and integrated into a coherent set of related activity systems that alternatively adapts to abundance and scarcity of riverine resources. Wakuénai phratries and sibs are, respectively, but one of several dimensions in an accordionlike process of opening and closing in response to abundance and scarcity. . .

The structural ethnoecology employed in this paper is not based on an assumption that a given society is reducible to a single pattern of social and economic behavior with a corresponding cognitive model. Instead, each society is seen as a dynamic interaction of two or more modes of structuring behavior. The relative importance of different modes changes over time in response to (1) changing ecological events in the annual cycle of seasons or in multi-annual

cycles; (2) changing ecological habitats in the long-term process of prehistoric migration; and (3) changing social and ecological circumstances in different historical periods.<sup>4</sup> The method of ethnoecology applied in this paper is as processual as it is structural in orientation and has much in common with recent developments in structural Marxism (see Legros 1977)...

### **cyclical deprivation and modes of structuring**

The following analysis investigates phratries and sibs of the Arawakan Wakuénaí as related activity systems having distinct cognitive models for decision making, or two different modes of structuring social and economic behavior around ongoing events in the natural environment. These two modes, the natural-social and the ritual-hierarchical, create adaptive flexibility in an ecosystem characterized by relatively severe, cyclical deprivation in which essential riverine resources become "both more limited in type and scarce in quantity" (Laughlin 1974:393). Seasonal changes in type and quantity of aquatic resources in the Upper Rio Negro basin clearly fall under the heading of Laughlin and Brady's (1978:26) "Condition II of cyclical deprivation," or extreme rather than moderate fluctuation of resources.

Soils in the Upper Rio Negro region are extremely acidic and nutrient-poor, even by Amazonian standards (Nicholaides, Sanchez, Brady, Villachica, Coutu, and Valverde 1983). Rain forests in this region are relatively short (25-30 m) and low in mean basal area (27.8 m<sup>2</sup>/ha), and the diversity of forest species is lower than that of comparable forests at the same humidity and temperature (Jordan and Uhl 1978). Research on nutrient-cycling in terra firma forests near San Carlos de Rio Negro has demonstrated the importance of thick layers of root mat on the surface of the ground in capturing available nutrients from falling plant debris, rainfall, and animals (Jordan 1979). Only a fraction of one percent of free nutrients ever reaches the soil beneath the root mat (Herrera, Jordan, Klinge, and Medina 1978). In short, the forest feeds on itself in tightly closed nutrient cycles.

Rivers and streams that drain these forests contain both low levels of nutrients and low in situ production of phytoplankton. Fish and aquatic animal species are thus highly dependent upon external sources of food along river margins. The rivers overflow their banks in the wet seasons and create large areas of flooded forest, allowing fish to enter a semi-terrestrial, semiaquatic environment that is richer in nutrient sources than the main channel of the river (Coulting 1981). Many species of fish in blackwater rivers are capable of storing energy surpluses in the form of fatty tissue by exploiting the enhanced food supply of flooded forests (Welcomme 1979). In blackwater areas the aquatic system is replenished by the forest rather than by alluvial soils, as in whitewater rivers (Chernela 1982:18). Like the trees and other plants of the forests, fish and aquatic animals depend on tightly closed nutrient cycles of the forest for their growth and reproduction.

Seasonal fluctuations in type and quantity of aquatic resources are far more extreme in blackwater river systems than in whitewater ones where nutrient sources are both richer and more stable in supply. In general, the Upper Rio Negro and its tributaries contain a relative abundance of aquatic life in the dry seasons when the river level is falling and a brief period of superabundance at

the time of spawning runs when the rivers first begin to rise and form flooded areas. As the rivers continue to rise in the long wet season of April through August, fish and aquatic animal species spread themselves out over an immense region of flooded forests, leaving the river channels almost devoid of animal life.

The Wakuénai phratries of the Isana and Guainía rivers are preeminently riverine social groups who collectively control fish and other aquatic resources along a clearly defined stretch of river.<sup>5</sup> The phratries act to control riverine territories (see Figure 1) vis-à-vis one another and against non-Wakuénai outsiders. Local groups belonging to other phratries can freely travel along the river but cannot systematically exploit its resources without obtaining permission from the local phratry. The use of resources within the territory of another phratry is forbidden, and a violation can provoke warfare between two phratries. Cubeo phratries along the Cuduiarí River in Colombia demonstrate the same principles of allowing travelers to hunt and fish as they pass but “not to put up fixed installations such as weirs or show other signs of residence such as fishing a particular spot with regularity without permission” (Coldman 1963:45). This congruence between Arawakan and Cubeo phratries implies a historical connection; as Coldman (1963:26) points out, “one of the Cubeo phratries was, in fact, once Arawakan.” Nevertheless, Cubeo social organization in other respects shows much stronger ties with the other Eastern Tukanoan groups to which the Cubeo are linguistically and culturally affiliated than to the social organization of Northern Arawakan groups in the region.

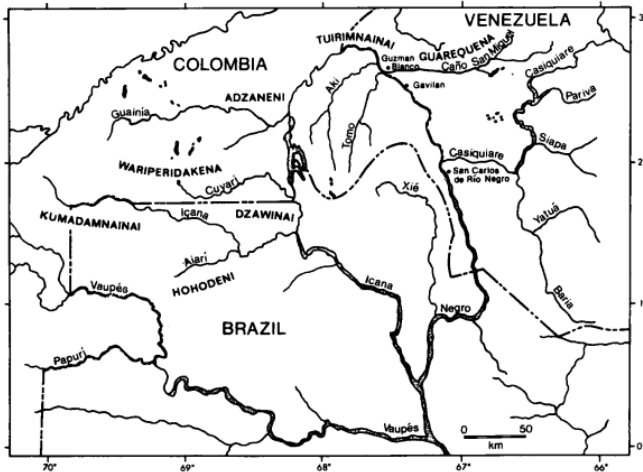


Figure 1. Territories of the Wakuénai phratries.

Among the Wakuénai, each patrilineal sib identifies specific areas within its phratry's territory for use as agricultural lands and as sacred lands where no one is permitted to hunt. The ties between individual sibs and discrete parcels of land are supported primarily by mythical and ritual sanctions rather than by political and economic ones. Each sib asserts a spiritual connection to the lands which it inhabits and uses for agriculture in terms of the mythical emergence of its sib ancestor spirit. Also, each sib maintains an area within the phratry's territory as the home of its recently deceased members (*lidanam*), a place where

shamans travel in songs during curing rituals and where no one is allowed to hunt. Thus, individual sibs are linked to specific areas within the phratric territory through the sacred, ritual bonding of the ancestral spirits with the lands inhabited by their descendants, both living and dead.

Ritual hierarchy within and among sibs acts as a means for sustaining and augmenting social and political order after the perceived onset of deprivation (when surplus is exhausted) by providing leaders a way of shifting the emphasis of their actions to “control over power resources the availability of which is not affected in any direct way by deprivation” (Laughlin and Brady 1978:40). I emphasize that the importance of ritual leadership in times of ecological stress is not at all an extension or reflection of secular forms of political authority, which either do not exist at all or exist incipiently, but brings into play a distinct mode with its own activity system and cognitive model (cf. Bloch 1974).

### the natural-social mode (mode 1)

The natural-social mode consists of the everyday activities of fishing and bitter manioc cultivation and the corresponding cognitive model of individuals and groups as part of the natural environment. The model is partially, but not exclusively, encoded in the cycle of myths about Iñápirrikuli, the trickster-creator, and his enemies, the affinal “others.” This mythology portrays the individual as a thinking, social animal, a sort of “rational strategist” whose identity is defined through conflicts centered around the division of society into competing exogamous groups of kinsmen and affines. All the basic social institutions such as bride service, patrilocal residence, and patrilineality, originated in the distant, miniature space-time of Iñápirrikuli. Káali, the mythical originator of cultivated plants, taught his sons the music of *pudáli* exchange ceremonies so that they would know how to ask for food from their hosts (or affines) in a socially appropriate manner. Sacred music and ritual did not yet exist in the partially completed creation of the distant mythical past, and the distinctions between human beings and animals and between male and female humans were not present. In short, the myth cycle of Iñápirrikuli outlines a presexual, precultural model of behavior in which the Wakuénai view themselves as part of nature. This model includes all the native taxonomies of soil types, forest types, fish species, and other natural phenomena that are important in subsistence activities and that have been treated as cognitive structures mediating between human populations and the environment in other ethnoecological studies. However, I am concerned here with the general model and its corresponding activity system rather than with any specific elements or subsystems.

The presexual, precultural model orients behavior to natural processes of plant and animal growth that provide an abundance of resources in the everyday subsistence activities of fishing and agriculture. Fishing and agriculture are complementary economic activities, and the Wakuénai do not rigidly separate them according to the sexes. Both men and women participate in both kinds of activity, although men tend to do more fishing and women tend to do more gardening. Men participate in all phases of the annual agricultural cycle prior to the harvesting and processing of bitter manioc. In the daily cycle of activities, men work in gardens most often in the hottest hours of midday, because fishing is very poor during those hours. Fishing and agriculture are also com-

plementary in the annual changing of seasons because the greatest inputs of male labor in agriculture (cutting, burning, and planting) coincide with periods of relative abundance of fish resources and fairly low inputs of male labor per fishing yields.

The annual cycle of agricultural activities begins in the short dry season of September through October when the rivers begin to recede and when fishing starts to improve after the long wet season. In this time, called Mákwapidánia, men select and cut new gardens in accordance with the mythical calendar of Káali. The gusty winds of the short dry season are seen as a sign of Káali urging the men to cut new gardens, for if they delay until the November-to-December rainy season, then their new gardens will not have enough time to dry out by the end of the January-through-March dry season. The amount of drying time for newly cut vegetation is crucial in the Upper Rio Negro region, since rainfall is fairly evenly distributed throughout all months of the year and never falls below 200 mm per month. The average monthly rainfalls figured over a continuous period of ten years in San Carlos de Rio Negro are indicated on the graph in Figure 2. Given the extremely nutrient-poor soils of the region, a good burn is vital to the success of manioc cultivation. Herrera et al. (1978) have calculated that 99 percent of available nutrients are contained in the above-ground biomass of the forest. . .

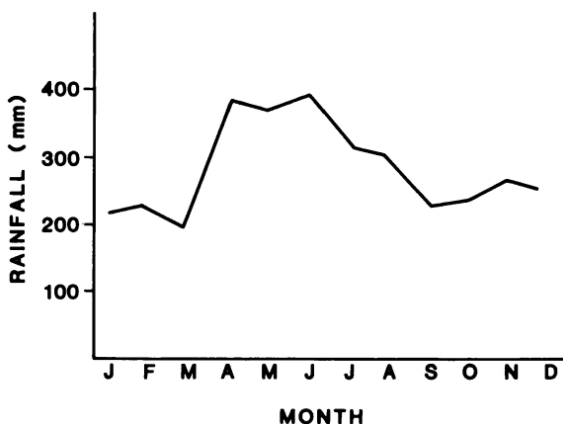


Figure 2. Pattern of rainfall in San Carlos de Rio Negro [Herrera et 81. 1978:225]

The Wakuénai use a variety of different natural indicators to coordinate the timing of their subsistence activities. Both fishing and agriculture are synchronized with the rising and falling river levels throughout the year, with the one exception of the wet season months known as Kákudzúdi ("Bright Star") and lñéwia ("Otter"), when men and women work together to clean and weed newly planted gardens. More strenuous tasks of cutting new gardens and extending old ones take place in the dry seasons, when the river level is falling and fishing is relatively productive. The correlation between river level and fishing productivity is so direct that even a minute rise in the river level triggers a brief period of poor fishing. Agricultural activities are synchronized with meteorological phenomena such as the gusty, dry winds of Mákwapidánia or the rains of the short wet season in Máarinai, the month of the white heron. Agricultural

activities are also timed by the singing of a small species of frog called *molítu* (unidentified) that is believed to be a son of Káali whose voice “tells” the men when to cut new gardens, when to burn, when to plant, and when to weed.<sup>6</sup> The general belief underlying all phases of the annual cycle of agriculture is that people can make the labor of gardening easier and safer by synchronizing their activities with the mythical calendar of the *molítu* frog’s singing and with other signs of Káali or his children (Káalieni). Conversely, people whose work is not timed in harmony with Káali and his children are said to find their gardening tasks more difficult and less productive.

The annual cycle culminates in the main planting of new manioc gardens at the end of the long dry season. This period, called Wáripérihnúme (the “mouth,” or beginning, of the Pleiades), is also the time of spectacular spawning runs of the various species of suckermouth *Leporinus* (*bocachico*, Spanish; or *aracú*, Portuguese lingua geral). These species return each year to the same streams and spawn in recently flooded areas of forest and open savannah. The mouth of the stream is blocked off with large fish traps after a wave of fish has passed into the lake upstream. Schools of fish are captured when they attempt to return to the river’s main channel on the following day.

The cycle of *pudáli* exchange ceremonies celebrates the simultaneous climax of annual cycles of fishing and agriculture. The exchange cycle begins with a male-owned *pudáli* in which a wife-giving group offers a large heap of smoked fish to a wife-taking group. The guest men and women perform a series of dances named after the various species of *Leporinus* (*táari*, *dúme*, and *dúpari*) and play musical instruments that represent the sound of a stream full of migrating, spawning fish. The heap of smoked fish is then offered to the host headman and his wife and redistributed equally among guest and host families alike on the next day. In a female-owned *pudáli* held several weeks later, the wife-taking group offers a large quantity of processed manioc pulp to the wife-giving group. *Pudáli* exchange cycles are coordinate with affinal alliances and the custom of bride service, a period of temporary uxorilocal residence in which young men must work for their wives’ kinsmen prior to returning to their own natal villages with their new brides.

### **the ritual-hierarchical mode (mode 2)**

The ritual-hierarchical mode is based on an alternative model for structuring behavior that is largely encoded in the cycle of myths about Amáru and Kuwái, the primordial mother and son. The myth cycle represents the transformation of undifferentiated social animals into sexual, human beings in terms of a strict dichotomy between control over hunger and its opposite. Control over hunger through ritual fasting on drinks made from manioc flour and wild fruits leads to orderly growth and development of the individual, whereas failure to control hunger (i.e., premature breaking of the fast) leads the social animal to devour itself through its own biological drive to consume. Fasting is a basic part of all Wakuénai ritual activities but reaches its most elaborate and explicit form in male and female initiation rituals.

These initiation rituals are predominantly wet-season events held when there is an abundance of wild fruits in the vicinity of the village. The initiates fast on manioc flour mixed with wild fruit juices and water for a period of one week



to a month. The owner of sacred *málikai* chants ends the period of fasting by performing a long series of songs and chants over a pot of hot-peppered, boiled meat (*kàridzámai*). In this series of performances the chant owner names all the species of fish, aquatic and forest animals, and birds in order to cook them, to get rid of their rawness so that the initiate will be able to eat them without harm. At the same time the chant owner uses the ritual whips (*liwanápu énu*) to “beat the rawness out of” the sacred food by tapping them on an overturned manioc basket that covers the food. Following this chanting and rhythmical tapping with the sacred whips, the chant owner gives advice in a ritually aggressive speech that leads up to a ritual whipping across the initiate’s back. The initiates are ritually “cooked,” an act that marks the successful completion of the ritual fast and passage into the intermediate status of recent initiate (*wálit’áki*, “newly-fasted”). For female initiates, the chant owner must continue to blow tobacco smoke and chant over each new species of plant and animal food as it enters her diet for the first time since the ritual fast. The control of fasting by chant owners is also important in childbirth rituals, curing rituals, and in *kwépani* (“dance of Kuwáí”) ceremonial exchanges of wild fruits for manioc breads.

The chant owner’s ritual “cooking” of initiates and, in other contexts, of newborn infants (*kérramu*) and their parents (*kinénerri* and *kinédua*), through musical naming power is so explicit and elaborate that it almost amounts to a parody of Lévi-Straussian culinary anthropology. Ritual cooking has its counterpart in the processes of ritual disintegration, or “rotting,” employed in curing rituals. The processes of ritual cooking and rotting together form the intermediate level of a hierarchical symbolic system, or “science of the concrete,” that serves the purposes of classifying, transforming, and reconstructing the individual and collective identities of human beings as well as the various species of animals, birds, fish, plants, and objects in nature. In this native reformulation of Lévi-Strauss’s (1969) basic assumption in *The Raw and the Cooked*, it is not empirical categories of raw versus cooked and fresh versus decayed that serve as a means for combining abstract ideas and elaborating them into propositions. Rather, it is the empirical processes of cooking and rotting that serve as a means for elaborating abstract ideas and applying them in ritual actions that equate basic human physiological processes with cooking and rotting. The Wakuénai science of the concrete is based on control over musical naming power, a highly refined genre of ritual behavior, rather than on mythical knowledge per se. Myth is always negotiable and subject to manipulation, a fact which the Wakuénai implicitly understand, since they recognize no one as myth owners but only as chant owners.<sup>7</sup> In short, the intermediate levels of structuring in the ritual-hierarchical mode are communicated through musical, ritual behavior rather than through mythology in Wakuénai social life.

The highest level of structuring in the ritual-hierarchical mode consists of the coordination of lower-level symbolic processes of cooking and rotting. Beyond cooking lies the symbolic process of burning, and specifically of smoking tobacco, and beyond rotting is the symbolic process of purification, or the production of honey out of flowers.<sup>8</sup> These processes converge in the symbolic production of honey from tobacco smoke and flowers in the counterwitchcraft chants (*málikai*) performed by specialists whenever a serious, life-threatening disease afflicts a member of the village. Another expression of higher-level structuring

of behavior around events is the practice of burning large beehives to fumigate villages in which an epidemic of contagious disease (i.e., collective witchcraft) threatens the health of the entire village. In this case, the conjunction of the cultural practice of burning with the natural process of honey production collectively organizes behavior around a dangerous ecological event.

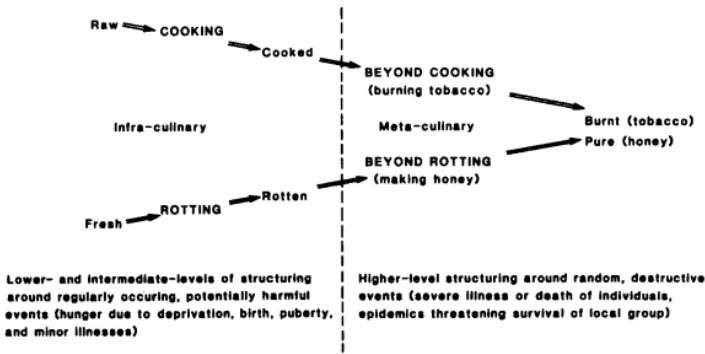
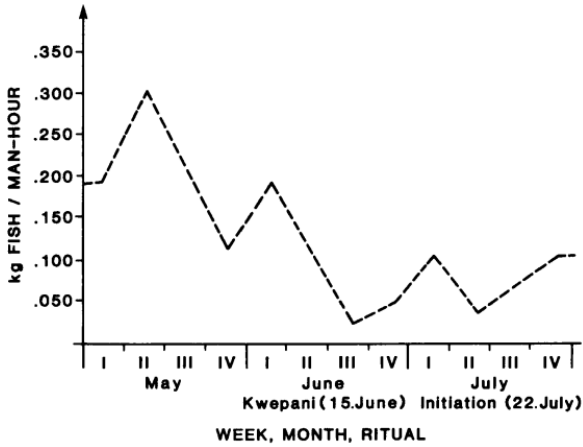


Figure 4. The ritual-hierarchical mode as a structured hierarchy of response to stressful events.

Figure 4 maps the various infra- and meta-culinary processes that constitute the intermediate and higher levels of structuring in the ritual-hierarchical mode. Below the two converging sets of symbolic processes I indicate the type of events toward which the intermediate and higher levels are oriented. Lower- and intermediate-level processes of cooking and rotting structure behavior around regularly-occurring, potentially dangerous events: cyclical deprivation in wet seasons and initiation rituals (which tend to coincide, due to the ripening of wild fruits in wet seasons), and minor illnesses and childbirth rituals, events that regularly take place throughout the year. Higher-level processes of burning and purifying (honey production) structure behavior around random, destructive events, such as the severe illness or death of individuals and epidemics that threaten group survival.

Initiation rituals and the corresponding cognitive model of the Kuwái myth cycle are central elements in the lower and intermediate levels of the ritual-hierarchical mode of structuring behavior. Although indigenous explanations place emphasis on an abundance of wild fruits as a key ecological event underlying this mode, the nearly total absence of riverine resources available during other seasons is perhaps the more important ecological condition from an analytical perspective. The perceived onset of deprivation, or the time when surplus is exhausted, arrives only a few weeks after the brief period of superabundance at the very beginning of the wet season. The Wakuénai have a technique of grinding smoked fish with a mortar and pestle that allows them to store fish products for several months. However, the *Leporinus* species cannot be preserved in this manner for more than a few days due to their high fat content. These important species are thus more suited to ceremonial exchange and redistribution than to storage. Even in the month of May, early in the long wet season, the local group must eke out its living on a low, but relatively steady, number of small fish and occasional forest animals that descend to the river margins.



The graph in Figure 5 illustrates how deprivation steadily worsens in June and July. While the total number of man-hours devoted to fishing remains constant over the three-month period, the ratio of man-hours fishing per kilogram of fish captured tapers off from about 3 to 1, to 9 to 1 in the month of May, falls to as low as 20 to 1 in June, and remains at 10 to 1 or lower through June and July. The chant owner/headman of the Dzáwinai village of *Gavilán*,<sup>9</sup> the village from which these data were taken in 1981, decided to hold a sacred *kwépani*, or dance of *Kuwái*, in the middle of June and a female initiation ritual near the end of July. These sacred ceremonies and rituals thus coincided in time with periods when fishing yields grew precariously close to zero. In short, the ritual hunger of the initiate is part of a wider, collective hunger experienced by the entire village.

The decision to hold *kwépani* ceremonies and initiation rituals brings about a temporary shifting of behavior in the village away from fishing and agricultural activities and toward fasting, chanting, and wild fruit collection under the control of ritual specialists. The ritual-hierarchical mode also shifts social relations away from their secular quality of competitive egalitarianism among affinal relatives and toward a sacred hierarchy among consanguineal kinsmen, as best seen in the power of the headman/chant owner giving advice and whippings to male and female initiates, who are also his grandchildren. Relations between the sexes as groups become polarized in the shift to a ritual mode, since women are strictly excluded from the activities of fruit collection and chanting.

### comparison of modes 1 and 2

The natural-social mode (Mode 1) leads to an expansion or opening that culminates in *puddáti* exchange cycles and the formation of affinal alliances among geographically dispersed phratries that are all of equal status. The key features of Mode 1 are: (1) synchronization of social and economic behavior with fish spawning runs and the annual cycle of agricultural activities; (2) complementarity of male and female productive activities; (3) open, indirect exchange between competing affinal, exogamous groups, or phratries; (4) symmetrical or homogeneous relations among individuals, with little or no specialization; (5)

status equality of exogamous social groups; (6) the use of phratric names as primary markers of identity in social interaction; and (7) a cognitive model of individuals and groups as undifferentiated social animals who form part of the natural environment.

The ritual-hierarchical mode (Mode 2) leads to contraction of the social order and an emphasis on hierarchical ranking among the sibs of each phratry, differential prestige within local sib groups according to biological and ritual specialization, and control over resources that are not in any way affected by the availability of basic resources in the natural environment. The key features of Mode 2 are: (1) synchronization of social and economic behavior with the ripening of wild fruit species and with human, physiological processes; (2) polarization of male and female activities; (3) closed, direct exchange between kinsmen; (4) heterogeneous, differentiated relations among individuals with specialization according to biological and ritual criteria; (5) hierarchically ranked relations among social groups; (6) the use of sacred sib names as part of a secret ritual language (i.e., musical naming power) that is radically distinct from, yet interrelated with, everyday speech dialects; and (7) a cognitive model based on male/female differentiation and control over hunger and other physiological processes as transformations that lead to structural hierarchy.

I distinguish between the two modes for analytical purposes, but in practice they are related activity systems that create adaptive flexibility by giving actors the ability to alternate and juxtapose the two modes. If the modes were too rigidly differentiated in practice, then they would become obstacles rather than a means for adjusting to the extreme fluctuation of basic riverine resources. For example, the Wakuénai must respond to a number of ecological events that are ill patterned by a set of cognitive models that neatly divides the environment into alternating periods of dry-season abundance and wet-season scarcity. The Wakuénai maintain a readiness to adjust either of the two modes in response to uncommon or chance events. Every fourth year or so the forest fails to produce wild fruits during the May-through-August wet season, yet the Wakuénai still hold initiation rituals in such years despite a lack of preferred wild fruit species. Precisely this situation arose in July 1981, during a female initiation ritual held in the village of Gavilán, a fact that supports my earlier assertion that scarcity (or near absence) of basic riverine resources is the more important ecological event underlying the ritual-hierarchical mode. This example shows how an uncommon, but fairly regular, ecological event is absorbed into the ritual-hierarchical mode even though it would seem to contradict some cognitive and behavioral elements of the mode.

The natural-social mode is also capable of undergoing situational adjustments in response to uncommon or random ecological events. An example is the occasional year when rainfall in the so-called dry season exceeds that in the wet seasons and disturbs both fish spawning runs and the agricultural cycle. *Pudáli* exchange cycles are not necessarily interrupted by such events, since in practice any man who is fortunate enough to capture a surplus of fish and game meat during any season of the year can initiate a ceremonial exchange with his affinal relatives. As in the more ideal *pudáli* cycles held at the time of *Leporinus* fish runs and main plantings, the practical factor of storage no doubt influences decision making, since any large surplus of meat would probably spoil in the

tropical climate of the region before it could be consumed. The personal motivation to gain prestige through public displays of generosity is thus channeled into *puddli* exchange cycles whenever there is a large surplus.

Both the natural-social and the ritual-hierarchical modes demonstrate a capacity for fine tuning in response to uncommon or chance ecological events. In addition to this intersystemic flexibility, there is a great deal of ambiguity, paradox, and contradiction built into the Wakuénai system of phratries and sibs due to the overlapping of the two modes of structuring. Wakuénai chant owners and shamans are individuals who can by definition switch back and forth between the natural-social and the ritual-hierarchical modes at a moment's notice. These same ritual specialists are also leaders, or principal decision makers, in the everyday activities of their villages. This fact underlies the simultaneous implication of egalitarian and hierarchical relations in Wakuénai society. Ritual specialists are in no way exempt from the daily and annual cycles of fishing and agricultural activities, yet at the same time they exercise exclusive control over the ritual-hierarchical mode. The two modes are not in a state of homeostatic equilibrium; they frame a process of dynamic interaction that over time favors the cumulative development of a structured hierarchy of responses to changing ecological conditions.<sup>10</sup> The elaborate set of structural processes making up the various levels of the Wakuénai ritual-hierarchical mode are part of a long-term process of adaptation to extreme resource fluctuation that began perhaps as long as two millenia ago and continues to evolve at the present time. . .

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>*Acknowledgments.* The study resulting in this article was made under a fellowship jointly granted by the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies, and the Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Abroad Program in 1980-81. I am deeply grateful to these institutions for their financial support. I would like to thank Dr. Carl Jordan of the Institute of Ecology, University of Georgia, and Drs. Rafael Herrera and Ernesto Medina of the Center for Ecology, Venezuelan Scientific Research Institute (IVIC), for inviting me to participate in MAB-UNESCO Project No. 1 in early 1980. I am also grateful to Dra. Nelly Arvelo-Jimenez and other members of the Department of Anthropology at IVIC for their personal and intellectual support. The conclusions, opinions, and other statements in this article are those of the author.

<sup>2</sup>The term Wakuénai can be glossed as "people with whom we speak" and includes the Dzáwinai, Wariperidakéna, Adzanéni, Kúmadámnainai, and Hohódeni peoples of the Isana and Guainía river basins. These groups speak mutually intelligible dialects of the language Wáku, all trace their cultural origins to mythical emergence from the ground at a place near Hípana on the Aiarí River ("The Center of This World"), and all intermarry. Wakuénai is used here in lieu of "Baniwa," a lingua geral word designating all Arawakan speakers along the Isana and its tributaries in Brazil, and "Curripaco," a name used in Colombia and Venezuela to refer to all Wakuénai groups. Baniwa and Curripaco are both inaccurate terms. Baniwa is the name of a distinct Northern Arawakan group living in Venezuela who do not intermarry with the Wakuénai and whose language is not mutually intelligible with Wáku. Curripaco denotes a dialect of Wáku that is associated with the Adzanéni phratry of the Guainía River and is therefore not an ethnologically precise term for the Wakuénai as a whole. The use of different terms reflects the geographical position of Wakuénai lands, some of which are in Brazil and the rest in Venezuela and Colombia.

<sup>3</sup>This same approach is useful also for studying the responses of local social groups to extralocal factors, such as national and international economic cycles, missionization programs, and regional political movements. In this study, however, the major goal is to describe and analyze indigenous Arawakan modes of structuring behavior around events in their immediate environment (i.e., the Upper Rio Negro region), since these modes provide models for historical and contemporary processes of adaptation to extralocal factors.

<sup>4</sup>The analysis presented here is limited in scope to the first category of changes, or seasonal and multi-annual cycles in the natural environment.

<sup>5</sup>Of course, the degree of indigenous control over ancestral lands has declined in proportion to the transformation of the Isana and Guainía rivers from remote, colonial frontiers into modern, interna-

tional boundaries. Educational, economic, political, and religious institutions have proliferated on all sides of the triple border in the region, but so far the Wakuénaí have not been forced to leave the region (although many have been forced off their particular sib lands) by an influx of outside colonists. In theory, at least, Wakuénaí phratries are localized like those of the Cubeo (Goldman 1963) rather than dispersed over a number of riverine territories like those of the majority of Eastern Tukanoan groups (C. Hugh-Jones 1979; Reichel-Dolmatoff 1971).

<sup>6</sup>The use of *molítu* frogs' singing by an Arawakan people of the Northwest Amazon region has an interesting parallel in the practice of "toad divination" in the August-through-December planting season of Quechua speakers in the Central Andes near Cuzco. There, if the toads' singing is relatively loud and constant in the month of August, then native farmers predict a good year for agriculture, with plenty of rain. Conversely, if the toads are mainly silent in August, a bad year with heavy frosts and little rainfall is predicted (Urton 1981:181). For the Wakuénaí the *molítu* frogs' singing acts as a stimulus to start new phases in the annual cycle of manioc cultivation, but it has no divinatory role in that context. In *kwépani* ceremonies, however, men play wooden flutes named after *molítu* frogs, and in these sacred contexts the "frogs" have power to divine the sex of unborn children when asked by pregnant women, who must remain in hiding so as not to see the male flute-players.

<sup>7</sup>The native term for owners, or controllers, is restricted to the masculine form (*liminali*) in ritual contexts. Aside from the chant owner (*málikai liminali*), the term is used in sacred songs of *kwépani* ceremonies and initiation rituals to refer to Kuwáí (*numinali*, "my master"). Also, guest headmen who organize the collection of wild fruits for offering to host groups in *kwépani* ceremonies are called *kwépanimnali* ("owners of *kwépani*"). In secular contexts a female term usually complements the masculine term for owner. Thus, male owners of *puddli* ceremonies (*puddlimnali*) are coupled with female owners (*puddlimnarru*), and male ceremonial hosts (*pantimnali*, "house owners") are paired with female hosts (*pantimnarru*).

<sup>8</sup>In *From Honey To Ashes*, Lévi-Strauss (1973:25) devotes an entire volume to identifying "technical and cultural activity which lies beyond cooking." He asserts that there is a second mythological system beyond the "infra-culinary" one based on the opposition of the two fundamental categories of cooking, the raw and the cooked. This second system centers around the opposition between honey (the pure) and tobacco (the burnt) and is called "meta-culinary." My research among the Wakuénaí confirms Lévi-Strauss's basic assertion of the importance of symbolism that operates beyond the opposition between the raw and the cooked. However, in seeking to understand how this meta-culinary symbolism is actually used in Wakuénaí rituals, I find it necessary to shift from an emphasis on the categories of honey versus tobacco to one between processes of honey production (purification) versus smoking tobacco (burning).

<sup>9</sup>Gavilán is a pseudonym for one of two villages along the lower Guainía in Venezuela in which I carried out fieldwork in 1980-81.

<sup>10</sup>Recent research (Chernela 1983; C. Hugh-Jones 1979) among the Eastern Tukanoan peoples of the Vaupés basin has demonstrated that hierarchical rank plays a far more prominent role in native social life than earlier accounts had indicated (Goldman 1963). Research among the Northern Arawakan peoples (Wright 1981; Hill 1983) is beginning to show that hierarchical rank is important throughout the region. The emergence of millenarian movements led by fanatical shaman/Christians in the 19th century illustrates the social limits of hierarchy in the region. Such movements centered around Arawakan ritual specialists and their followers from the Guainía and Isana basins but apparently never took place among Eastern Tukanoan groups, a fact that suggests a native inclination toward hierarchy that is perhaps stronger among the Arawakans.

# Feasting on People: Eating Animals and Humans in Amazonia

Carlos Fausto, 2007. Translated by Luiz Costa and revised by David Rodgers. In *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 48, No. 4. Excerpted.

A problem of particular concern in the literature on animistic systems is the status of hunting and food consumption in societies whose ontology is not founded upon a distinction between humans and animals. If animals are people, how can one distinguish between everyday eating and cannibalism? Commensality is a vector for producing kinship among humans, a mechanism which depends on the transformation of the animal prey into an object devoid of intentionality. Indigenous techniques for desubjectivizing prey are based on a specific conception of the person that is not reducible to a simple body-and-soul dualism. A new theoretical formulation for this partibility sheds light on warfare and funerary anthropophagy in Amazonia.<sup>1</sup>

*Our body is, after all, only a society constructed out of many souls.*  
—F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

*In Lua-do-Chão, there is no word to say “poor.” One says “orphan.”  
This is true misery: to have no kin.* —Mia Couto, *Um rio chamado tempo, uma casa chamada terra*

Ever since Darwin, the process through which our animal nature became human history has captured the Western imagination. This process is often held to have decided, once and for all, our psychological constitution and the development of government and society. The role of hunting and, more generally, predation has been central to conceptualizing this process and its consequences. The predominant view is that predation was one of the key forces in the process of humanization. Climbing down from the trees to wander the savannahs, our ancestors were required to hunt or die. From this first (mis)step the rest of human history follows, from technology to social organization and gender relations (Cartmill 1993). This legacy is also held to explain our supposed inclination toward violence, making warfare the end result of the very process through which we became cultured humans (Washburn and Lancaster 1968; Tiger and Fox 1971). An alternative view holds, on the contrary, that we have never been unrestrained predators and that human evolution was shaped more

by opportunistic scavenging (Binford 1981; Shipman 1983) or the sharing of meat (Isaac 1978; Isaac and Crader 1983) than by hunting. But in either case, the way our ancestors got along with the task of meat eating is held to define our basic constitution as persons and our sociality (see Stanford 1999; Stanford and Bunn 2001; Stiner 2002).

In this article I intend to explore this set of images from the perspective of a different tradition of thought, one which developed in the Americas thousands of years before the arrival of modern Europeans and is still very much alive today. This tradition emerged from quite distinct ontological assumptions, leading to different conceptualizations of the relation between predation and food consumption and to different social practices. Amerindian ontologies are not predicated upon the divide between nature and culture (or subject and object) that plays a foundational role in the modern Western tradition. In Amerindian contexts, the relationships between humans and non-humans take precedence over the instrumental action of human beings upon nature, and therefore the hunting of animals immediately invokes a wider field of sociocosmic relations.

From the pioneering works of Hallowell (1960) on Ojibwa ontology to Ingold's ecological phenomenology (1986, 2000a), Philippe Descola's socialized nature and schemes of practice (1986, 2005), and Viveiros de Castro's perspectivism (1998a), a new way of looking at the relationship between humans and nonhumans has emerged. The fundamental premise shared by these approaches is that, in Amerindian (and North Eurasian) ontologies, intentionality and reflexive consciousness are not exclusive attributes of humanity but potentially available to all beings of the cosmos. In other words, animals, plants, gods, and spirits are also potentially persons and can occupy a subject position in their dealings with humans. This ontological indistinction gives rise to a series of ethnographic and theoretical problems, including the one that concerns us here: the status of the hunt and food consumption. If the predation of animals is equivalent to killing people, would hunting not immediately merge into warfare? And if both these phenomena are inscribed within a field of social relations between subjects imbued with intentionality, would not food consumption necessarily slip into cannibalism?

These questions have been posed, in these or other terms, by the contemporary literature on so-called animistic systems, a concept that has arisen from its Tyloean ashes since the revision of the core notions of nature and culture (Descola 1992, 1996; Bird-David 1999; Stringer 1999). Some of these studies aim to establish a clear rupture between hunting and warfare. Bird-David and Ingold, for example, characterize the relations between humans and non-humans in hunter-gatherer societies as essentially nonviolent. These societies, they argue, are founded upon a "cosmic economy of sharing" (Bird-David 1990) in which the cardinal value is trust, defined as a peculiar mixture of dependency and autonomy involving positive and noncoercive relations (Ingold 2000c, 69–70). Within this paradigm, hunting emerges as sharing between humans and animals and is thereby opposed to belligerent relations between humans.

But just how widespread is this paradigm? Does it apply to all animistic systems or all hunter-gatherers? Since I lack the necessary expertise to address the problem from such a general standpoint, my geographic scope is much narrower: it comprehends Lowland South America, especially Amazonia, which



is inhabited today by more than 300 different indigenous peoples speaking about 250 different languages.<sup>2</sup> Most of these peoples are horticulturalists and hunters, relying on nonintensive food production and the procurement of animal meat through hunting and fishing. The hunt plays a central role in their cosmologies (Viveiros de Castro 1996a, 194). It is possible, however, that more sedentary and agricultural societies, with different ideological emphases, were more prominent in some parts of Amazonia before the Conquest (Roosevelt 1980; Heckenberger 2005; Hornborg 2005).<sup>3</sup>

Even in the present, considerable cultural variation can be observed across the region, and an Amazonian model of the relation between predation and food consumption may appear overgeneralized. I intend to sketch the ground from which part of this variation emerges and to demonstrate the ethnographic robustness of my model through a number of examples taken from all the main language families of Lowland South America. I do not claim that this model applies to all these peoples in the same way or in the same domains. However, the ethnographic coverage is wide enough and diverse enough to make plausible my hypothesis that we are dealing with a substrate with broad implications for the daily lives of Amazonian peoples. As a model, it is certainly abstract, but this does not mean that it is not rooted in the concrete and dense everyday experiences of indigenous peoples. I hope that other ethnographers will recognize how the principles spelled out here operate in their own field contexts and are fleshed out in everyday experience. I do not pretend to give a phenomenological rendering of the model here, which I believe can only be seriously done in a more ethnographic register.

Although devoted to Amazonia, this article has an implicit built-in comparison that is best made explicit from the outset. Amazonian ontologies are part of what I would call the Sibero-American shamanic tradition, which has a historical unity of its own. My argument develops from an internal contrast with the hunter-gatherers of the Subarctic, speakers of Algonquian and Athapaskan languages, who came to represent in its purest form the conversion of hunting into a morally positive relation of giving and sharing. This model is based on the replacement of predation by the gift. According to it, animals are killed only when they are willing to die, their motivation being described either in the idiom of love-sharing and compassion or in that of reciprocity: animals give up their bodies because they like (or pity) the hunter or because humans offer counterprestations during ritual meals. Hunting is therefore described as a positive relationship for both parties, ensuring the reproduction of human life without implying the destruction of the potential for animal life.<sup>4</sup>

When we move from the boreal to the tropical forest, however, we encounter an inversion of dominance in the schema of human-animal relations: while in the Subarctic the gift reigns supreme, predation is the more productive schema in Amazonia. It is difficult to determine whether this contrast is entirely empirical or whether it also results from differences in the approaches adopted by researchers in the two regions. Nor do we know whether it is of long standing or historically recent. It may be the case that contemporary Arctic and Subarctic hunting ideologies have been influenced by Western moral conceptions, just as it is arguable that less predatory ideologies were more conspicuous in Amazonia before the Conquest. However, I lack sufficient data to historicize my model,

especially in such general terms.

Siberia presents a somewhat different picture of human-animal relations that seems to be midway between the American boreal and the tropical forest. Although there is also a stress on giving, hunting is a more ambivalent activity than it is in the American Subarctic. It involves a play of seduction in which, rather than freely giving itself to the hunter, the animal surrenders itself to him (see Willerslev n.d., 50, 135). In some societies, shamans play an important role in managing the relations between humans and animals, serving as intermediaries in an asymmetrical exchange between humanity and (super)nature in which “each of these worlds is the game of the other” (Hamayon 1990, 12). Hunters constantly run the risk of counterpredation from animals (Kwon 1998, 119), and sickness and death are conceived as the unwanted consequences of hunting. At the same time, killings can also be seen as a “rite of regeneration” (Willerslev n.d., 36), echoing the North American example.<sup>5</sup>

I am not primarily concerned here with showing that a North American gift model or a Siberian alliance model is relatively less productive in Amazonia. There are certainly examples of an Amazonian preoccupation with animal regeneration (Århem 1996, 218; Vilaça 1992, 61), of hunting as sexual seduction (see Descola 1986, 323–24), and of shamans’ marrying “animal spirits” (Califano 1988, 117–19; Saladin d’Anglure and Morin 1998; Daillant 1998; Perez Gil 2006, 144–45). This is no surprise. To use Descola’s (2005, 459), vocabulary, we encounter a common “mode of identification” between humans and non-humans across the region but different “modes of relation” subject to regional and historical variation. For our purposes, the contrast with the North American case, be it literal or literary, enables us to highlight an aspect which has remained largely unexplored elsewhere and seems to be central in the tropical forest: *that predation is a transspecific vector of sociality*. I am more interested in locating hunting within a set of predatory relations between different kinds of persons, since the premise of my argument is that humans and animals are immersed in a sociocosmic system in which the direction of predation and the production of kinship are in dispute.<sup>6</sup>

This article aims at conveying an Amazonian perspective on the issue of predation, food consumption, and kinship production. It takes predation and commensality to be distinct yet dynamically articulated forms of producing people and sociality. Food consumption appears less as an activity directed toward the production of a generic physical body than as a device for producing related bodies—literally, “bodies of a kind.” Many writers have already drawn attention to commensality as central to the fabrication of kinship in Amazonia. If making kin converges on the universe of culinary practices and food sharing, the question becomes one of articulating two separate processes of transformation, one which results from eating someone (cannibalism) and the other from eating *like* and *with* someone (commensality).

To address this question, I start with a general account of the relationship between hunting and warfare, focusing on the animal perspective and the dangers to which humans are exposed through the practice of hunting. Human illness appears in this account as an act of predation by animals, while commensality emerges as a device for producing identity within and across “species.” Subsequently, I turn to the question of how humans are able to identify with each

other by eating food together without identifying themselves with what they eat. I analyze this question not only as an aspect of everyday contexts but also in two opposite situations: seclusion (when food is maximally restricted) and ritual meat eating (when prohibited food is temporarily allowed). Next, I focus on the hunting of a specific lowlands animal, the peccary, whose traits seem to combine most of what Amerindians take to be characteristically human. Finally, I turn to anthropophagy, which I distinguish from cannibalism. I develop this argument in tandem with another issue concerning the constitution of persons in indigenous Amazonia, the relationship between body and soul.

### Animals at War

Amazonian predation operates transspecifically and is never one-way. Therefore we cannot restrict ourselves to the hunting of animals by humans, since animals also engage in predatory acts against humans. I relate this fact to the Amazonian preoccupation with the transformability of beings in a perspectival environment (Viveiros de Castro 1998a; Lima 1999). If all entities in the cosmos are potentially people, knowing how one kind of being turns into another kind becomes a matter of paramount concern. This transformability manifests itself as an intermeshing of predatory cycles: the human passes into the nonhuman and vice versa. This passage can be thought of as a series of particular events: the species  $x$  magically kills the man  $y$ , turning him into  $x$ , or the killing of an animal  $w$  leads to the conception of a human child  $z$ . It may also be conceived as a general condition: humans always become peccaries when they die, or all new humans result from the shamanic appropriation of vital principles from other species.

These dynamics contrast with the hegemonic model of hunting in the Subarctic (Brightman 1993), which postulates a series of closed cycles particular to each species: the caribou is reborn as caribou, the bear as bear, and so forth. This contrast may account for the relative lack of interest in the remains of animals shown by Amazonian peoples compared with the Subarctic obsession with the proper disposal of the bones of prey to enable their regeneration. Although the idea of animal regeneration is present among some Amazonian peoples, it does not seem to be the hunters' main concern.

There are exceptions, of course. In Northwest Amazonia, for example, where the vertical transmission of identity is a central concern of indigenous sociocosmology, there is an ideal of keeping each system closed, even at the level of exogamic clans: human souls should return to their ancestors' "houses" and be reborn as the same kind of person. But there always remains the risk of becoming an animal through disease or an enemy through warfare. Along with this ideal of vertical recursivity, we also find an emphasis on horizontal reciprocity, in which the predation of animals is cross-linked to the predation of humans. The Tukanoan Desana, for instance, claim that the masters of animals free their protégés to be hunted only if they are paid in human souls (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1973, 160). Such negotiation implies predation against other humans through sorcery, an action that can be conceived as hunting, as Chaumeil (1983, 233) points out for the Yáguá, or as invisible warfare, as Albert (1985) shows for the Yanomami.

More frequently, this enchainment of predatory cycles tends to oppose humans and animals directly. This fact adds a crucial twist to a central concern of Subarctic hunters: respect for animal prey. Rules imposing the correct ways of killing and handling prey, as well as limits to predation, have all been described in the Amazonian literature. Yet even when these prescriptions and prohibitions are framed in the idiom of respect, disrespect gives way to revenge warfare rather than the disappearance of game from a particular territory. Whereas in the Subarctic it is imperative to find wounded animals, since allowing prey to die in pointless suffering disturbs the ideal harmony between humans and animals (Brightman 1993, 110), in Amazonia the same care is justified by the hunter's fear of counterpredation. Among the Tikuna, for instance, the flight of a wounded animal entails an exhaustive search for it; if the prey returns home and tells what happened, the hunter will face vengeance by the "father" of the species.

Hunting ethics in Amazonia focuses on preventing hunting from appearing as warfare to humans and animals at the same time. As Lima (1999) shows, this is the meaning behind the verbal moderation requisite to peccary hunting among the Juruna. A hunter who abuses language condemns himself to death—or, more exactly, condemns himself to becoming a peccary. His dead body will be found by his companions, but his person will be incorporated into the herd of peccaries, acquiring, little by little, a peccary body until he completely turns into one of them. This form of appropriating the enemy's soul or person is characteristic of warfare between humans: homicide triggers the victim's familiarization, which results, through seclusion and rituals, in the production of new people in the killer's community. In the Juruna case, therefore, peccaries actually engage in warfare when they are hunted, capturing humans and transforming them into peccaries and kin. But for this to occur the hunter must, through a reckless verbal outburst, share the perspective of his prey, and from this peccary perspective "the hunt is called 'war,'" as a Kurripaco myth tells us.

The set of practices and beliefs related to hunting responds primarily to the danger of inverting the positions of predator and prey. This explains why the consequence of breaching these practices is expressed in terms of a vendetta: the main eventuality to be avoided is having to pay for the death of an animal with one's own life or the life of a close relative. In some cases, when the cycle of vengeance has already been set in motion, the aggression may actually override the normal prescriptions for the appropriate treatment of prey. The Miraña hunter, driven by the desire to retaliate, may prevent the regeneration of his victim: instead of allowing the animal's blood to fall on the forest floor and leaving its head and entrails behind, he butchers the killed prey in the water, a practice that may be employed with a "tapir who one suspects to be responsible for various diseases" (Karadimas 2005, 222). In the same vein, deaths among the Bororo demand a retaliatory hunt to avenge the dead: a carnivorous animal, preferably a jaguar or a harpy eagle, must be killed by a hunter from the opposite moiety (Crocker 1979). In these cases, hunting intentionally slips into vengeance warfare, but the interconnections between these two phenomena are much more general, being highly visible in indigenous concepts of illness.

Warfare and disease represent different perspectives on a single event: what

appears as disease to humans may be seen as warfare by animals. What to human eyes constitutes an act of sorcery conducing to illness is, from the animal's perspective, capture through warfare. The Miraña claim that humanity is exposed to aggression from animal spirits, for these can pursue "the descendents of humans so as to kidnap them and take them below the earth to where their longhouses are found, transforming them into their own descendents" (Karadimas 2005, 220). The Wayana say that the anthropomorphic masters of animals continually try to attract humans to their houses in order to transform them into animals and increase their number of familiars (van Velthem 2003, 95). Among the Wari', many diseases are attributed to an attack by an animal that captures and keeps the person's soul. While the person's body wastes away, the person appears in a state of transformation in the eyes of the shaman trying to cure him or her, acquiring the characteristics of the aggressor animal. The patient gains a new body and new habits, capacities, and affects in much the same way as a person seized in warfare is familiarized by his or her captors. In the same vein, Lagrou claims that, for the Kashinawá, disease is a "dangerous and uncontrollable process of alteration", a metamorphosis in which the human is preyed upon and familiarized by the aggressor animal species.

In sum, the disease caused by "soul capture" allows two orders of reality: death in the eyes of the relatives of the human patient and the transformation of an other into kin in the eyes of the entity that has captured the soul. But there is a further proviso: the capture that appears as seduction and commensality from the viewpoint of the patient's soul is experienced as pain and suffering by the embodied person. Such pain is produced by minuscule magical darts and other pathogenic objects. The Kuikuro call these darts "the arrows of the spirit animals," and they are so numerous that they demand lengthy treatment by shamans to extract them. Among the Parakanã, the pathogenic object is conceived as a cannibal agent that eats the flesh of the patient. As Overing points out for the Piaroa, "disease is always considered... to be a process of being eaten." Over the period of illness the patient oscillates, therefore, between the perspective of past relatives and that of future relatives, experiencing pain as a dissolution of his or her embodied condition. However, from the point of view of the nonhuman aggressor, the disease is an act of capture that implies the double movement of cannibal predation and the transformation of another person into kin.

### **From Prey to Food**

Humans and animals are enmeshed in a sociocosmic web in which existential potentialities and reproductive capacities (conceived in a broad sense) are in dispute. The fundamental opposition is not between being human or not but between being (and having) a relative or not. The notion of familiarizing predation which I have used previously to characterize warfare and shamanism in Amazonia applies to these relations of capture, which dynamically articulate the exterior with the interior, the other with the same. In this universe in which nothing is created and everything is appropriated, different groups—human or nonhuman, living or dead—related as meta-affines (Taylor 2000, 312) seek to capture people in order to turn them into relatives. Shamans capture animal spirits and warriors capture enemy spirits, fertilizing women, giving names to

children, producing songs for ritual, benefiting the hunt. But nonhumans also capture humans, seducing them and/or preying on them so as to transform them into members of their community. Predation is thus intimately connected to the cosmic desire to produce kinship. Every movement of appropriation unleashes another process of fabrication-familiarization, which endows the captured entity with the distinctive affects and dispositions of the captor's "species." To use Vilaça's (2002) elegant formulation, familiarization is a way of making "kin out of others."

For humans to create human affects and dispositions and produce kinship among themselves, they need to hunt: "Dead peccaries are eaten to satisfy the intense human desire to eat game animals, and, by satisfying that desire, to create kinship ties" (Gow 2001, 70). Commensality and the sharing of meat not only characterize the relation between relatives but produce relatives. Eating *like* someone and *with* someone is a primary vector of identity, much like abstaining for or with someone else. In sum, food sharing and the culinary code fabricate people of the same species.

In Amazonia, commensality is a vector of identification that applies beyond the sociologically visible relationships between humans. It is a general device for conceptualizing (and actualizing) the passage from one condition of kinship to another and hence what I have called "familiarization". A Juruna hunter, for instance, upon being captured by a herd of peccaries, must be gradually made into one of them: "feeding on coconuts and worms, participating in their dances and drinking their muddy beer, the captured hunter assumes, as time goes by, the aspect of a peccary" (Lima 1999, 111). Following the same logic, the Wari' shaman discovers food of the animal species responsible for the disease in his patient's body, testifying that animal and human are becoming commensals and, therefore, akin to each other, in the sense of becoming both kin and alike (Vilaça 2002). Among the Wauja, a patient whose soul has been kidnapped by a jaguar spirit dreams that he is eating the meat of tapir, armadillo, and deer: he recounts that "someone is bringing him food and a gourd full of blood for him to drink" (Barcelos Neto 2004, 46). Among the Barasana, the connection between feeding and familiarization is manifested by the verb *ekaa-re*, which means both "to feed" and "to domesticate." Pets are called *ekariera*, "those whom we feed."

This same idea is manifested as a warning in a Parakanã myth—a local version of the bird-unnester (*dénicheur d'oiseaux*) myth (Lévi-Strauss 1964). After coming down from the tree in which he has been abandoned, the protagonist goes in search of his relatives. He arrives at the tapir village, where he is made welcome, but he begins to miss his relatives and decides to leave. The tapirs show him the way but warn him not to eat worm porridge at the armadillo village. The inference is clear: to eat like and with the armadillos will cause him to forget his human relatives. Not to eat like and with is to refuse kinship, and this refusal is equivalent to adopting the position of an enemy. Indeed, this happened to a boy whom the Parakanã kidnapped along with his mother in a raid in the 1940s. Soon after being captured, they attempted to escape, but the Parakanã went in pursuit and intercepted them. Before killing them both, a man reproached the boy in a plaintive tone: "I told you to eat the tapir I had hunted, I told you this in vain" (Fausto 2001, 301).

Such an identificatory device is also present in Amazonian eschatologies,

in which death is frequently only definitive when a person accepts the food or drink offered by the deceased. For the Krahô, for instance, death is reversible until the settling of the soul in the village of the dead “through the acceptance of food, sexual relations, painting, and log racing” (Carneiro da Cunha 1978, 11, 121).<sup>7</sup> Feeding the dead concludes a process initiated by the predation that produced the disease and catalyzed the transformation of the patient into another species of person, a transformation often conceived as the passage from human to animal.

In sum, throughout Amazonia we find a widespread conception that *eating like and with someone* begins or completes a transformation leading to identification with this someone. At the same time, there is an equally widespread notion that *eating someone* triggers a transformation leading to identification between predator and prey—an identification which, as we know, is ambivalent, since it is never one-way.<sup>8</sup> What is the relationship between these two transformations? How can kinship be produced among humans as a result of eating animals who are people? More precisely, how can humans identify with each other by sharing and eating food proper to humans without thereby identifying themselves with the beings they eat?

The answer can be found by carefully distinguishing the two operations. Eating and sharing food in order to produce kinship must be kept distinct from eating as a way of identifying with what is eaten. But this requires work: the game animal needs to be produced as food, since it is not “naturally” an object. In other words, an animal subject needs to be reduced to the condition of an inert object. The Parakanã language has an elegant way of marking this reduction: before being cooked, the dead game is said to be *temiara*, a term formed by the aggregation of a patient marker to an agent marker. After cooking, it is said to be *temi'oa*, a word in which the agent marker is replaced by the verb “to eat” (*o*) and a nonagentive nominalizer. To transform game into food is to remove its capacity to act toward another self, to relate to others—a capacity proper to beings qua persons. In other words, the relationship between active subject and inert object does not immediately result from an act of predation: it requires the additional work of reducing the killed game to food.

The capacity which I term “agentive” is unequally distributed throughout the cosmos not only because not everything has agency but also because there is a hierarchy among beings that possess it. In Amazonia, the food chain is a cardinal index of agency. Large predators such as the jaguar and the anaconda occupy the top of this hierarchy, whereas fish and plants occupy the base. Animals are generally above plants, although they may be located below those with psychotropic effects, while carnivores tend to be placed above herbivores. However, there are significant variations in response to other characteristics linked not necessarily to position in the food chain but to color, size, behavior, ecological association, and so forth.<sup>9</sup> The care demanded in eating prey varies as a function of the relative attribution of agency to each category of animal. For example, the Kashinawá distinguish between animals without *yuxin*, those with *yuxin*, and those who are pure *yuxin* (this concept, loosely translatable as “soul,” implies a capacity for transformative action). Animals without *yuxin* are harmless, since they are only animals and cannot act as persons. Animals with *yuxin*—which include most edible species—are dangerous because they can re-

tialiate for acts of cynegetic predation by inflicting disease on humans. Finally, animals which are pure *yuxin* are dangerous and inedible. The Miraña distinguish animals classed as plants from those classed as persons. The first are the products of the gardens of the gods and not vectors of disease, while the second may well be harmful to humans. The problem lies in determining which animals are which. Small birds and rodents are plants by definition, whereas large predators are always persons. Located between these two categories are the most commonly hunted prey, which may be either plants or persons.

Since most edible game can act as subjects, they must be made into food before being consumed. Hence the importance of shamanically treating game in Amazonia, an operation that neutralizes or reduces the animal's agentive-transformative capacity. Thus, among the Piaroa, the shaman transubstantiates meat into plant in order to render it edible (Overing 1975, 89), while Barasana shamans reduce mammals to fish (S. Hugh-Jones 1996). Occasionally this activity is confined to certain species: the Tikuna ritually treat only the tapir, the sole animal reputed to avenge itself directly on humans (Goulard 1998, 430), while the Wari<sup>7</sup>—who today focus merely on the peccary—used to treat almost all prey species ritually (Vilaça 1992, 61). Sometimes shamanic action is directed at a particular class of prey, as in the Bororo case, where animals deemed to be the food of metamorphic spirits (*bope*) must be treated by a shaman to make the meat safe for general consumption (Crocker 1985, 142).

Shamanically treating the dead animal is not enough, however. Its subjective condition must be neutralized through cooking. Culinary fire is a central operator in the reduction of animal subjects to objects. Yet the technique employed also matters: for many Amazonian peoples, boiled animals present less of a risk than roasted ones, perhaps because, as Lévi-Strauss (1965) has proposed, roasting is thought to be closer to rawness. The Arakmbut, for example, avoid roasted meat because of the likelihood of its being incompletely cooked (Gray 1996, 154), while in contrast the Miraña jaguar hunter “lightly roasts” his prey so as to eat it as though raw (Karadimas 1997). These culinary preferences are not easily generalized: the Wari<sup>8</sup>, for instance, consider roasting the “best way to cook any flesh that contains dangerous blood,” including human flesh (Conklin 2001a, 125).<sup>10</sup> In all cases, however, it is blood that is the focus of attention, since it functions as an indicator of transformative agency. This is why even a slight trace of blood presents some risk and why food in Amazonia tends to be overcooked. Even in a context such as the Upper Xingu, where fish are practically the only animals eaten, villages may censure their neighbors for eating “barely cooked fish” (Gregor 1990).

The opposition between raw food and cooked food is fundamental: it establishes two highly distinct forms of consumption. Devouring prey raw defines both the intention and the result of the act of consumption; eating meat (well) cooked defines the intention but leaves the result ambiguous, since one never knows whether its agency has been completely removed. The same culinary distinction is central in the American Subarctic. Brightman argues that “the cooking process blocks acquisition by the eater of desired immaterial properties contained in the raw food” (1993, 143), while omophagy implies precisely the ingestion of these properties.<sup>11</sup> We are presented, therefore, with two modes of consumption: one, cooked, whose objective is strictly alimentary, and another,



raw, whose goal is the appropriation of the victim's animistic capacities.

Allow me to rephrase this opposition so as to avoid any possible confusion with a Cartesian dualism that is almost unanimously rejected today in describing Amerindian ontologies.<sup>12</sup> This dualism does not allow us to explain, for example, why drinking blood or eating raw meat (i.e., substantive parts of the body) entails the appropriation of the victim's subjective capacities. However, the absence of any absolute rupture between material body and immaterial soul does not imply the nonexistence of another distinction, one we can *provisionally* identify as the distinction between the consumption of the other as a person (or in the condition of a person) and the consumption of that other in the condition of food. This distinction can be equated to that between subject and object so long as we understand that the unmarked value for animals is that of subject. This does not mean that all the individuals of a species or all species fulfill this value in the same way or at all moments. Nonetheless, it is a basic premise of Amerindian ontologies. Indeed, if animals—or some animals—are persons, to devour them in this condition is to appropriate their qualities as subjects. This is what happens when prey is eaten raw. Cooking animals, in contrast, means removing this condition and transforming them into objects suitable for daily consumption.

Let us redefine the notion of cannibalism: cannibal consumption is any devouring (literal or symbolic) of the other in its (raw) condition as a person—a condition which is the default value. Noncannibal consumption supposes a process of desubjectifying the prey, a process in which culinary fire plays a central part. In daily meals, the animal-as-subject must be absent for identification to occur between humans. Any subjective relation between human and animal must be blocked so that the latter's meat can provide the medium for commensals to produce themselves as humans and relatives. However, daily meals are not always safe or desirably so. Sometimes one needs to stay behind this line of safety and sometimes one needs to go beyond it.

### Seclusion and Transformation

There are times when eating becomes the focus of very severe restrictions, different from everyday interdictions and precautions. These tend to be periods in which processes of transformation are already in progress and marked by seclusion. Birth is a good example. The event of birth is the exteriorization of a process of internal transformation that can usually be traced back to the capture of a vital principle from the outside.<sup>13</sup> Gestation is a creative and risky process, since the fetus may be attacked by the spirits of animals that its father has hunted or its mother has consumed: "Whilst in the mother's womb such spirit attack deforms the baby, who comes to resemble the animal consumed, rather than its human parent" (McCallum 2001, 18–19). The fabrication-transformation of the child is not interrupted at birth. On the contrary, the postpartum period is crucial to defining the baby's "species": father, mother, and kindred all strive to fabricate it as a human and as kin. As Vilaça has shown, "in the process of being created, the body [of the newborn] runs the risk of being made like the body of other types of people (or simply of an animal)." Parakanã women spend hours on end massaging babies to make their bodies different from animal bodies, which, with the exception of pets, are never modeled. Actions on the body

thus serve to fix a form and a fate: “Occasional applications of genipap,” writes McCallum on the Kashinawá, “appear to ‘fix’ the shape made by the hard work of the parents both during pregnancy and afterward; at the same time genipap renders the baby invisible to the spirits”.

Becoming invisible to spirits brings us back to the problem of capture. A common conception in Amazonia is that the baby’s vital principle is not securely attached to the body and can be captured. The baby has not yet been entirely fabricated as a member of its community and can be made into kin by other people, animals, or enemies: if “parents do not take the necessary ritual precautions, a newborn infant’s soul may be ‘stolen’ and converted into that of an animal” (Goldman 2004, 174). During the *couvade*, any means of interacting with the exterior must therefore be foreclosed, as is exemplified in the prohibitions incurred by the father on taking part in hunting, warfare, rituals, or shamanic activity. It is not only the child who is at risk here, for the father too is in a process of transformation and will become another kind of person (a father) though not a person of another kind. The Guarani *Ñandeva* call this threat to the genitor *odjepotá*, which is the fate of every man who abandons seclusion for hunting. Upon meeting an animal, he sees it as a person and is lured toward it: “The animal blends with us, and we end up living with the animal for the rest of our lives,” as a *Ñandeva* man explained to the anthropologist Egon Schaden.

The same danger of becoming an animal exists for the Guarani girl in seclusion after her first menses and the Parakanã man in posthomicidal seclusion. In the first case, the girl runs the risk of being attracted by an “animal-man” who will take her with him; fur will begin to grow on her body and she will become a threat to human beings. The Parakanã killer, like the father in *couvade*, cannot go hunting. The fate of anyone who disrespects this prohibition is explained in a myth: A man in seclusion had to go hunting because his son was hungry and no one in the village would hunt for him. He spotted a herd of wild pigs and began to kill them. But he was alone, and after he had shot the last of his arrows he sought refuge in the branches of a tree. He was later brought down by the wild pigs, who took him away forever. This myth begins with the refusal of kinship (the villagers do not recognize the child as a relative and deny him food) and ends with peccaries capturing the killer. A link is established between the initial negation of a relationship (among humans) and the production of a second relationship (between humans and animals). A similar idea is present among the Kayabi: a person who is mistreated by her relatives is exposed to the risk of having her soul kidnapped by spirits that will transform it into a familiar. The Kashinawá claim that “sad or angry people, unsatisfied with their relationship with close kin or spouses, are said to be prone to lend an ear to *yuxin* [“spirit”] callings at night, and then disappear as they ‘sleep walk’ into the forest” (Lagrou 1998, 45).

This process of disaffection directed by kinfolk is thus equivalent to a pathology. Writing about the Jivaroan Achar, Taylor (n.d.) shows that the erosion of the web of relations constituting the person induces “a kind of sociological anemia that translates into symptoms of illness and claims of being an orphan, a state that is tantamount to being sick.” Disease experienced as orphanhood reveals the double movement consisting of the rupture of kinship relations and their recreation elsewhere. The agent of disease—that unwanted

metamorphosis—is an other subject that wants to produce its own kinfolk and acts out of jealousy and desire, seducing and preying upon other peoples. Seen from this side as disease-disaffection, the transformation is perceived from the other side as predation-affection. The difference between disease and warfare is not one of process but one of point of view.

If potential competition exists between different kinds of peoples (human or otherwise) over the persons one wants to fabricate as kin and if refusing kinship paves the way for the production of a new relationship that passes through a metamorphosis, why should the postpartum, postmenarche, and posthomicide conditions be surrounded by interdictions? The danger seems to derive from the fact that a metamorphosis is already in progress, one evinced by the smell of blood. But what metamorphosis is this, and what risk is involved? In the case of homicide, the key issue is the direction of familiarization: instead of controlling the victim, the killer runs the risk of being controlled by it, definitively assuming its perspective. Because of this, the killer's relatives place him in seclusion, forcing him to focus on his relationship with the victim and prohibiting food and activities which might lead him to interact with other subjects and go astray. They also insistently remind him that he is kin and not an enemy.<sup>14</sup> Therefore we can say that while the killer familiarizes the victim, his kin refamiliarize both himself and his victim, who are now one and the same. The direction of familiarization is also at stake in the *couvade*. As Rival says, birth is part of “a wider process of gradual incorporation” (1998, 626). What starts as part of a generic pool of subjectivity (or soul-stuff) has to be made into a specific kind of person through acts of feeding and caring. And here again certain relations must be placed in focus while others have to be blocked. Finally, in the case of the menarche, there is no appropriation of a new subject (there is no victim and no baby). There is instead the production of a condition that will enable a woman to be an active receptacle for a nonvisible transformation (gestation), which serves as an analogical model for another transformation, that of the killer, which is also objectifiable only in its external manifestations (chants and names provided by the victim and transferred to the community).

In sum, seclusion is a way of controlling processes of transformation, preventing them from taking the wrong direction. This is a matter not of obviating them but of trying to impede other beings from appropriating this potential for movement. The numerous food restrictions applicable during seclusion suggest that eating is a particularly vulnerable activity, since it can quickly be converted into a social relationship between subjects. Shamanic and culinary treatments are not sufficient by themselves to transform alimentary consumption into a secure relationship between an active subject and an inert object; there is always a trace of activity and subjectivity left in the animal, and therefore, in some circumstances, one must abstain from almost everything.<sup>15</sup>

### **From Food to Person**

Food in Amazonia cannot always be simply food. While there are times when prohibitions are rife, there are others when processes of transformation must be triggered by the consumption of prohibited animals. These animals are normally predators and tend to be consumed raw or roasted. In order to develop the dreaming capacity of young men, Parakanã adults used to give them selected

roasted parts of giant otter, an animal which many Amazonian peoples consider to be a sort of aquatic jaguar. Kashinawá men used to eat the raw heart and tongue of the boa constrictor (while women ate the eyes) so as to acquire its capacities. Among the Yágua, a man who kills a jaguar is supposed to eat its still beating heart to acquire strength and courage. The Ávila Runa are reported to ingest the bile of jaguars and harpy eagles to increase their hunting prowess and become were-jaguars: "As were-jaguars they become powerful in life and their soul goes to inhabit the body of a jaguar after death" (Kohn 2002, 175).

Along with the actual consumption of normally prohibited animals, there are numerous other ritual practices which aim to acquire a supplement of predatory potency. As part of the initiation of young men, the sixteenth-century Tupinambá killed jaguars in the plaza as a substitute for human captives. The animals were ritually killed but not devoured, in contrast to the enemy. Nowadays, upon killing a jaguar, the Parakanã dance with its corpse in order to dream about it and transform themselves into it and subsequently leave to hunt in the forest. Before departing on a war expedition, the Yanomami conduct a ritual which aims to incorporate the vital images of certain animals, particularly the vulture, who help the killer to devour the victim during posthomicide seclusion. In all these examples, the aim is to produce transformations in certain persons so that they can interact with nonkin and familiarize them. These practices seek to constitute persons as potential terms in a future relation of familiarizing predation.

To these practices in which animals are taken not as food but as the source of capacities we can add the consumption of narcotics and hallucinogens. I have already explored the connections between tobacco and the jaguar in South America. Ayahuasca (*Banisteriopsis caapi*) is similarly associated with large predators. According to Harner, snakes (particularly the anaconda) and jaguars are the animals most commonly cited by Amerindians when explaining the effects of the drink. The Mawé establish a direct link between the beverage and felines: as a shaman notes, "the master of /kaapi/ is a spotted jaguar. . . . When we cultivate it in bloody water [i.e., water used for cleaning game], it becomes very wild" (quoted by Giraldo Figueiroa 1997, 276). The association between hematophagy and psychotropics is also found among the Miraña: coca is kept in a small bag called "the devouring spirit bag," the spirit in question being an eater of raw meat and blood. In Northwest Amazonia, coca and ayahuasca are conceived as parts of the bodies of ancestors who are themselves predators.<sup>16</sup>

Lastly we have an example which makes the correlation between this modality of consumption and predatory warfare explicit. The Miraña practiced exocannibalism and fashioned necklaces from the teeth of their victims. The removal of the teeth was the final stage in the process of consanguinizing the enemy that began with the homicidal act itself. By wearing the necklace, the killer mobilized the predatory potential (*gwásá*) of his victim, which enabled him to use these powers against the deceased's ex-consanguines. The same practice applies to the jaguar, today as in the past. Upon killing the animal, the hunter removes its canine teeth and hands them over to a shaman. He also cuts off the tail (or removes the liver), which he will eat "lightly roasted" to curb his fear of meeting the jaguar's spirit. The shaman then summons the spirit, who speaks through his mouth and converses with the hunter. The teeth will be the new

resting place for the jaguar's *gwásà*, and whenever the hunter needs its help he will don the necklace and summon the spirit of the jaguar.<sup>17</sup>

The *Miraña* practice offers a good example of what I have termed familiarization: the conversion of relations of predation into familiarization, modeled as the passage from affinity to consanguinity. Familiarizing predation characterizes the taming of both the human victim in warfare and the animal victim in shamanism. In the latter case, however, the connection between hunting and familiarization is not immediate, except when the animal is devoured (literally or symbolically) in its condition as a person described above. However, in these cases the animal prey is equivalent to a human victim, and hunting is no different from homicide during warfare. In daily activities, in contrast, hunting must be kept distinct from warfare, and even the consumption of a nonprohibited animal must, in certain cases and at certain times, be surrounded by ritual precautions so as to transform the animal into safe food.

### The Hunting of Peccaries

Here we come to the reason that hunting can be warfare only from the animals' perspective. If there is no ontological barrier between human and nonhuman, humans must make the effort to distinguish the consumption of the animal as food from its consumption as a person. To confuse hunting with warfare is, as Lima says of the Juruna, to affirm the peccaries' point of view: "A fight takes place—a struggle between one's hunt and the other's war. The hunter's misfortune is the slipping of hunting into warfare." The Juruna verbal interdiction therefore implies not the affirmation of the hunter's perspective but its production as a human perspective. In this sense, the interdiction is already part of the desubjectification of the future meal and the transformation of a person into food. The presupposition that peccaries are humans is still there, but it is denied by an interdiction, and this establishes an asymmetry between the prey's position and that of the predator. The intention to eat meat and not to make war must be affirmed to avoid counterpredation. This distinction can be expressed by a minimal difference such as is found among the Kashinawá, who used the same club to kill peccaries and enemies but never the same side of the club.

According to Erikson, even if predators are occasionally enemies, animal game "should not be treated as an enemy". For this to hold, differences need to be produced. Thus the Sharanawa killed jaguars with war spears and edible game with bow and arrow. The use of different cynegetic techniques as a way of producing a distinction between warfare and hunting is recurrent in Amazonia; however, it does not always subdivide the fauna along the same lines. Predation of jaguars is almost universally equated with the killing of enemies, but the hunting of other large terrestrial mammals may also be compared to warfare. Here, the prototypical species tends to be the white-lipped peccary, which offers a model for the *generic* human condition itself: they are not purely predators but mortals who are preyed upon and defend themselves bravely, live in groups, eat manioc, and possess a chief. Like humans, they are gregarious (signaling their capacity to produce kinship), socially organized in herds (signaling their recognition of asymmetric relations other than devouring), and cosmologically ambivalent, positioned halfway between prey and predator. The jaguar, in contrast, is characterized by solitariness and an almost unlimited predatory

capacity, a capacity that is unequally distributed among humans (being typical of warriors, shamans, and hunters), and indicates the surpassing of the human condition (either positively through immortality or negatively through antiso-ciability).

The salience of peccaries as a metaphor for the human condition makes the hunting of this animal distinct from other hunting, and not only for technical reasons. It is not by chance that many Amazonian peoples associate the hunt for white-lipped peccaries with warfare, setting it apart from the hunting of other animals. Indigenous peoples that hunt with blowguns, for example, tend to oppose this technique, aimed at arboreal species, to those based on the bow or the spear, used for killing terrestrial mammals in general and peccaries in particular. The use of the blowgun causes the victim to shed little blood (since the prey is killed by poison rather than the wound) and implies greater distance between hunter and prey, whereas the use of weapons of perforation causes intense bloodshed and involves a less distant relationship between killer and victim. We thus have situations in which, differently from those described by Lima among the Juruna, the hunting of peccaries seems to be positively marked as preying on enemies. How should we interpret this fact within the framework I have been delineating?

The peccary is the least prohibited mammal in all of Amazonia, its exclusion from indigenous diets being rare, but it is also the game which tends to require the greatest effort at desubjectification either through the action of shamans or through ritualized commensality. The tapir may occupy a similarly prominent position (as appears to be the case in the Northwest Amazon and among the Miraña), but it is not gregarious, does not involve the same collective efforts at hunting, and does not result in the same quantity of food. This is why peccary meat, more than any other, is subject to the moral imperative of ample sharing, whose nonfulfillment can lead to illness. Not to share is to behave like a lone predator; selfishness with food betrays a cannibal propensity, something that the Guarani make explicit by comparing stingy behavior to that of jaguars. Commensality and the shamanistic treatment of food mark a distance from cannibalism: even though they are enemies, we do not eat them as enemies: what we want is not their subject part but their object part.

The ambivalence of peccaries is also expressed in the ritualized manner in which they may be consumed, often combining the two modalities of consumption (ontological and alimentary). The Huaorani of Ecuador distinguish the hunting of arboreal animals with blowguns from the hunting of peccaries with war spears. When peccaries are killed, this distinction results in an orgiastic party. Upon returning to camp, the hunters place the hands of children on the palpitating and bloody skin of peccaries for them to absorb the animals' strength and energy. Peccary hunting, Rival says, "is special; it is a collective slaughter followed by a feast. . . . Peccary meat, the meat of an omnivorous animal with an uncontrolled appetite, is considered highly intoxicating and can only be consumed infrequently, in a kind of orgy, by the *huaomoni* group in whose territory the herd was hunted."

This ambivalence in the consumption of wild pigs, which seems on the verge of shifting into cannibalism, forces us to ask one final question: what, then, of anthropophagy? Is anthropophagy necessarily a cannibal practice, or can

humans be eaten as if they were merely food?

### Anthropophagic Commensality

Warfare anthropophagy has been observed among many Lowland South American peoples. It was practiced by Tupian groups such as the Tupinambá, the Guarani and the Chiriguano in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and by the Shipaya and the Juruna in the nineteenth century. It was also reported to be practiced by Island and Continental Caribs in the colonial period, Putumayo and Caquetá Rivers peoples such as the Miraña and the Bora, the Rikbaktsa of the Xingu-Tapajós interfluvial zone, the Arawakan-speaking Kurripaco of the Upper Rio Negro basin, and Chapakuran-speaking peoples such as the Wari'. One of the key elements of this anthropophagy was the disjunction of killers from eaters. Those who killed did not consume the meat of their victims; on the contrary, they had to abstain from it. This strict prohibition contrasts with the broad range of people who were allowed to eat an enemy. According to the chroniclers who described the Tupinambá anthropophagic ritual, men, women, children, and even babies participated. Similarly, among the Wari' of Rondônia, "any person, except the killers, could eat *wijam* [enemy] flesh, including women and children" (Vilaça 1992, 102).

Tupinambá warfare anthropophagy was expressed in the language of food desire and revenge. Human meat was consumed because it was sweet and appetizing and because everyone wanted to—or was expected to—take revenge on the enemy. Eating produced an alliance among those who ate together and separated those who were, potentially, food for one another. At the same time it produced the eaters as predators and the food as prey. Hence the famous jest made by Cunhambebe, who, between bites of the roasted leg of an enemy, replied to Hans Staden—who had reproved him for eating his fellow humans—by remarking that he was a jaguar. Yet what the Tupinambá chief ate was not the predator part of the enemy, for this was devoured by the killer in seclusion. The portion of the enemy left for him was its game part. In other words, the Tupinambá consumed humans as if they were food. The repast was an eating with and like someone in which the subjectivity of the object devoured was absent. According to the definition I have proposed, Tupinambá anthropophagy was not cannibalism. What was eaten was a human body reduced to an object, through which the eaters identified with each other and produced a common condition (even if this envisaged common condition was not that of meek humans but that of full predators).<sup>18</sup>

Among the Arawakan Kurripaco, as described by Journet, a war party would butcher the body of a slain enemy and take away as many body parts as possible, with the exception of the head and the guts. They might stop to eat it on the way home, but only in small quantities, since human meat was held to be strong and dangerous. Once back in the village, all men and women took part in the meal. The flesh was roasted and distributed like any other animal's meat. Journet notes that in Kurripaco narratives the flesh of enemies is called "food" or "game" (p. 192). Meanwhile, the killer had to make a flute from the enemy's femur, which was said to contain the victim's breath. This became an inalienable possession and had to be buried with the killer upon his death.

Thus the killer, through the act of killing, consumed something different from meat, bringing about a process of transformation publicly signaled by seclusion. But what was this “other thing”? In the literature on indigenous warfare in Amazonia, we find various terms for designating what is acquired upon killing an enemy, from commonplace terms such as “strength” and “courage” to categories derived from philosophy and psychology such as “subjectivity,” “activity,” and “intentionality” to metaphysical concepts such as “spirit,” “breath,” and “soul.” These terms translate native categories which possess in common the idea that this acquired “something” corresponds to a capacity held by an other (human or nonhuman) which, on being captured through predation, becomes an integral part of the predator as a *supplement*. This supplement can be conceived as an alien self that merges with the killer, establishing an asymmetrical relationship with the latter (as in the Araweté case, for example), or as a capacity which, although not hypostasized in the form of a self, implies the future possibility of establishing asymmetrical relations with alien subjects (as in the Parakanã case).

I suggest that, in both cases, this captured supplement corresponds to the *predator part* of the enemy, its jaguar part, which is detachable and can be transferred from one subject to another. For the Parakanã, homicide does not lead to the appropriation of a spirit: the killer is simply contaminated by the odor of blood and by the “magic-fat” (*kawahiwa*) of the victim, which confers a predatory and creative capacity on him.<sup>19</sup> This capacity is associated with that of dreaming, through which the Parakanã familiarize enemies and receive names and songs from them. These songs are themselves called “jaguar” (*jawara*), and the dreamer is said to be a “master of the jaguars” (*jawajara*). Upon transferring a song, the enemy gives up a part of himself to the dreamer—his jaguar part, so to speak. The jaguar part is that which enables a subject, in a relationship with another subject, to determine the direction of familiarizing predation.

The homicide allows the killer to capture his victim’s jaguar part. What remains for the eaters, therefore, is another part, objectified in a body and particularly in its flesh. This we can call the *game part*, the person’s potential as food. However, not all beings possess these parts in equal measure, since the partition is indexed by the food chain. Jaguars occupy an extreme pole, since everything in them points to a predator part; although they possess flesh, they are seen as not having a game part and are therefore rarely consumed as food.<sup>20</sup> This may explain why, although the Tupinambá performed a simulacrum of the anthropophagic ritual with jaguars in the place of human victims, they did not eat them. Human meat, in contrast, was said to be delicious, as peccary meat certainly is. Peccaries, as we have seen, possess both a substantial food part and abundant activeness. The separability of these two components is expressed in the distinction between the master of peccaries (or the chief of the herd) and his animals: the first represents the jaguar part, while the second represents an anonymous collectivity, denoting the passive aspect of peccaries. Indeed, the Piro say that the master of peccaries is the jaguar of its species.<sup>21</sup>

The notion of a jaguar part applies equally well to shamanism, which is often associated with the establishment of a special relationship with familiarized predators. The Mamainde Nambikwara, for instance, render this idea of a detachable and transferable jaguar part highly tangible, since their shamans derive



their curative and offensive powers from the little feline that they hold between their teeth and can release at will. For the Kanamari, shamans also have jaguars, which they keep either in their bodies or in a container where they feed them with tobacco powder. Upon a shaman's death, one of his souls is liberated in the form of a jaguar, which can subsequently be familiarized by another living shaman.

In sum, it can be stated that in war anthropophagy the distinction between killers and eaters corresponds to the difference between eating someone and eating with and like someone; therefore the act of eating a human was primarily a commensal practice—an-other-body was eaten so as to produce a body of relatives. We still need to determine, however, if this analysis applies to funerary anthropophagy.

### **Eating the Dead**

Funerary anthropophagy refers to the eating of the deceased's flesh or bones or both. Osteophagy (the consumption of calcinated bones) was more common in the South American Lowlands than the consumption of the flesh. The latter was practiced in Western Amazonia by Panoan-speaking peoples, by the Chapakuran peoples of Rondônia and Bolivia, and, to the south, by the Aché-Guayaki. The former were observed in a large arc covering the north of Brazil, the Upper Orinoco, and the Northwest and Upper Amazon. Colonial sources report the occurrence of flesh anthropophagy in areas such as the Tapajós Basin, Northeast Brazil, and the Maranhão, but it is difficult to ascertain the veracity of these data.

As does warfare anthropophagy, funerary anthropophagy often involves a distinction between those who eat and those who do not, a distinction that follows kinship relations, though not always in the same way. There seems to be a difference, for example, between the consumption of flesh and the consumption of bones. While in the first case close kin do not eat (while affines or distant kin do eat), in the second the kin of the deceased tend to eat and control who can eat with them. Nonetheless, the distinction is more complex, for some peoples consumed both flesh and bones and in some cases established a variety of prescriptions and prohibitions. I have no intention of accounting for this variation here. In order to extend my analysis from warfare to funerary anthropophagy, I shall pose only one question: Can we say that the meat that is eaten is the game part of the deceased kin?

This is what both Vilaça and Conklin report in relation to Wari' funerary anthropophagy. The deceased were consumed as game, an assimilation which was ritually expressed at two moments: first, when affines ate the corpse butchered and roasted like game; and, secondly, during the ritual closure of mourning, when everyone, including close kin, ate game meat as if it were a human corpse. Mourning, which occurred in the interval between these two moments, allowed the consanguines to defamiliarize the dead and thus share the viewpoint of affines, identifying the deceased kin with food, that is, with an object which provides the support for other relationships. For Conklin, the work of mourning aimed to produce an anticipated image of the deceased as game, since the Wari' hold that their "ancestors" can return to the world of the living in the guise of white-lipped peccaries and offer themselves as food to their former relatives.

They cannot be commensals with the living anymore, but they can still feed them.

Wari' funerary anthropophagy is an example of eating with and like someone where the support for commensality was a human being. Hence the requirement that every relative of the deceased be present, including those inhabiting other villages, even though this often meant that the corpse had become putrefied by the time it was consumed. That there was a ritual reduction of a deceased kinsperson to game does not mean that eating humans was a trivial or easy matter. In the Wari' case, there was a marked contrast between eating the enemy's flesh and eating that of a relative. The former was to be devoured with voracity and demonstrations of anger, whereas the latter was eaten in small parts, with the aid of little wooden sticks and no demonstration of pleasure. Both were ritually treated as food but carefully distinguished in terms of eating manners and the expression of emotions.

Moreover, in the Wari' funeral, the distinction between those who ate and those who abstained was not of the same order as that in war anthropophagy. The abstinence shown by kin expressed the defamiliarization of a deceased kinsperson, while the killer's abstinence expressed the familiarization of a deceased enemy. The movements are in opposite directions but correspond to two aspects of the same process: defamiliarization for some always corresponds to familiarization for others. If the Wari' funeral severed kinship relationships constructed throughout life, producing forgetting, it also permitted the familiarization of the deceased by another species of people, another body of kin, since the deceased was incorporated either into the species responsible for the death or into the subaquatic world of the dead.

The assimilation of the corpse to food seems also to have characterized the funerary anthropophagy of the Aché-Guayaki (P. Clastres 1968). There was an emphasis on the alimentary character of the act (human flesh is tasty; those who do not eat it become thin) and on the notion that everyone, except close kin, could or should eat the deceased. Although adults were eaten roasted, children were boiled in order for there to be "enough liquid for everyone" (p. 39). This extensive funerary commensality was a decisive indicator of the networks of alliance among the different Guayaki bands: friendly groups were to be invited (or receive a part of the corpse), lest they shoot arrows at "those who had forgotten them" (pp. 40–41). Another notion that we reencounter among the Guayaki is the idea of funerary anthropophagy's producing or favoring the dissociation between body and soul, a notion which I suggest refers to the double operation of forgetting the dead and being forgotten by them (i.e., defamiliarization here and familiarization elsewhere).

Funerary anthropophagy was most common among Panoan peoples. According to Dole, 15 Panoan groups are reported to have eaten their dead, 5 of them consuming only the bones. The best-known example is undoubtedly that of the Kashinawá. According to McCallum (1999, 66), anthropophagy was reserved for older men and women who were widely respected in the community—people who embodied multiple kinship relations, constituting central nodes in the relational network. To be eaten was the privilege of a few, but to eat was the duty of everyone. In this case, the meat was also eaten as though it were game. As meat, the deceased could serve commensality among

relatives: "It is as if the kin effectively carried out one final constitutive act of kinship. Instead of offering game or fish meat to the community... he offered his own body" (p. 456). Nonetheless, commensality among relatives excluded the dead, who had to be forgotten, their names erased, their houses destroyed, and their paths wiped clean. The work of eating was likewise one of forgetting. Its aim was to dissolve the body as the physical support of affective memories and relatedness through the process of cooking, which disengaged "the *yuxin* (souls), still permeating the flesh, from the bodily remains that need to become transformed into mere meat" (Lagrou 2000, 167).

If the game part of the deceased served the production of kinship among the living, the "body soul" and the "eye soul" were supposed to depart and establish an existence elsewhere, as "foreigners" (*nawa*): the first soul with the animals in the forest, the second with the Inka (a celestial and cannibal god), where it acquired "a new body by clothing itself with the robe" of the deity (Lagrou 2000, 167). Here we find a set of correlations replicated at different scales: body is to soul as meat is to bones as the body soul is to the eye soul. The first term is the prey part vis-à-vis the second term, the predator part, as though each person contained multiple predatory relations. Thus while feasting on the meat is associated with the liberation of the body soul, feasting on the bones is associated with the liberation of the eye soul, the bones being described by the Kashinawá man Pudicho Torres as "the bones of the *nawa* (foreigner), of the powerful man, of the sky man, of the jaguar, of the *jiadama* (giant)".

This replication in the imagery of prey and predator, objectified in distinct parts of the dead person's body and at different scales, can be found in other ritual contexts where anthropophagy was not practiced. The Jivaro, for example, used the head of an enemy, its jaguar part, as a subjective object; at the same time, they fattened pigs, which were killed and served to their guests as a substitute (*imiak*) for the enemy or, more exactly, for his game part.<sup>22</sup> The same argument can be applied to Amazonian eschatologies. Among the Pirahã of the Madeira River, body and name have distinct fates. Each name received by a body in life is divided at death into two antagonistic components, *kaoaiboge* and *toipe*, which represent the prey part and the predator part of the person (or a gregarious and social component in opposition to a warlike and cannibal one). The *toipe* live to prey on the *kaoaiboge*, which may suffer up to two deaths but on the third one are transformed into jaguars. In turn, the *toipe* become super-*toipe* when they are first killed but if they are killed again become *kaoaiboge*, fulfilling their destiny as prey until they become jaguars again.

The argument also helps us understand aspects of some Amazonian cosmogonies. Among the Piaroa, for instance, the origin of all earthly creation is a chimerical being called Ofo/Da'a (Tapir/Anaconda), a composite of the largest game and one of the main predators of South American tropical forest. Ofo/Da'a is responsible for the birth of the two demiurges, Wahari and Kuemoi, who inherit different powers contained in him. The mythic struggles between these two demiurges are the origin of the current state of the world. Wahari ends up killing Kuemoi for his cannibalistic attacks on his realm, the jungle, and is subsequently killed by his own family for his incestuous behavior. Both are reborn and now live on the earth, Kuemoi as anaconda and Wahari as tapir.

The complexity of each ethnographic example demands a more careful anal-

ysis than I can offer here. My argument concerning anthropophagy should not be taken as an analysis of anthropophagic rites per se. There is much more to be said about them, especially concerning the continuous inversion of the positions of predator and prey and the complex ways in which relations are put into action in a specific, ritual form. Rituals produce transformations in a complex set of relations, both internal and external to the person. Here I have focused mainly on commensality, since my aim has been to discuss the status of meat eating and personhood in Amazonia. Elsewhere I have dealt with other aspects of warfare and shamanic rites.

This said, I believe that we can accept (and this is enough for my aims here) that in anthropophagy human flesh is consumed as food, that there is a disjunction between ontological predation and commensality, and that this disjunction is founded on the possibility of separating the human person into predator parts and prey parts, a distinction which is often, though not exclusively, indexed by the predatory relation.

### Reconfiguring Body-and-Soul Dualism

Throughout this text, I have been progressively led to reconceptualize body-and-soul dualism. I have started with a general question which concerns all “animistic systems”: in ontologies in which both humans and animals are persons, how can the consumption of game be differentiated from cannibalism? This question has been posed before by other Amazonianists and by specialists on indigenous peoples of the boreal forest. Brightman addresses it directly by acknowledging the instability of the ontological categories of animals and humans among the Cree: if they share a condition as persons, how are we to distinguish a hunter from a sorcerer or a cannibal, who eats humans because he sees them as animals?

For Brightman, the model of the hunt as a gift from animals offers a suitable compromise for this insoluble paradox, for it negates its warfare and cannibalistic character. But this redefinition of the prey as a giver depends on the further distinction between a zoomorphic body and an anthropomorphic soul: “The flesh and skin of animals are represented as distinct and iteratively detachable from the humanoid essence and identity: the body is likened to clothing that the animal discards. . . . There is no cannibalism because the similitude of human and animal exists in relation to the soul” (Brightman 1993, 205–6). What animals give up to humans—their bodies—is like a piece of clothing which they surrender upon being shot. Both the notion of regeneration and that of clothing point to the separation of that which humans appropriate from the potential for life which animals conserve despite being hunted and killed. The ontological problem of cannibalism would thus be resolved through the separability of body and soul (the meat-food being distinguished from the animal subject), while the moral problem would be resolved by the emphasis on sharing and compassion between humans and animals. Brightman’s answer depends not only on postulating a distinguishability between zoomorphic body and anthropomorphic soul but also on adopting the idea that cannibalism is the consumption of the *same*. To the extent that the similarity between humans and animals occurs at the level of the soul, eating the body of prey is not cannibalism.

In this article I have moved away from this notion, seeking to redefine cannibalism as the consumption of the active part of the other. I have sought to show that although Brightman's formulation in terms of a body-soul dualism may be economical, it does not work very well in Amazonia. In saying this I am not asserting the nonexistence of distinctions between more and less material, more and less representational, more and less relational components of the human and the nonhuman person. Yet these distinctions are not organized by a global dualism, be it because there are multiple souls, because the body is not a discrete unit, because the soul has a body and certain parts of the body have more soul than others, or because the body does not contain a soul within it, the presence of the soul being the manifestation of the absence of the body. In Amazonia, there seems to be a constitutive tension between the provisory unity of the person and its fragmentation into two different modes of plurality: the dual and the multiple. The dual may indeed emerge as a distinction between an interior essence ("soul," "mind") and an exterior envelope ("body," "skin"), which Ingold sees as a fundamental division in the animism of the circumpolar North. Most of the time, however, duality is much more complex than this by virtue of its fractal structure and its scaling mechanism. Moreover, such duality coexists with the idea of a continuous accretion of potency throughout life, which is better conveyed by the notion of supplementation and is linked to each person's biography. Amazonian eschatological beliefs present interesting examples of multiple souls, sometimes reducible to a duality and sometimes tending to an irreducible multiplicity.

The distinction between animal clothes and humanoid essence does not apply very well in Amazonia. On one hand, many of the agentive and subjective capacities that confer intentionality and potency on humans tend to be found more in some animals than in others, particularly in predators (and, among them, in those possessing intricate designs, such as the jaguar and the anaconda). On the other hand, humans possess a sort of blank skin which can be decorated, dressed, or even changed by the appropriation of designs, patterns, feathers, and animal pelts. These "skins" or "clothes" often represent the active part of the person, a supplement of beauty and agentive capacity. This is why, for example, the Barasana burn the feathers and fur of animals they wish to desubjectify in order for them to serve as food and use them as ornaments when they want to appropriate the "potentially dangerous power of their 'weapons'" (S. Hugh-Jones 1996, 141). The zoomorphic body is not a monolithic unit, a mechanical substrate inhabited by a humanoid essence. Each of its parts is, in a different measure, an edifice of "multiple souls."

In the face of these facts, I have moved away from the current view that animals and plants are also persons because they possess, as humans do, an anthropomorphic essence often called "spirit" or "soul." I have preferred to treat the person as an amalgamation of activity and passivity, as someone who contains two possible perspectives in a relation of predation. The move from potency to act, from predatory tension to predatory act, is what produces the disjunction of these perspectives into detachable parts, parts which can then be transacted. I have also drawn attention to the fact that this partition is not simple but complex, since it is replicated at different scales and is subject to inversions and condensations. An analysis of certain rituals would undoubtedly shed light on

this type of fractal complexity, which is congenial to some recent models of Amazonian sociality.

In order to avoid a simple opposition between body and soul (or between animal appearance and human essence), I have proposed the distinction between consuming the other in its condition as subject and consuming it in its condition as object. This distinction is dynamic and complex. Its premise is that all persons in the cosmos, in degrees proper to their species and conditions, have a positive potential to occupy the agent position and a negative potential to occupy the patient position in a predatory relation. This double potency is internal to the person and constitutive of the person's specific condition: a person is thus an amalgam of predator and prey. When predatory interaction is established between two persons thus constituted, a metarelation is created in which one of them occupies the agent position and the other occupies the patient position. Yet the predatory act does not eclipse the multiple and partible constitution of the person; on the contrary, it makes this constitution manifest by means of a fracture that can lead to two types of consumption: the consumption proper to warfare and cannibalism (in which one consumes the predator parts of the victim) and the consumption characteristic of cuisine (in which one consumes the prey parts of the victim).

These modalities require supplementary labor, since in both cases there is the risk of a reversal in positions. On one hand, by consuming the predator part of the prey, the killer runs the risk of becoming prey: this is why he needs to undergo seclusion through which the predator part of the prey is turned into the predator part of the predator. On the other hand, the predatory act does not immediately turn game into an inert object; one must continue to deconstruct the subject, progressively removing the activity it contains through a series of shamanic and culinary operations. This process of objectification reduces prey to the condition of food, which serves to produce both *the* body of kin and a body of kin—both their bodies and the sociality of kinship.

In contrast to the jaguar, a dread and lone predator, humans possess the means to distinguish daily alimentation from cannibalism. Hence the importance of culinary fire in the myths analyzed by Lévi-Strauss in *The Raw and the Cooked*. These myths speak not of a definitive rupture between nature and culture but of two predatory codes, that of the jaguar and that of humans, which make the first a master among masters and allow the second to produce kinship. Culinary fire makes it possible for carnivorous meals to be noncannibal, allowing kin to produce each other as kin. If all they ate were animal agents they would end up either becoming one of them or being unable to recognize any form of relationship other than devouring. This is why some hunters do not eat their own prey or do not carry it or avoid certain parts, such as the head. They wish to remain human, providing meat for their wives, children, and affines. This is why generosity and moderation are basic indicators of the acceptance of kinship while gluttony and selfishness are associated with sorcery, the jaguar, and solitude.

The ethical question in Amazonia thus seems to favor relations between kin over those between humans and animals. This is not a matter of excluding cannibalism. There is no definitive rupture between the predatory code of the jaguar and that of humans. It is, instead, a matter of making cannibalism

moderate, mediated by specialists and practiced on ritual occasions. Were this otherwise, cannibal predation would become the measure of relations on the inside and there would be no production of kinship. We would all be jaguars—and this only some gods can be...

### Comments ...

#### Morten Axel Pedersen

Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen...

Fausto is to be congratulated for this piece, which in my view represents a contribution on several levels. For one thing, the comparative dimension of his analysis seems to reach beyond the Amazon and the circumpolar region. Despite the fact that my own regional specialization is Northern and Inner Asia, his ethnographic findings ring many bells. Among the Darhads of Northern Mongolia, where I have conducted fieldwork, as well as among other peoples inhabiting the border zone between the Central Eurasian taiga and plains such as the Buryats, one recognizes many of the—to the Western eye so unfamiliar—ontological assumptions that he describes. In fact, it is a matter of debate whether the indigenous cosmologies of Inner Asia differ fundamentally from their Northern Asian counterparts, just as one can discuss whether these ideas and practices may best be labeled animist, shamanist, or perspectivist, but here, “predation is a transspecific vector of sociality.”

For another thing, the article represents a distinct theoretical contribution. I am especially thinking of Fausto’s import of Strathern’s concept of the partible person to shed new light on Amerindian perspectivism. It is here, in the dialogue between Melanesian and Amazonian anthropology, that the analysis is most convincing. In particular, the positing of a distinction between the predator part and the game part of humans and nonhumans is suggestive, at least for a regional outsider such as myself. While it remains moot whether this distinction is native or heuristic (is the “jaguar part” an Amerindian concept, or is it merely “align[ed] more closely with native conceptions?”), it evidently provides a powerful tool by which seemingly disparate phenomena (such as hunting and cannibalism or warfare and disease) can be brought together under one analytical umbrella.

Less convincing, in my view, is Fausto’s claim that there is “no ontological barrier between humans and nonhumans” in a “perspectival environment.” To acknowledge that the different worlds of hunting and warfare are “constructed” and that the “parts” and “orders” of these “realities” may be exchanged with one another does not mean that there are no barriers to cross. Much to the contrary, it could be argued that the more perspectival or, to use Viveiros de Castro’s term, multinaturalist—an environment is, the more essentialized it will be. After all, as Latour (2002) has argued, closely following Viveiros de Castro (1998a), real wars take place not between different worldviews but between different worlds (see also Henare, Holbraad, and Wastell 2007). Given that one of Fausto’s main themes is precisely warfare (between humans as well as between humans and nonhumans) and given that he is keen on avoiding any solipsistic trappings of hypostatized sameness (between, for example, the souls of predator and prey), it seems to follow that, far from being devoid of ontological distinctions, the perspectival environment under investigation is one characterized by *radical dif-*

ferences whose multiple worlds can be bridged only by ritualized and/or violent means (such as shamanism, hunting, and cannibalism).

My final query is less a critique than a comment. I want to return to the central distinction in Fausto's argument between predator parts and prey parts in order to point to another distinction through which his argument may be taken a step farther. There is, I believe, a weakness in assuming that the predator/master position always represents an active subject pole and that the prey/pet position always represents a passive object pole. Indeed, some of Fausto's own examples seem to suggest that this division is not always that clear-cut. If, for instance, we accept his claim that the point about the mourning which takes place after Wari' funerary anthropophagy is for "the consanguines to defamiliarize the dead and thus share the viewpoint of affines," does this "desubjectification" then not render the "prey part" of the deceased an *active* agent in its own right (its agency being to facilitate the forgetting of the dead)?

More than a distinction between active and passive or between subject and object, what seems to happen in the ritualized separation of the deceased (or the murdered, or the hunted) body into two parts is the instantiation of a division between the multiple and the singular (Pedersen 2007; cf. Strathern 1991). In that sense, the ultimate difference between predator and prey is not a matter of subject-like activity versus object like passivity; rather, it seems to me, we are faced with two qualitatively different ways of being imbued with agency: one that brings about effects by embodying difference, individuality, and solitude (the predator side) and another that brings about effects by embodying sameness, collectivity, and commensality (the prey side).

#### **Laura Rival**

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Fausto's model is clear, simple, and very helpful. It also has the merit of comparing 50 Amazonian societies with a number of Subarctic and Siberian ones, all belonging to the "Sibero-American shamanic tradition," which, according to the author, has "a historical unity of its own."

The Huaorani are mentioned twice, first in support of the general commensality thesis and then in support of the "hunting is warfare on animals" thesis. However, the model proposed by Fausto cannot fully capture what is most significant about Huaorani hunting practices and ritual food restrictions. Huaorani people hold two contrastive and gendered models of nature. Not all animals have the same degree of "animality," and therefore different kinds of animals are treated differently. Far from being a uniform enterprise, hunting is made up of two radically different activities based on entirely discontinuous relational modes: blowing and spear killing. The Huaorani have consciously chosen to know, relate to, and eat animal species with which communities of sharing can be formed. The large herds of white-lipped peccaries that invade and ravage their land trigger the men's desire for revenge through violent killing; the meat, considered repugnant, sickens those who eat it. Monkeys and other frugivorous tree animals, by contrast, are put to death respectfully, without bloodshed or aggression. Their meat, especially monkey meat, a staple food and a central ingredient of Huaoraniness, has strong associations with palm fruits. I know of no illness attributed to monkeys or birds or to the consumption of their meat. Moreover, and as a corrective to the assertion that kinship cannot be produced



without hunting, it should be mentioned that Huaorani families, who value forest plant food as highly as other native Amazonians value manioc or maize beer, can live without game for weeks.

If interspecies differences are meaningful, human differentiation is the key to Amazonian societies and their historical transformations. Fausto remarks in passing that his model is inflected by gender and age, but he does not follow this fact through. I wish to argue that fundamental social differences are inscribed onto the human body through violent death and modes of dying, which the model is ill-equipped to account for. The Araweté cannibal gods, the Maï, eat the souls of dead men, consume sexually the souls of dead women, and accept as peers the souls of men who have killed violently before dying. In the past, the Araweté say, all men were killers, which means that only women had their souls devoured by the gods. Viveiros de Castro (1996b) concludes that (1) both the status of food for the gods and the condition of lived humanity are “feminine” and (2), while the typical dead human is a woman, the typical immortal being is a male killer. In other words, men and women do not have the same relationship to the spiritual world or die the same death. Consequently, warfare and hunting cannot be seen as forming a single battle between social subjects unless one understands “social subjects” as male. The significance of gender difference becomes even clearer when examining the Araweté killer’s subjectivity. The victim who fuses with his killer to form the immortal soul that cannot be devoured by the Maï is feminized. The immortal soul is thus composed of a female part, which is subjected, controlled, and encompassed, and a male part, which is conquering, controlling, and encompassing. What Fausto calls “familiarization” is a profoundly gendered process, a process which must be understood in relation to pregnant sociological differences such as the creation of subhuman statuses in a number of past and contemporary Amazonian societies and the devaluation and persecution of highly mobile egalitarian groups by domineering ranked ones.

Many of the 50 ethnographies mentioned by Fausto would equally show the centrality of intrahuman differentiation, especially for the societies that choose intergenerational transference over the familiarization of predation. The numerous constructions of primordial androgyny, male/female complementarity, and parenthood in Amazonian cosmologies and social models point to recurring conflicts and dilemmas over reproduction. I suspect that a careful cross-cultural comparison of male and female subjectivities will show that the former is far more unstable, composite, and “partible” than the latter. It might also show that the “soul” is not reducible to a virtual quality reflecting consciousness and intentionality—the source of conceptualizations of the person as fractal. The vital energy contained in the “soul” articulates an Amazonian ecological theory of life. This theory may be widely shared, as today’s enthusiastic discussions about the shamanic origins of religion or the historical domestication of natural environments seem to suggest. What is uniquely Amazonian, though, is the treatment of death as a scandal to be anticipated and forestalled.

**Virginie Vaté**

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Fausto reassesses some of the classic topics of anthropology, including notions of predation, commensality, cannibalism, and anthropophagy, in an at-

tempt to shed new light on them and to challenge widespread ideas about body/soul dualism. While his paper is based on an analysis of the practices of a large number of Amazonian peoples, he tries to include in it what he calls the “Sibero-American shamanic tradition,” the peoples of the North of America and Asia. Since my research has been conducted in Northeastern Siberia and since I am no expert on Amazonian peoples, I will base most of my comments on the comparative aspects of the paper.

I am sympathetic both to the comparison of northern and southern materials and to the productive confrontation of theories based on different regional practices. While this is not a new approach, it seems to be gaining renewed interest. However, Fausto’s paper reflects the difficulty of the exercise. First, his argument is predominantly based on Amazonian material; therefore, he cannot develop the comparison without remaining, as he does, appropriately cautious in his conclusions. Second, although, once again with reservations, he does not claim full applicability to the northern context, he nonetheless expresses a desire to refine notions for wider anthropological debate, and this is precisely where he faces problems.

For instance, he defines cannibalism as “any devouring (literal or symbolic) of the other in its (raw) condition as a person.” Further, he critiques Brightman’s approach to cannibalism: “Brightman’s answer [to “the ontological problem of cannibalism”] depends not only on postulating a distinguishability between zoomorphic body and anthropomorphic soul but also on adopting the idea that cannibalism is the consumption of the *same*. To the extent that the similarity between humans and animals occurs at the level of the soul, eating the body of prey is not cannibalism.” At this point, rather than entertaining the possibility that his definition of cannibalism might not be applicable to Brightman’s Rock Cree case, Fausto seems to be accusing Brightman of misreading his own ethnographic material. However, the materials I collected in Northeastern Siberia suggest that Fausto’s definition of cannibalism is inapplicable there. In the Chukchi case, contrary to the Amazonian example, it is necessary to maintain the meat’s symbolic “integrity” (or “rawness,” but not in a literal sense—although meat can be eaten raw, at least frozen, and preferably bloody). This is particularly the case in ritual contexts, when it becomes food for spirits, but it is also the case in everyday life. In order to maintain this “integrity,” the mistress of the house must be sure that a twig of willow is put on the meat and prevent the dogs from smelling it. It is only when its symbolic integrity is respected—when it is *not* divested of its “subjectivity” prior to eating it—that the meat retains its value as sustenance. Otherwise, it is impossible to “get one’s fill,” no matter how much meat is eaten.

This leads me to another point which seems important for the argument developed here. Fausto focuses most of his attention on meat consumption as a “vector for producing kinship,” suggesting that “food consumption appears less as an activity directed toward the production of a physical body than as a device for producing related bodies.” It may sound trivial, but it seems to me that he ignores the universal aim of eating and local definitions of being hungry and of the qualities of food (he defines food as what it should not be—a subject—but does not give a definition of food as an object). How can he be sure that both animal and human flesh can be consumed *as food* in the same way if no positive

definition of “food” is provided? How is hunger depicted in Amazonia? Is it expressed in the same way in relation to plants, animals, and humans?

These are some of the questions that the reading of this text has raised for me. I would like to encourage Fausto to continue developing this dialogue with data in the “Sibero-American sphere.” I also suggest, in general, that this kind of comparison would benefit from involving researchers from different fields.

**Rane Willerslev**

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Fausto’s article is perhaps the most systematic attempt yet to provide a plausible model for dealing with the ontological problem of cannibalism in so-called animistic societies, in which animals are regarded not as mindless meat but as subjects with social, intellectual, and spiritual characteristics paralleling those of human selves or persons. Moreover, his article has a rare and impressive comparative range, bringing together ethnographic data from Amazonia, North America, and Siberia.

His key argument centres on an alternative conception of the person in “Sibero-American” hunting societies. He rightly rails against the dualistic body-soul model commonly adopted by anthropologists of the Subarctic (see, e.g., Hallowell 1960; Brightman 1993, 205–6; Ingold 2000a, 94), which postulates an absolute distinguishability between the animal’s body (which is detachable and eaten) and its anthropomorphic soul (which remains intact after the killing) as being too simplistic. As Viveiros de Castro has briefly noted, the body-soul polarity in many hunting societies is not a Platonic “appearance-essence” distinction but rather one of reversibility: “the invisible dimension of the invisible dimension is the visible one, *the soul of the soul is the body*” (2001, 42, my emphasis). Thus, the ontological problem of cannibalism cannot be resolved through a simple dualistic body-soul distinction. Fausto’s proposed alternative is a conception of the person (human and animal alike) as being made up of multiple subject-object parts, understood as an amalgam of predator and prey aspects. Eating, in contrast to cannibalism, involves turning the subject/predator parts into object/prey parts, and there are various indigenous techniques for doing this. He even extends this principle to the consumption of human flesh: Humans are consumed on the same basis as animals—that is, as subjects-turned-objects.

This is a provocative and interesting argument, but it is one that is caught up in a dualism of its own. First, the contrast between hunting peoples of the Subarctic, for whom predation is said to be “a morally positive relation of giving and sharing,” and Amazonia, where predation is predominantly conceptualized as “warfare” and “production of kin,” is too generalized and essentially unattainable. Although much of the Subarctic literature emphasizes the image of predation as essentially “nonviolent,” conceived as “lovemaking” and “gift sharing,” the best of this literature also points to other, more ambivalent conceptions of animals in which prey and their associated spirits are seen as “opponents” (Brightman 1993, 199) that can be conquered with the use of “cohesive magical powers” (Tanner 1979, 148) and from whom the hunter is in great danger of “retribution” (Kwon 1998) because the animal spirit attempts to turn him into “one of its own kind” (Willerslev 2004, n.d.). Predation in Subarctic America

and Siberia is, therefore, also a two-way predator-prey dynamic as in the Amazon, and the hunting schemes of the two regions cannot easily be polarized.

The real challenge is to account for the coexistence of these multiple and opposing images of animal prey as both “lovers” and “opponents,” both “benevolent” and “deceptive,” both “meat” and “persons” throughout the “Sibero-American shamanic tradition.” Fausto’s model is an important step in this direction, but it is not radical enough in its attempt to overcome the inherent dualisms of anthropological thinking. In the end, we are left with a new set of binary oppositions: a contrast between subject-object parts, predator-prey aspects, and an overly crude contrast between the hunting schemes of the Amazon and the Subarctic.

A somewhat different and perhaps more fruitful approach would be to take seriously the widespread indigenous conception of the soul as a “shadow,” *Doppelgänger*, or “twin” (see Hultkrantz 1953) and develop Viveiros de Castro’s notion of a body-soul reversibility as being the basic relation that repeats itself at different levels of “scale.” In other words, the reversible principle that “the soul of the soul is the body” (Viveiros de Castro 2001, 42) could be extended as a scale-phenomenon to include macro-relations such as human-animal relations, relations between subject and object, relations between predator and prey, etc. This would allow us to overcome the rigid contrast between predation as “gift sharing” and “lovemaking” and predation as “warfare” and “making kin,” for, “unlike other expressions of counterpoints, e.g., contraries, antitheses, or polarities, . . . reversibles are opposites that contain themselves” (Corsín Jiménez and Willerslev n.d.). In other words, a reversible is never just itself but always carries with it a double or shadow that can turn back upon it so that one crosses over and becomes the other. In this view, “eating someone” (cannibalism) and “eating with and like someone” (commensality) are not opposites but constitute the opposing sides of each other as ontological expressions of a reversible potentiality.

**Reply** I am grateful to the commentators for critically addressing my text. It is a privilege to receive so much high-quality feedback. Since there is more food than I can digest here, I will focus on some of the recurrent questions. I apologize for not addressing them all.

Let me start with the article’s comparative scope. Most of the commentators positively evaluate my intention, though not always the results. Vaté raises two criticisms: first, she faults me for proposing a different interpretation of one aspect of Brightman’s work. Let me make clear that I am not “accusing [him] of misreading his own ethnographic material.” I merely propose a different interpretation of what cannibalism stands for in Amazonia and the boreal forest. In order to do comparative work, one has to critically address the data of colleagues, and this can only be done when there is a good ethnography to start with (and Brightman’s is one of the best). The second point concerns the idea of de-agentivizing the meat, which seems inapplicable to the Chukchi of Siberia. The Chukchi have a very complex cuisine, which includes the eating of raw meat in different states of “rawness” depending on the animal, the body parts, and the season (Vaté 2003, 207). I do not see how these data can be fitted neatly, if at all, into my argument, but I do not claim that my model is equally

productive across the whole Sibero-American area or that there is a one-to-one correspondence between it and the ethnographic data. Vaté's question about hunger helps us to understand how common themes can emerge from different experiences: Subarctic hunters are haunted by the specter of extreme hunger, a condition that is said to turn people into cannibals who prey on their own kinsfolk. In contrast, there is always something to eat in Amazonia, and hunger often refers to the absence of game. The Amazonian equivalent of a *witiko* state, then, is that of being alone and without fire in the forest, a situation in which one may start to act like a jaguar.

Willerslev's criticism reverses that of Vaté. For him, the predatory model applies across the whole region, and its distinction from a giving-and-sharing hunting scheme is overly crude and dualistic. I am basically in agreement with him, but he seems to misinterpret what I say. First of all, my comparison is not dualistic but triadic, since it includes Siberia, which I characterize as being midway between the American boreal and the tropical forest. Second, I state that the contrast between an American Subarctic gift-giving and an Amazonian predatory model may result from different emphases in the literature. Finally, mine is not a typological model. One finds all three modes of relation (predatory, giving-and-sharing, alliance) in each region (see Descola 2001 for Amazonia). Still, there are differences in emphasis that roughly correspond to these regions: in each case, one of the modes comes to the fore and becomes, to use Brightman's expression, "hegemonic."

Despite the difficulties of such a broad comparison, my aim is to stimulate a discussion across regional specialties and suggest new ways of looking at the ethnographic data. I am pleased to hear from Pedersen that my argument "rings many bells," to see Århem proposing an even broader comparison, and to find Kohn reinterpreting his own material.

The article also has an Amazonian comparative thrust. Here, the main criticism revolves around gender. Lagrou argues that, despite the predominance of predation, focusing too much on it hinders our comprehension of a "less androcentric theory of intentionality." Langdon claims that "gender and femininity can also be active elements in an intentioned universe." I could argue that the model is not androcentric but neutral with respect to gender (or that gender is encompassed by other principles). I could also say that there are two complementary models of intentionality, but that begs the question of their relationship. So let me try to face the problem.

I limit myself to three observations. First, in a literal sense, ontological predation is not only about men, as I made explicit through the Nivakle, Tupinambá, and Kashinawá examples. As Lévi-Strauss noticed, "women always occupy a strongly marked position" with regard to cannibalism (1984, 44). Secondly, there is an intrinsic link between warfare, shamanism, and the reproductive capacities of women, meaning that female fertility may appear as the model of men's predatory agency (Fausto 1999a; 2001, 456–68). How are we to characterize this: as male, female, androgynous, or neutral in terms of gender? Finally, what, exactly, would stand for female agency? The commentators seem to equate it with commensality and nurturing. If this is the case, familiarization should be seen as expressing female intentionality. Sometimes this is quite literal, as in the case of breast-feeding the young of animals, as Karadimas ob-

serves. But men also nurture humans, animals, or spirits. How are we to characterize the agency of a shaman who nurtures his jaguar pets with tobacco? Is he evincing female, male, or androgynous intentionality? I ask these questions in all earnestness, because I am not sure how to answer them. I suspect that there is greater ethnographic variation here precisely because, as Descola (2005) argues, gender is encompassed by other sociocultural principles.

Rival would disagree with this last observation. She claims that the key element in understanding Amazonian socialities is not interspecific differences but gendered interhuman differentiation. Her comments point to another possibility for “gendering” my model. Her analysis of Araweté postmortem destiny in terms of male and female parts resonates with the predator-prey partition. Should we follow Simone de Beauvoir (1949) and say that women are “the prey of the species”? Or Århem, for whom “in their spiritual aspect animal Others are ‘male’ (Spirit Owners) [and] in their physical aspect they are ‘female’ (prey)” (1996, 92)? This seems to hold for the Northwest Amazon, but I am uncertain of its generality, except in the sense that women have fewer opportunities for acquiring other people’s jaguar parts during the course of their lives. This fact may explain why male subjectivity is more “unstable, composite, and partible” than female subjectivity, as Rival suggests. This is where the notion of supplementation and biographical grounding intervenes in my model.

Let me now try to clarify my argument on body-and-soul dualism. First, my aim is not to dispel body and soul *per se*. I find Viveiros de Castro’s formulations on this topic extremely fruitful, and my general argument depends on his 1998, 1998, and 2001 articles. What I propose, however, is a new *figure* to address some of its ethnographic problems. Secondly, predator prey partition is orthogonal to that of body and soul. There is no global dualism in which body always stands for the prey part and soul for the predator part. If one focuses only on body and soul, this partition runs all the way along the scale. It then becomes difficult to disassemble the body. Not all parts of the body are the same, and, as far as my field experience goes, Amazonian people seldom talk about *the* body as a whole entity opposed to the soul: they rather talk about skin, hair, flesh, bones, blood, etc. In some contexts, the soul of the body is the blood and the body of the soul is the bones; in other contexts, it is the skin that stands for a jaguar part, whereas the flesh appears as its counterpart. The same is valid for souls, names, and their post-mortem destiny. The final point concerns the tension between the two modes of plurality: one which is reducible to a duality (body and soul, for instance), the other which tends toward an irreducible multiplicity (see also Viveiros de Castro n.d.). People strive to acquire new active parts and embody them. This supplement is not a given and tends to extrapolate body-and-soul dualism.

Finally, the prey-predator partition helps to highlight the extraction of parts from others without recourse to the notion of soul (with all its metaphysical implications). Indigenous Amazonia presents a low level of objectification of social relations: there are relatively few artifacts, and no object can substitute for a person. More than objects, what is extracted and transacted is body parts, body qualities, body indexes (names), oral performances, and so on. In some contexts these are related to a category that can be translated as “soul,” but this is not always so. In many cases the supplement extracted from others is

called “jaguar” or is described as a jaguar (in Amazonia every species has its own jaguar). To answer Pedersen’s question, then, I think that the “jaguar part” is an Amerindian concept, as well as being a heuristic device.

Willerslev suggests that I address body-and-soul dualism in terms of reversibles, which are “opposites that contain themselves.” This is interesting, but I would need to think through its implications better before elaborating on its applicability. In any case, the concept of familiarizing predation implies both reversibility and directionality. When I refer to modalities of eating (cannibalism and commensality), I am talking about two aspects of familiarization: in a commensal key, I am considering how meat serves as a support and vehicle for establishing kin relations; in a cannibal key, familiarization designates the movement through which an affinal other is converted into a consanguineal pet/child. This movement is directional and potentially reversible. The reversibility is contained within an asymmetric relation, since the master/parent’s agency is superior to that of the pet/child’s. But here lies the ambiguity: in shamanism, “familiar spirits” who are controlled by the shaman also control him and may reverse their positions. In warfare, there is always a struggle of perspective between the killer and the victim. Mastery in Amazonia (and I presume in the American Subarctic and Siberia too) is a risky enterprise: it is never clear who seduced whom and who controls whom (see Lagrou).

Mastery relationships are not exclusive to shamanism and warfare. This is a basic schema of asymmetric relations in Amazonia, and it helps us to understand long-standing sociocosmic facts as well as more recent historical transformations: for instance, why the *Ávila Runa* came to see the masters of game on the model of white people (Kohn 2002), why the master-pet relation served as a potent framework for acting within post Conquest relations of slavery and debt peonage, and why indigenous prophetic movements entertained the utopia of inverting the predator-prey relation, as occurred along the Atlantic Coast in the sixteenth century, where it was promised that “the white people would be converted into game for them to eat” (Monteiro 1999b, 1012). This is a typical Tupinambá jaguar-like dream, which suggestively resonates with Siona’s categorization of whites as animal/meat (Langdon). Other people, in other times, were more cautious and behaved as good prey and servants in order to control their masters’ predatory behavior, as Bonilla (2005) argues for the Paumari (see also Rival 1999b). Here we observe a shift in point of view: persons and collectivities are constituted through an identification not with the predator position but with the position of familiarized prey.

Pedersen is right in saying that we should not assume that “the prey/pet position always represents a passive object pole.” As a matter of fact, the prey’s predator part does not become an inert object: the pet position is a subjective one. To become an object, the prey has to be turned into game and then into food, in which case it can serve as a support for commensality. With this proviso, I embrace Pedersen’s idea that meat is imbued with an agency that is qualitatively different from that of the predator part, embodying sameness, collectivity, and commensality. If we take meat as an object and apply Latour’s (2005) or Gell’s (1998) framework of analysis, we come to the same conclusion. But then we have to refine our use of intentionality (distinguishing it from agency), consider the difference between objects that stand for persons and objects who are

persons, and closely analyze matter and form (as Lagrou proposes).

Karadimas laments that I only touched upon the relation between divinity and predation in the very last sentence. As Århem writes, “men relate to animals, as gods to men” (1996, 89). The human *generic* condition may be that of the gods’ prey. In Amazonia, gods are commonly associated with jaguars and other predatory figures, but if they evince supreme predatory capacity and mastery, they are never one. If there was ever a singularity, it was fragmented into a multiplicity of jaguar parts at the dawn of time (Costa 2007). So God (in the singular) cannot be the end limit of predator-prey and master-pet relations. The question is: what happens when this configuration enters into the game of conversion to Christianity?

Kohn calls attention to the fact that the text is silent about the relation between the principles spelled out in the model and daily life. I purposefully bracketed out phenomenology. I do not know how to accommodate it within so general a model, and my phenomenological skills are rather limited. Be that as it may, I do not think that we can entirely explain Amazonian understandings of personhood as the *product* of intimate relations with animals or as *emergent effects* of interspecific interaction. Here we stumble on an anthropological dilemma: the relation between what is already constituted (call it a form, a structure, a culture, an ontology) and what is emergent within interactions. I presume that this relation is not homogeneous across all times and cultures and has to be dealt with in specific ethnographic situations. Therefore I comment on only some of the implications of grounding perspectivism or animism in a *practical* activity such as hunting and see it as an emergent property of *real* relations between humans and nonhumans, as Kohn’s argument implies (see also Willerslev n.d.). Some questions follow: Is perspectivism the ontology of all (and only of) hunting peoples? If people stop hunting, will perspectivism necessarily fall into decline? Is animism the ontology of male hunters? Should we expect other ontological principles to emerge from other gendered activity? Since the experience of hunting is so different in the boreal forest and in the Amazon, should we not expect quite distinct understandings of personhood?

I am not arguing for perspectivism’s detachment from the practical activity of hunting. The trophic trope and its “perspectival quality” (Århem 1996) are obviously connected to hunting and the knowledge of ecological relations. But this connexion is complex and mediated. Shamanic séances, dreaming experiences, and ritual activities are no less *real* or *practical* than hunting. In terms of ontogeny, the apprehension of the “perspectival quality” of the cosmos starts much earlier in life than the practice of hunting or gathering. Children’s sensory and embodied experience with shamanism plays an important role in “learning religion” (Fausto n.d.b), as does hearing myths and stories from parents and grandparents (Gow 2001). It is through these verbal and nonverbal interactions during early life that the person apprehends an animistic ontology (Déléage 2005) and inevitably constitutes it anew (Toren 1999).—Carlos Fausto

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>A first draft of this article was presented at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in 2001. I gratefully acknowledge Philippe Descola for the invitations and for his comments. I am also



grateful to Frédéric Laugrand and Jarich Oosten, who gave me the opportunity to present my core argument to specialists on indigenous peoples of North America and Siberia at the meeting “The Nature of Spirits: Human and Non-human Beings in Aboriginal Cosmologies,” held in Québec, Canada, in 2004. For sharing their ideas and precious data, I thank Aparecida Vilaça, Stephen Hugh-Jones, Jean-Pierre Goulard, Dimitri Karadimas, Jean-Pierre Chaumeil, Isabelle Daillant, Marcia Damaso, Denny Moore, and Carolina de Araújo. Marilyn Strathern read a first draft, and I am grateful for her comments. Rane Willerslev and Virginie Vaté helped me access the recent Siberian literature. This text is part of an ongoing conversation among many people, and although the sharing of data and insights has made of us commensals of a sort, I claim, as usual, responsibility for any mistakes and for the cannibal incorporation of other people’s ideas.

<sup>2</sup>“Lowland South America” designates almost the whole continent with the exception of the Andes, the Pacific coast, and the southernmost part of the continent. Amazonia may have different geographic limits according to the criteria adopted; here it designates the entire drainage area of the Amazon and Orinoco Rivers. The figures are approximations. Not only are there no precise statistics on indigenous population in Amazonia but also it is difficult to establish ethnic and language boundaries in many cases.

<sup>3</sup>Less predatory ideologies have been associated with Arawak-speaking peoples, who since the work of Max Schmidt (1917) have been taken to be the spearhead of cultural development in Lowland South America. Heckenberger (2002) has characterized these peoples as possessing hierarchical ideologies, well-defined politico-ritual spaces, pluriethnic and multilingual regional systems, extensive exchange networks, sedentarism, and more developed horticulture. They probably played a major role in the emergence of densely populated sedentary societies in Amazonia before the Conquest. However, I am not convinced that a consistent process of “Neolithization” occurred in the region as a whole or that it started as early as the first millennium BC as Hornborg (2005, 590) proposes. We should also be careful not to “Arawakanize” Amazonian prehistory and not to exclude warfare and predation from the history of Arawakan peoples. In any case, the model I present here can also be applied to more reciprocal modes of relation with nonhumans such as those observed among Upper Xingu peoples (Barcelos Neto 2004).

<sup>4</sup>I limit myself here to what Brightman calls the hegemonic “benefactive model,” which coexists with more ambivalent ways of conceiving the relation between humans and animals in the Subarctic.

<sup>5</sup>This is a gross overgeneralization. A serious comparison would demand a finer-grained picture of the varied ethnographic and historical situations in Siberia.

<sup>6</sup>In this sense, my discussion cuts across Descola’s distinction between predatory, reciprocal, and giving animism. Although I agree with him that this variation exists in Amazonia and that these schemes may dynamically coexist in a hierarchical way in any single system, I prefer to focus on interspecific transformation by means of predatory relations, which I consider a key sociocosmic fact in all Amazonian contexts.

<sup>7</sup>By the same logic, the reversal of death can be thought of as the reinstatement of ties of commensality with the living.

<sup>8</sup>Examples of war homicide and the devouring of the dead by the gods or animals provide a clear illustration of this type of identificatory operation.

<sup>9</sup>Various elements may serve as indicators of subjective potency, among them longevity, the capacity for vocalization and imitation of birds, and the mating behavior of certain species. The amount and color of blood are also important indices of transformative capacity; the Pirahã, for example, distinguish three categories of edibility according to these criteria.

<sup>10</sup>The most radical techniques are not culinary: incineration, which reduces the transformative capacity (hence its frequent use against sorcerers, shamans, and missionaries), and rotting, which intensifies the transformative potential (see Lagrou 1998, 38–39).

<sup>11</sup>The Cree seem to have practiced cannibalism in their wars against the Inuit in the eighteenth century, eating raw pieces of enemy flesh. Brightman relates this practice to a hunting procedure involving the drinking of fresh caribou or moose blood.

<sup>12</sup>See, for example, Smith (1998) on the monist character of Athapaskan ontology, opposing Cartesian dualism to an “ontology of bush sensitivity.” See also Viveiros de Castro’s argument that the *duality* of body and soul among Amerindians “cannot be interpreted as an ontological *dualism*”

<sup>13</sup>This idea of capture may be simply a general abstract model or particularized for each birth. We find both situations among the Parakanã: depersonalized vital principles are said to enter through the vaginas of women when they bathe in the river, but some people are said to be the sons of *waratoa* (the rhythmic baton used in a ritual of the same name), which captures future children and inserts them into women (Fausto 2001, 391).

<sup>14</sup>Among the Parakanã, the killer’s sister will ask him to hand over a bow (not, however, the one used in the homicide) to his brother-in-law so that the latter may bring her game meat. He thus furnishes the instrument for his affine to continue to satisfy his sister’s desire for meat, recognizing the relationship which unites them. Sometimes, however, the enemy causes the killer to lose consciousness (*-pikajym*) and turn against his own kin.

<sup>15</sup>This argument does not account for the numerous food restrictions whose native explanation concerns the transferral of a characteristic of the food to the person in seclusion without recourse to

the agentive capacity of the animal or plant. The Parakanã, for example, establish a merely analogical relationship between the qualities of the animal or plant and its effects on the killer in seclusion (if he eats yam, his buttocks shrink; if he eats collared peccary, his testicles grow; and so on). These prohibitions relate to a more general operation: the analogical transference of qualities from one being to another, which is characteristic of ritual symbolism. In the Amazonian context, however, it is arguable that these are cases of “species” alteration, in which only a part of the body is transformed into the animal or plant consumed.

<sup>16</sup>Here we have examples of plants consumed as if they were predator animals. This is not, however, the case of cultivars and some wild fruits. As Rival notes, the predatory relational mode is not the unique mode of interspecies feeding in Amazonia. Generally, horticulture represents a safer sociality turned toward the inside, in opposition to predatory sociality turned toward the outside. From cultivars, however, people also make beer, whose fermentation may be conceived as a process of subjectification and drinking as a mode of predatory alteration.

<sup>17</sup>In the Bororo case, the man who avenged the death of a person of the opposite moiety through the killing of a carnivore was required to make a necklace from the animal’s teeth or claws. This necklace was given to the deceased’s relatives and was considered a precious relic. However, when the death was caused by a human enemy, the avenger “had to kill one of the enemy instead of a carnivore, and the enemy’s jawbone was given as a necklace”. For the Gê-speaking Rikbaktsa, jaguars are the incarnation of dead people, and their canines must be extracted and pierced in order to extinguish their predatory capacity. The piercing ceremony is prohibited to children, women, and men with recently born children. Porridge is made for the men participating, but the hunter cannot drink it. Once the piercing is completed, the hunter gives the jaguar teeth to a man from the opposite moiety, who will use them to fabricate a necklace and wear it. Although they are reported to have practiced cannibalism, the Rikbaktsa do not eat the jaguar’s meat.

<sup>18</sup>The ritual feast also implied transformative processes and may have been marked by the characteristic ambivalence of the eating of “dangerous food.” However, the socialization of the *ontological* predation occurred during other moments within the ritual cycle. Tupinambá women were able to benefit from the killing by being renamed for taking part in events which preceded the execution, such as the symbolic recapture of the captive. Among the Nivakle, women danced with the bloody scalp-trophy so that “something of the soul-spirit of the victim” would pass on to them. This amplification of the effects of ontological predation was a hallmark of Amazonian indigenous warfare; the members of the war party could all be considered “killers” and enter into seclusion if even a single death occurred on the battlefield.

<sup>19</sup>This occurs only when an adult male is killed. Children have no “magic-fat,” while women have little. The killing of women does not produce the creative rage which spurs the killer to new killings but leads only to hunger, causing him to be stingy with relatives, a behavior associated with the jaguar and opposed to commensality among kin. If jaguars have more jaguar parts than, say, agoutis, among humans such differences are constructed in terms of biography, age, and gender. Generally speaking, babies have no jaguar part, women have more than children but less than men, and warriors and shamans (male or female) have more than ordinary people. Such differences inflect eschatological beliefs, mortuary and warfare practices, and conceptions of hunting. They also point to the fact that the “soul” is not exactly a given, as Viveiros de Castro (2001) postulates, since it is also constructed along with the person’s biography. As a general and indeterminate virtuality of existence, the “soul” is a given, but its destiny is to become inextricably linked with what the person becomes through the embodying of knowledge and capacities.

<sup>20</sup>In Muinane, the nominal classifier *-gai*, applied to all animate beings, is never affixed to the terms “jaguar” (*hwku*) or “chief” (*ke’é’i*), as if these were nonmarked cases of the class “animate beings,” prototypes of the quality “animation” (Vengoechea 2001).

<sup>21</sup>As a default condition, every species potentially has its own jaguar part, sometimes hypostasized as the species’s master. The jaguar, however, much like the bear in the Subarctic, is a “chief unto himself” (to paraphrase Skinner [1911, 95]), having no master or at least none other than a powerful human shaman. This idea can also be expressed in linguistic terms. Most Carib languages have a nominal modifier (*-imü*, *-imë*) which, when suffixed to an animal name, indicates a supernatural and predatory animal rather than an ordinary one. This is an important element in terms of understanding their aesthetics. Among the Wayana, for instance, the basketry pattern “squirrel” is said to represent not only a squirrel (*merî*) but also a hypersquirrel (*merîmë*), which is a supernatural jaguar.

<sup>22</sup>Elsewhere I mistakenly treated these pigs as captured peccaries. According to Karsten, domestic pigs and chickens were introduced among the Jivaro by the Spaniards. Both had a central role in the *tsantsa* ritual cycle, but pigs were rarely employed as ordinary food. I have no data to affirm that captured peccaries were used before the introduction of pigs. There are, however, examples of the ritual capture and slaying of peccaries in Amazonia (among Tupi-Mondé-speaking peoples of Rondônia), as well as a strong association between headhunters and peccaries (among the Munduruku). The fact that pigs and not peccaries were used in the *tsantsa* ritual does not contradict my arguments on pets and familiarizing predation in Amazonia.

# Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism

Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, 1998. In *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 4, No. 3.

This study discusses the meaning of Amerindian ‘perspectivism’: the ideas in Amazonian cosmologies concerning the way in which humans, animals and spirits see both themselves and one another. Such ideas suggest the possibility of a redefinition of the classical categories of ‘nature’, ‘culture’ and ‘supernature’ based on the concept of perspective or point of view. The study argues in particular that the antinomy between two characterizations of indigenous thought – on the one hand ‘ethnocentrism’, which would deny the attributes of humanity to humans from other groups, and on the other hand ‘animism’, which would extend such qualities to beings of other species – can be resolved if one considers the difference between the spiritual and corporal aspects of beings.<sup>1</sup>

... *la reciprocité de perspectives où j’ai vu le caractère propre de la pensée mythique...*

(Lévi-Strauss 1985: 268)

## Introduction

This article deals with that aspect of Amerindian thought which has been called its ‘perspectival quality’ (Århem 1993): the conception, common to many peoples of the continent, according to which the world is inhabited by different sorts of subjects or persons, human and non-human, which apprehend reality from distinct points of view. This idea cannot be reduced to our current concept of relativism (Lima 1995; 1996), which at first it seems to call to mind. In fact, it is at right angles, so to speak, to the opposition between relativism and universalism. Such resistance by Amerindian perspectivism to the terms of our epistemological debates casts suspicion on the robustness and transportability of the ontological partitions which they presuppose. In particular, as many anthropologists have already concluded (albeit for other reasons), the classic distinction between Nature and Culture cannot be used to describe domains internal to non-Western cosmologies without first undergoing a rigorous ethnographic critique.

Such a critique, in the present case, implies a redistribution of the predicates subsumed within the two paradigmatic sets that traditionally oppose one another under the headings of 'Nature' and 'Culture': universal and particular, objective and subjective, physical and social, fact and value, the given and the instituted, necessity and spontaneity, immanence and transcendence, body and mind, animality and humanity, among many more. Such an ethnographically-based reshuffling of our conceptual schemes leads me to suggest the expression, 'multinaturalism', to designate one of the contrastive features of Amerindian thought in relation to Western 'multiculturalist' cosmologies. Where the latter are founded on the mutual implication of the unity of nature and the plurality of cultures – the first guaranteed by the objective universality of body and substance, the second generated by the subjective particularity of spirit and meaning – the Amerindian conception would suppose a spiritual unity and a corporeal diversity. Here, culture or the subject would be the form of the universal, whilst nature or the object would be the form of the particular.

This inversion, perhaps too symmetrical to be more than speculative, must be developed by means of a plausible phenomenological interpretation of Amerindian cosmological categories, which determine the constitutive conditions of the relational contexts we can call 'nature' and 'culture'. Clearly, then, I think that the distinction between Nature and Culture must be subjected to critique, but not in order to reach the conclusion that such a thing does not exist (there are already too many things which do not exist). The flourishing industry of criticisms of the Westernizing character of all dualisms has called for the abandonment of our conceptually dichotomous heritage, but to date the alternatives have not gone beyond the stage of wishful unthinking. I would prefer to gain a perspective on our own contrasts, contrasting them with the distinctions actually operating in Amerindian perspectivist cosmologies.

### **Perspectivism**

The initial stimulus for the present reflections were the numerous references in Amazonian ethnography to an indigenous theory according to which the way humans perceive animals and other subjectivities that inhabit the world – gods, spirits, the dead, inhabitants of other cosmic levels, meteorological phenomena, plants, occasionally even objects and artefacts – differs profoundly from the way in which these beings see humans and see themselves.

Typically, in normal conditions, humans see humans as humans, animals as animals and spirits (if they see them) as spirits; however animals (predators) and spirits see humans as animals (as prey) to the same extent that animals (as prey) see humans as spirits or as animals (predators). By the same token, animals and spirits see themselves as humans: they perceive themselves as (or become) anthropomorphic beings when they are in their own houses or villages and they experience their own habits and characteristics in the form of culture – they see their food as human food (jaguars see blood as manioc beer, vultures see the maggots in rotting meat as grilled fish, etc.), they see their bodily attributes (fur, feathers, claws, beaks etc.) as body decorations or cultural instruments, they see their social system as organized in the same way as human institutions are (with chiefs, shamans, ceremonies, exogamous moieties, etc.). This 'to see as' refers literally to percepts and not analogically to concepts, al-

though in some cases the emphasis is placed more on the categorical rather than on the sensory aspect of the phenomenon.

In sum, animals are people, or see themselves as persons. Such a notion is virtually always associated with the idea that the manifest form of each species is a mere envelope (a 'clothing') which conceals an internal human form, usually only visible to the eyes of the particular species or to certain trans-specific beings such as shamans. This internal form is the 'soul' or 'spirit' of the animal: an intentionality or subjectivity formally identical to human consciousness, materializable, let us say, in a human bodily schema concealed behind an animal mask. At first sight then, we would have a distinction between an anthropomorphic essence of a spiritual type, common to animate beings, and a variable bodily appearance, characteristic of each individual species but which rather than being a fixed attribute is instead a changeable and removable clothing. This notion of 'clothing' is one of the privileged expressions of metamorphosis – spirits, the dead and shamans who assume animal form, beasts that turn into other beasts, humans that are inadvertently turned into animals – an omnipresent process in the 'highly transformational world' (Rivière 1994: 256) proposed by Amazonian ontologies.<sup>2</sup>

This perspectivism and cosmological transformism can be seen in various South American ethnographies, but in general it is only the object of short commentaries and seems to be quite unevenly elaborated.<sup>3</sup> It can also be found, and maybe with even greater generative value, in the far north of North America and Asia, as well as amongst hunter-gatherer populations of other parts of the world.<sup>4</sup> In South America, the cosmologies of the Vaupés area are in this respect highly developed (see Århem 1993; 1996; Hugh-Jones 1996; Reichel-Dolmatoff 1985), but other Amazonian societies, such as the Wari' of Rondônia (Vilaça 1992) and the Juruna of the Middle Xingu (Lima 1995; 1996), also give equal emphasis to the theme.

Some general observations are necessary. Perspectivism does not usually involve all animal species (besides covering other beings); the emphasis seems to be on those species which perform a key symbolic and practical role such as the great predators and the principal species of prey for humans – one of the central dimensions, possibly even the fundamental dimension, of perspectival inversions refers to the relative and relational statuses of predator and prey (Århem 1993:11-12; Vilaça 1992: 49-51). On the other hand, however, it is not always clear whether spirits or subjectivities are being attributed to each individual animal, and there are examples of cosmologies which deny consciousness to post-mythical animals (Overing 1985:249 sqq.; 1986: 245-6) or some other spiritual distinctiveness (Baer 1994: 89; Viveiros de Castro 1992a: 73-4). Nonetheless, as is well known, the notion of animal spirit 'masters' ('mothers of the game animals', 'masters of the white-lipped peccaries', etc.) is widespread throughout the continent. These spirit masters, clearly endowed with intentionality analogous to that of humans, function as hypostases of the animal species with which they are associated, thereby creating an intersubjective field for human-animal relations even where empirical animals are not spiritualized.

We must remember, above all, that if there is a virtually universal Amerindian notion, it is that of an original state of undifferentiation between humans and animals, described in mythology. Myths are filled with beings whose form,

name and behaviour inextricably mix human and animal attributes in a common context of intercommunicability, identical to that which defines the present-day intra-human world. The differentiation between 'culture' and 'nature', which Lévi-Strauss showed to be the central theme of Amerindian mythology, is not a process of differentiating the human from the animal, as in our own evolutionist mythology. The original common condition of both humans and animals is not animality but rather humanity. The great mythical separation reveals not so much culture distinguishing itself from nature but rather nature distancing itself from culture: the myths tell how animals lost the qualities inherited or retained by humans (Brightman 1993: 40, 160; Lévi-Strauss 1985: 14, 190; Weiss 1972: 169-70). Humans are those who continue as they have always been: animals are ex-humans, not humans ex-animals. In sum, 'the common point of reference for all beings of nature is not humans as a species but rather humanity as a condition' (Descola 1986: 120).

This is a distinction – between the human species and the human condition which should be retained. It has an evident connexion with the idea of animal clothing hiding a common spiritual 'essence' and with the issue of the general meaning of perspectivism. For the moment, we may simply note one of its main corollaries: the past humanity of animals is added to their present-day spirituality hidden by their visible form in order to produce that extended set of food restrictions or precautions which either declare inedible certain animals that were mythically co-substantial with humans, or demand their desubjectivization by shamanistic means before they can be consumed (neutralizing the spirit, transubstantiating the meat into plant food, semantically reducing it to other animals less proximate to humans), under the threat of illness, conceived of as a cannibal counter-predation undertaken by the spirit of the prey turned predator, in a lethal inversion of perspectives which transforms the human into animal.<sup>5</sup>

It is worth pointing out that Amerindian perspectivism has an essential relation with shamanism and with the valorization of the hunt. The association between shamanism and this 'venatic ideology' is a classic question (for Amazonia, see Chaumeil 1983: 231-2; Crocker 1985: 17-25). I stress that this is a matter of symbolic importance, not ecological necessity: horticulturists such as the Tukano or the Juruna (who in any case fish more than they hunt) do not differ much from circumpolar hunters in respect of the cosmological weight conferred on animal predation, spiritual subjectivation of animals and the theory according to which the universe is populated by extra-human intentionalities endowed with their own perspectives. In this sense, the spiritualization of plants, meteorological phenomena or artefacts seems to me to be secondary or derivative in comparison with the spiritualization of animals: the animal is the extra-human prototype of the Other, maintaining privileged relations with other prototypical figures of alterity, such as affines (Árhem 1996; Descola 1986: 317-30; Erikson 1984: 110-12). This hunting ideology is also and above all an ideology of shamans, in so far as it is shamans who administer the relations between humans and the spiritual component of the extra-humans, since they alone are capable of assuming the point of view of such beings and, in particular, are capable of returning to tell the tale. If Western multiculturalism is relativism as public policy, then Amerindian perspectivist shamanism is multinaturalism as

cosmic politics.

### Animism

The reader will have noticed that my 'perspectivism' is reminiscent of the notion of 'animism' recently recuperated by Descola (1992; 1996). Stating that all conceptualizations of non-humans always refer to the social domain, Descola distinguishes three modes of objectifying nature: totemism, where the differences between natural species are used as a model for social distinctions; that is, where the relationship between nature and culture is metaphorical in character and marked by discontinuity (both within and between series); animism, where the 'elementary categories structuring social life' organize the relations *between* humans and natural species, thus defining a social continuity between nature and culture, founded on the attribution of human dispositions and social characteristics to 'natural beings' (Descola 1996: 87-8); and naturalism, typical of Western cosmologies, which supposes an ontological duality between nature, the domain of necessity, and culture, the domain of spontaneity, areas separated by metonymic discontinuity. The 'animic mode' is characteristic of societies in which animals are the 'strategic focus of the objectification of nature and of its socialization' (1992: 115), as is the case amongst indigenous peoples of America, reigning supreme over those social morphologies lacking in elaborate internal segmentations. But this mode can also be found co-existing or combined with totemism, wherein such segmentations exist, the Bororo and their *aroe/bope* dualism being such a case.<sup>6</sup>

These ideas form part of a theory which I cannot discuss here as fully as it would merit. I merely comment on the contrast between animism and naturalism but from a somewhat different angle from the original one. (Totemism, as defined by Descola, seems to me to be a heterogeneous phenomenon, primarily classificatory rather than cosmological: it is not a system of *relations* between nature and culture as is the case in the other two modes, but rather of purely logical and differential *correlations*.)

Animism could be defined as an ontology which postulates the social character of relations between humans and non-humans: the space between nature and society is itself social. Naturalism is founded on the inverted axiom: relations between society and nature are themselves natural. Indeed, if in the animic mode the distinction 'nature/culture' is internal to the social world, humans and animals being immersed in the same socio-cosmic medium (and in this sense 'nature' is a part of an encompassing sociality), then in naturalist ontology, the distinction 'nature/culture' is internal to nature (and in this sense, human society is one natural phenomenon amongst others). Animism has 'society' as the unmarked pole, naturalism has 'nature': these poles function, respectively and contrastively, as the universal dimension of each mode. Thus animism and naturalism are hierarchical and metonymical structures (this distinguishes them from totemism, which is based on a metaphoric correlation between equipollent opposites).

In Western naturalist ontology, the nature/society interface is natural: humans are organisms like the rest, body-objects in 'ecological' interaction with other bodies and forces, all of them ruled by the necessary laws of biology and physics; 'productive forces' harness, and thereby express, natural forces. So-

cial relations, that is, contractual or instituted relations between subjects, can only exist internal to human society. But how alien to nature – this would be the problem of naturalism – are these relations? Given the universality of nature, the status of the human and social world is unstable and, as the history of Western thought shows, it perpetually oscillates between a naturalistic monism ('sociobiology' being one of its current avatars) and an ontological dualism of nature/culture ('culturalism' being its contemporary expression). The assertion of this latter dualism, for all that, only reinforces the final referential character of the notion of nature, by revealing itself to be the direct descendant of the opposition between Nature and *Supernature*. Culture is the modern name of Spirit – let us recall the distinction between *Naturwissenschaften* and *Geisteswissenschaften* – or at the least it is the name of the compromise between Nature and Grace. Of animism, we would be tempted to say that the instability is located in the opposite pole: there the problem is how to administer the mixture of humanity and animality constituting animals, and not, as is the case amongst ourselves, the combination of culture and nature which characterize humans; the point is to differentiate a 'nature' out of the universal sociality.

However, can animism be defined as a projection of differences and qualities internal to the human world onto non-human worlds, as a 'socio-centric' model in which categories and social relations are used to map the universe? This interpretation by analogy is explicit in some glosses on the theory: 'if totemic systems model society after nature, then animic systems model nature after society' (Århem 1996: 185). The problem here, obviously, is to avoid any undesirable proximity with the traditional sense of 'animism', or with the reduction of 'primitive classifications' to emanations of social morphology; but equally the problem is to go beyond other classical characterizations of the relation between society and nature such as Radcliffe-Brown's.<sup>7</sup>

Ingold (1991; 1996) showed how schemes of analogical projection or social modelling of nature escape naturalist reductionism only to fall into a nature/culture dualism which by distinguishing 'really natural' nature from 'culturally constructed' nature reveals itself to be a typical cosmological antinomy faced with infinite regression. The notion of model or metaphor supposes a previous distinction between a domain wherein social relations are constitutive and literal and another where they are representational and metaphorical. Animism, interpreted as human sociality projected onto the non-human world, would be nothing but the metaphor of a metonymy.

Amongst the questions remaining to be resolved, therefore, is that of knowing whether animism can be described as a figurative use of categories pertaining to the human-social domain to conceptualize the domain of non-humans and their relations with the former. Another question: if animism depends on the attribution of human cognitive and sensory faculties to animals, and the same form of subjectivity, then what in the end is the difference between humans and animals? If animals are people, then why do they not see us as people? Why, to be precise, the perspectivism? Finally, if animism is a way of objectifying nature in which the dualism of nature/culture does not hold, then what is to be done with the abundant indications regarding the centrality of this opposition to South American cosmologies? Are we dealing with just another 'totemic illusion', if not with an ingenuous projection of our Western dualism?



### Ethnocentrism

In a well-known essay, Lévi-Strauss observed that for 'savages' humanity ceases at the boundary of the group, a notion which is exemplified by the widespread auto-ethnonym meaning 'real humans', which, in turn, implies a definition of strangers as somehow pertaining to the domain of the extra-human. Therefore, ethnocentrism would not be the privilege of the West but a natural ideological attitude, inherent to human collective life. Lévi-Strauss illustrates the universal reciprocity of this attitude with an anecdote:

In the Greater Antilles, some years after the discovery of America, whilst the Spanish were dispatching inquisitional commissions to investigate whether the natives had a soul or not, these very natives were busy drowning the white people they had captured in order to find out, after lengthy observation, whether or not the corpses were subject to putrefaction (1973: 384).

The general point of this parable (from which Lévi-Strauss derived the famous moral: 'The barbarian is first and foremost the man who believes in barbarism') is quite simple: the Indians, like the European invaders, considered that only the group to which they belong incarnates humanity; strangers are on the other side of the border which separates humans from animals and spirits, culture from nature and supernature. As matrix and condition for the existence of ethnocentrism, the nature/culture opposition appears to be a universal of social apperception.

At the time when Lévi-Strauss was writing these lines, the strategy of vindicating the full humanity of savages was to demonstrate that they made the same distinctions as we do: the proof that they were true humans is that they considered that they alone were the true humans. Like us, they distinguished culture from nature and they too believed that *Naturvölker* are always the others. The universality of the cultural distinction between Nature and Culture bore witness to the universality of culture as human nature. In sum, the answer to the question of the Spanish investigators (which can be read as a sixteenth-century version of the 'problem of other minds') was positive: savages do have souls.

Now, everything has changed. The savages are no longer ethnocentric but rather cosmocentric; instead of having to prove that they are humans because they distinguish themselves from animals, we now have to recognize how *inhuman* we are for opposing humans to animals in a way they never did: for them nature and culture are part of the same sociocosmic field. Not only would Amerindians put a wide berth between themselves and the Great Cartesian Divide which separated humanity from animality, but their views anticipate the fundamental lessons of ecology which we are only now in a position to assimilate (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1976). Before, the Indians' refusal to concede predicates of humanity to other men was of note; now we stress that they extend such predicates far beyond the frontiers of their own species in a demonstration of 'ecosophic' knowledge (Århem 1993) which we should emulate in as far as the limits of our objectivism permit. Formerly, it had been necessary to combat the assimilation of the savage mind to narcissistic animism, the infantile stage of naturalism, showing that totemism affirmed the cognitive distinction between culture and nature; now, neo-animism reveals itself as the recognition of the

universal admixture of subjects and objects, humans and non-humans against modern *hubris*, the primitive and post-modern 'hybrids', to borrow a term from Latour (1991).

Two antinomies then, which are, in fact, only one: either Amerindians are ethnocentrically 'stingy' in the extension of their concept of humanity and they 'totemically' oppose nature and culture; or they are cosmocentric and 'animic' and do not profess to such a distinction, being models of relativist tolerance, postulating a multiplicity of points of view on the world.

I believe that the solution to these antinomies<sup>8</sup> lies not in favouring one branch over the other, sustaining, for example, the argument that the most recent characterization of American attitudes is the correct one and relegating the other to the outer darkness of pre-post-modernity. Rather, the point is to show that the 'thesis' as well as the 'antithesis' are true (both correspond to solid ethnographic intuitions), but that they apprehend the same phenomena from different angles; and also it is to show that both are false in that they refer to a substantivist conceptualization of the categories of Nature and Culture (whether it be to affirm or negate them) which is not applicable to Amerindian cosmologies.

The first point to be considered is that the Amerindian words which are usually translated as 'human being' and which figure in those supposedly ethnocentric self-designations do not denote humanity as a natural species. They refer rather to the social condition of personhood, and they function (pragmatically when not syntactically) less as nouns than as pronouns. They indicate the position of the subject; they are enunciative markers, not names. Far from manifesting a semantic shrinking of a common name to a proper name (taking 'people' to be the name of the tribe), these words move in the opposite direction, going from substantive to perspective (using 'people' as a collective pronoun 'we people/us'). For this very reason, indigenous categories of identity have that enormous contextual variability of scope that characterizes pronouns, marking contrastively Ego's immediate kin, his/her local group, all humans, or even all beings endowed with subjectivity: their coagulation as 'ethnonyms' seems largely to be an artefact of interactions with ethnographers. Nor is it by chance that the majority of Amerindian ethnonyms which enter the literature are not self-designations, but rather names (frequently pejorative) conferred by other groups: ethnonymic objectivation is primordially applied to others, not to the ones in the position of subject. Ethnonyms are names of third parties; they belong to the category of '*they*' not to the category of '*we*'. This, by the way, is consistent with a widespread avoidance of self-reference on the level of personal onomastics: names are not spoken by the bearers nor in their presence; to name is to externalize, to separate (from) the subject.

Thus self-references such as 'people' mean 'person', not 'member of the human species', and they are personal pronouns registering the point of view of the subject talking, not proper names. To say, then, that animals and spirits are people is to say that they are persons, and to attribute to non-humans the capacities of conscious intentionality and agency which define the position of the subject. Such capacities are objectified as the soul or spirit with which these nonhumans are endowed. Whatever possesses a soul is a subject, and whatever has a soul is capable of having a point of view. Amerindian souls, be they

human or animal, are thus indexical categories, cosmological deictics whose analysis calls not so much for an animist psychology or substantialist ontology as for a theory of the sign or a perspectival pragmatics (Taylor 1993a; 1993b; Viveiros de Castro 1992b).

Thus, every being to whom a point of view is attributed would be a subject; or better, wherever there is a point of view there is a subject position. Whilst our constructionist epistemology can be summed up in the Saussurean formula: *the point of view creates the object* – the subject being the original, fixed condition whence the point of view emanates – Amerindian ontological perspectivism proceeds along the lines that the *point of view creates the subject*; whatever is activated or ‘agented’ by the point of view will be a subject.<sup>9</sup> This is why terms such as *wari*’ (Vilaça 1992), *dene* (McDonnell 1984) or *masa* (Århem 1993) mean ‘people’, but they can be used for – and therefore used by – very different classes of beings: used by humans they denote human beings; but used by peccaries, howler monkeys or beavers they self-refer to peccaries, howler monkeys or beavers.

As it happens, however, these non-humans placed in the subject perspective do not merely ‘call’ themselves ‘people’; they see themselves anatomically and culturally as *humans*. The symbolic spiritualization of animals would imply their imaginary hominization and culturalization; thus the anthropomorphic-anthropocentric character of indigenous thought would seem to be unquestionable. However, I believe that something totally different is at issue. Any being which vicariously occupies the point of view of reference, being in the position of subject, sees itself as a member of the human species. The human bodily form and human culture – the schemata of perception and action ‘embodied’ in specific dispositions – are deictics of the same type as the self-designations discussed above. They are reflexive or apperceptive schematisms by which all subjects apprehend themselves, and not literal and constitutive human predicates projected metaphorically (i.e. improperly) onto non-humans. Such deictic ‘attributes’ are immanent in the viewpoint, and move with it (Brightman 1993: 47). Human beings – naturally – enjoy the same prerogative and therefore see themselves as such.<sup>10</sup> It is not that animals are subjects because they are humans in disguise, but rather that they are human because they are potential subjects. This is to say *Culture is the Subject’s nature*; it is the form in which every subject experiences its own nature. Animism is not a projection of substantive human *qualities* cast onto animals, but rather expresses the logical equivalence of the reflexive *relations* that humans and animals each have to themselves: salmon are to (see) salmon as humans are to (see) humans, namely, (as) human.<sup>11</sup> If, as we have observed, the common condition of humans and animals is humanity not animality, this is because ‘humanity’ is the name for the general form taken by the Subject.

### Multinaturalism

With this we may have discarded analogical anthropocentrism, but only apparently to adopt relativism.<sup>12</sup> For would this cosmology of multiple viewpoints not imply that ‘every perspective is equally valid and true’ and that ‘a correct and true representation of the world does not exist’ (Århem 1993: 124)?

But this is exactly the question: is the Amerindian perspectivist theory in fact asserting a multiplicity of representations of the same world? It is sufficient to consider ethnographic evidence to perceive that the opposite applies: all beings see ('represent') the world in the same way – what changes is the world that they see. Animals impose the same categories and values on reality as humans do: their worlds, like ours, revolve around hunting and fishing, cooking and fermented drinks, cross-cousins and war, initiation rituals, shamans, chiefs, spirits. 'Everybody is involved in fishing and hunting; everybody is involved in feasts, social hierarchy, chiefs, war, and disease, all the way up and down' (Guédon 1984: 142). If the moon, snakes and jaguars see humans as tapirs or white-lipped peccaries (Baer 1994: 224), it is because they, like us, eat tapirs and peccaries, people's food. It could only be this way, since, being people in their own sphere, non-humans see things *as* 'people' do. But the things *that* they see are different: what to us is blood, is maize beer to the jaguar; what to the souls of the dead is a rotting corpse, to us is soaking manioc; what we see as a muddy waterhole, the tapirs see as a great ceremonial house.

(Multi)cultural relativism supposes a diversity of subjective and partial representations, each striving to grasp an external and unified nature, which remains perfectly indifferent to those representations. Amerindian thought proposes the opposite: a representational or phenomenological unity which is purely pronominal or deictic, indifferently applied to a radically objective diversity. One single 'culture', multiple 'natures' – perspectivism is multinaturalist, for a perspective is not a representation.

A perspective is not a representation because representations are a property of the mind or spirit, whereas the point of view is located in the body.<sup>13</sup> The ability to adopt a point of view is undoubtedly a power of the soul, and non-humans are subjects in so far as they have (or are) spirit; but the differences between viewpoints (and a viewpoint is nothing if not a difference) lies not in the soul. Since the soul is formally identical in all species, it can only see the same things everywhere – the difference is given in the specificity of bodies. This permits answers to be found for our questions: if non-humans are persons and have souls, then what distinguishes them from humans? And why, being people, do they not see us as people?

Animals see in the *same way* as we do *different* things because their bodies are different from ours. I am not referring to physiological differences – as far as that is concerned, Amerindians recognize a basic uniformity of bodies – but rather to affects, dispositions or capacities which render the body of every species unique: what it eats, how it communicates, where it lives, whether it is gregarious or solitary, and so forth. The visible shape of the body is a powerful sign of these differences in affect, although it can be deceptive since a human appearance could, for example, be concealing a jaguar-affect. Thus, what I call 'body' is not a synonym for distinctive substance or fixed shape; it is an assemblage of affects or ways of being that constitute a *habitus*. Between the formal subjectivity of souls and the substantial materiality of organisms there is an intermediate plane which is occupied by the body as a bundle of affects and capacities and which is the origin of perspectives.

The difference between bodies, however, is only apprehendable from an exterior viewpoint, by an other, since, for itself, every type of being has the

same form (the generic form of a human being): bodies are the way in which alterity is apprehended as such. In normal conditions we do not see animals as people, and vice-versa, because our respective bodies (and the perspectives which they allow) are different. Thus, if 'culture' is a reflexive perspective of the subject, objectified through the concept of soul, it can be said that 'nature' is the viewpoint which the subject takes of other body-affects; if Culture is the Subject's nature, then *Nature is the form of the Other as body*, that is, as the object for a subject. Culture takes the self-referential form of the pronoun 'I'; nature is the form of the non-person or the object, indicated by the impersonal pronoun 'it' (Benveniste 1966a: 256).

If, in the eyes of Amerindians, the body makes the difference, then it is easily understood why, in the anecdote told by Lévi-Strauss, the methods of investigation into the humanity of the other, employed by the Spanish and the inhabitants of the Antilles, showed such asymmetry. For the Europeans, the issue was to decide whether the others possessed a soul; for the Indians, the aim was to find out what kind of body the others had. For the Europeans the great diacritic, the marker of difference in perspective, is the soul (are Indians humans or animals?); for the Indians it is the body (are Europeans humans or spirits?). The Europeans never doubted that the Indians had bodies; the Indians never doubted that the Europeans had souls (animals and spirits have them too). What the Indians wanted to know was whether the bodies of those 'souls' were capable of the same affects as their own – whether they had the bodies of humans or the bodies of spirits, non-putrescible and protean. In sum: European ethnocentrism consisted in doubting whether other bodies have the same souls as they themselves; Amerindian ethnocentrism in doubting whether other souls had the same bodies.

As Ingold has stressed (1994; 1996), the status of humans in Western thought is essentially ambiguous: on the one hand, humankind is an animal species amongst others, and animality is a domain that includes humans; on the other hand, humanity is a moral condition which excludes animals. These two statuses co-exist in the problematic and disjunctive notion of 'human nature'. In other words, our cosmology postulates a physical continuity and a metaphysical discontinuity between humans and animals, the former making of man an object for the natural sciences, the latter an object for the 'humanities'. Spirit or mind is our great differentiator: it raises us above animals and matter in general, it distinguishes cultures, it makes each person unique before his or her fellow beings. The body, in contrast, is the major integrator: it connects us to the rest of the living, united by a universal substrate (DNA, carbon chemistry) which, in turn, links up with the ultimate nature of all material bodies.<sup>14</sup> In contrast to this, Amerindians postulate a metaphysical continuity and a physical discontinuity between the beings of the cosmos, the former resulting in animism, the latter in perspectivism: the spirit or soul (here not an immaterial substance but rather a reflexive form) integrates, while the body (not a material organism but a system of active affects) differentiates.

### **The spirit's many bodies**

The idea that the body appears to be the great differentiator in Amazonian cosmologies – that is, as that which unites beings of the same type, to the extent

that it differentiates them from others – allows us to reconsider some of the classic questions of the ethnology of the region in a new light.

Thus, the now old theme of the importance of corporeality in Amazonian societies (a theme that much predates the current ‘embodiment’ craze – see Seeger *et al.* 1979) acquires firmer foundations. For example, it becomes possible to gain a better understanding of why the categories of identity – be they personal, social or cosmological – are so frequently expressed through bodily idioms, particularly through food practices and body decoration. The universal symbolic importance of food and cooking regimes in Amazonia – from the mythological ‘raw and the cooked’ of Lévi-Strauss, to the Piro idea that what literally (i.e. naturally) makes them different from white people is ‘real food’ (Gow 1991); from the food avoidances which define ‘groups of substance’ in Central Brazil (Seeger 1980) to the basic classification of beings according to their eating habits (Baer 1994: 88); from the ontological productivity of commensality, similarity of diet and relative condition of prey-object and predator-subject (Vilaça 1992) to the omnipresence of cannibalism as the ‘predicative’ horizon of all relations with the other, be they matrimonial, alimentary or bellicose (Viveiros de Castro 1993) – this universality demonstrates that the set of habits and processes that constitute bodies is precisely the location from which identity and difference emerge.

The same can be said of the intense semiotic use of the body in the definition of personal identities and in the circulation of social values (Mentore 1993; Turner 1995). The connexion between this overdetermination of the body (particularly of its visible surface) and the restricted recourse in the Amazonian *socius* to objects capable of supporting relations – that is, a situation wherein social exchange is not mediated by material objectifications such as those characteristic of gift and commodity economies – has been shrewdly pinpointed by Turner, who has shown how the human body therefore must appear as the prototypical social object. However, the Amerindian emphasis on the social construction of the body cannot be taken as the culturalization of a natural substratum but rather as the production of a distinctly human body, meaning *naturally* human. Such a process seems to be expressing not so much a wish to ‘de-animalize’ the body through its cultural marking, but rather to particularize a body still too generic, differentiating it from the bodies of other human collectivities as well as from those of other species. The body, as the site of differentiating perspective, must be differentiated to the highest degree in order completely to express it.

The human body can be seen as the locus of the confrontation between humanity and animality, but not because it is essentially animal by nature and needs to be veiled and controlled by culture (Rivière 1994). The body is the subject’s fundamental expressive instrument and at the same time the object *par excellence*, that which is presented to the sight of the other. It is no coincidence, then, that the maximum social objectification of bodies, their maximal particularization expressed in decoration and ritual exhibition is at the same time the moment of maximum animalization (Goldman 1975: 178; Turner 1991; 1995), when bodies are covered by feathers, colours, designs, masks and other animal prostheses. Man ritually clothed as an animal is the counterpart to the animal supernaturally naked. The former, transformed into an animal, reveals to himself the ‘natural’ distinctiveness of his body; the latter, free of its exterior form and revealing itself as human, shows the ‘supernatural’ similarity of spirit.

The model of spirit is the human spirit, but the model of body is the bodies of animals; and if from the point of view of the subject culture takes the generic form of 'I' and nature of 'it/they', then the objectification of the subject to itself demands a singularization of bodies – which naturalizes culture, i.e. embodies it – whilst the subjectification of the object implies communication at the level of spirit – which culturalizes nature, i.e. supernaturalizes it. Put in these terms, the Amerindian distinction of Nature/Culture, before it is dissolved in the name of a common animic human-animal sociality, must be re-read in the light of somatic perspectivism.

It is important to note that these Amerindian bodies are not thought of as given but rather as made. Therefore, an emphasis on the methods for the continuous fabrication of the body (Viveiros de Castro 1979); a notion of kinship as a process of active assimilation of individuals (Gow 1989; 1991) through the sharing of bodily substances, sexual and alimentary – and not as a passive inheritance of some substantial essence; the theory of memory which inscribes it in the flesh (Viveiros de Castro 1992a: 201-7), and more generally the theory which situates knowledge in the body (Kensinger 1995: ch. 22; McCallum 1996). The Amerindian *Bildung* happens in the body more than in the spirit: there is no 'spiritual' change which is not a bodily transformation, a redefinition of its affects and capacities. Furthermore, while the distinction between body and soul is obviously pertinent to these cosmologies, it cannot be interpreted as an ontological discontinuity (Townesley 1993: 454-5). As bundles of affects and sites of perspective, rather than material organisms, bodies 'are' souls, just, incidentally, as souls and spirits 'are' bodies. The dual (or plural) conception of the human soul, widespread in indigenous Amazonia, distinguishes between the soul (or souls) of the body, reified register of an individual's history, site of memory and affect, and a 'true soul', pure, formal subjective singularity, the abstract mark of a person (e.g. McCallum 1996; Viveiros de Castro 1992a: 201-14). On the other hand, the souls of the dead and the spirits which inhabit the universe are not immaterial entities, but equally types of bodies, endowed with properties – affects – *sui generis*. Indeed, body and soul, just like nature and culture, do not correspond to substantives, self-subsistent entities or ontological provinces, but rather to pronouns or phenomenological perspectives.

The performative rather than given character of the body, a conception that requires it to differentiate itself 'culturally' in order for it to be 'naturally' different, has an obvious connexion with interspecific metamorphosis, a possibility suggested by Amerindian cosmologies. We need not be surprised by a way of thinking which posits bodies as the great differentiators yet at the same time states their transformability. Our cosmology supposes a singular distinctiveness of minds, but not even for this reason does it declare communication (albeit solipsism is a constant problem) to be impossible, or deny the mental/spiritual transformations induced by processes such as education and religious conversion; in truth, it is precisely because the spiritual is the locus of difference that conversion becomes necessary (the Europeans wanted to know whether Indians had souls in order to modify them). Bodily metamorphosis is the Amerindian counterpart to the European theme of spiritual conversion.<sup>15</sup> In the same way, if solipsism is the phantom that continuously threatens our cosmology – raising the fear of not recognizing ourselves in our 'own kind' because they are not like

us, given the potentially absolute singularity of minds – then the possibility of metamorphosis expresses the opposite fear, of no longer being able to differentiate between the human and the animal, and, in particular, the fear of seeing the human who lurks within the body of the animal one eats<sup>16</sup> – hence the importance of food prohibitions and precautions linked to the spiritual potency of animals, mentioned above. The phantom of cannibalism is the Amerindian equivalent to the problem of solipsism: if the latter derives from the uncertainty as to whether the natural similarity of bodies guarantees a real community of spirit, then the former suspects that the similarity of souls might prevail over the real differences of body and that all animals that are eaten might, despite the shamanistic efforts to de-subjectivize them, remain human. This, of course, does not prevent us having amongst ourselves more or less radical solipsists, such as the relativists, nor that various Amerindian societies be purposefully and more or less literally cannibalistic.<sup>17</sup>

The notion of metamorphosis is directly linked to the doctrine of animal ‘clothing’, to which I have referred. How are we to reconcile the idea that the body is the site of differentiating perspectives with the theme of the ‘appearance’ and ‘essence’ which is always evoked to interpret animism and perspectivism (Århem 1993: 122; Descola 1986: 120; Hugh-Jones 1996; Rivièrè 1994)? Here seems to me to lie an important mistake, which is that of taking bodily ‘appearance’ to be inert and false, whereas spiritual ‘essence’ is active and real (see the definitive observations of Goldman 1975: 63). I argue that nothing could be further from the Indians’ minds when they speak of bodies in terms of ‘clothing’. It is not so much that the body is a clothing but rather that clothing is a body. We are dealing with societies which inscribe efficacious meanings onto the skin, and which use animal masks (or at least know their principle) endowed with the power metaphysically to transform the identities of those who wear them, if used in the appropriate ritual context. To put on mask-clothing is not so much to conceal a human essence beneath an animal appearance, but rather to activate the powers of a different body.<sup>18</sup> The animal clothes that shamans use to travel the cosmos are not fantasies but instruments: they are akin to diving equipment, or space suits, and not to carnival masks. The intention when donning a wet suit is to be able to function like a fish, to breathe underwater, not to conceal oneself under a strange covering. In the same way, the ‘clothing’ which, amongst animals, covers an internal ‘essence’ of a human type, is not a mere disguise but their distinctive equipment, endowed with the affects and capacities which define each animal.<sup>19</sup> It is true that appearances can be deceptive (Hallowell 1960; Rivièrè 1994); but my impression is that in Amerindian narratives which take as a theme animal ‘clothing’ the interest lies more in what these clothes do rather than what they hide. Besides this, between a being and its appearance is its body, which is more than just that – and the very same narratives relate how appearances are always ‘unmasked’ by bodily behaviour which is inconsistent with them. In short: there is no doubt that bodies are discardable and exchangeable and that ‘behind’ them lie subjectivities which are formally identical to humans. But the idea is not similar to our opposition between appearance and essence; it merely manifests the objective permutability of bodies which is based in the subjective equivalence of souls.

Another classic theme in South American ethnology which could be inter-



preted within this framework is that of the sociological discontinuity between the living and the dead (Carneiro da Cunha 1978). The fundamental distinction between the living and the dead is made by the body and precisely not by the spirit; death is a bodily catastrophe which prevails as differentiator over the common 'animation' of the living and the dead. Amerindian cosmologies dedicate equal or greater interest to the way in which the dead see reality as they do to the vision of animals, and as is the case for the latter, they underline the radical differences *vis-à-vis* the world of the living. To be precise, being definitively separated from their bodies, the dead are not human. As spirits defined by their disjunction from a human body, the dead are logically attracted to the bodies of animals; this is why to die is to transform into an animal (Pollock 1985: 95; Schwartzman 1988: 268; Turner 1995: 152; Vilaça 1992: 247-55), as it is to transform into other figures of bodily alterity, such as affines and enemies. In this manner, if animism affirms a subjective and social continuity between humans and animals, its somatic complement, perspectivism, establishes an objective discontinuity, equally social, between live humans and dead humans.<sup>20</sup>

Having examined the differentiating component of Amerindian perspectivism, it remains for me to attribute a cosmological 'function' to the transspecific unity of the spirit. This is the point at which, I believe, a relational definition could be given for a category, Supernature, which nowadays has fallen into disrepute (actually, ever since Durkheim), but whose pertinence seems to me to be unquestionable. Apart from its use in labelling cosmographic domains of a 'hyper-uranian' type, or in defining a third type of intentional beings occurring in indigenous cosmologies, which are neither human nor animal (I refer to 'spirits'), the notion of supernature may serve to designate a specific relational context and particular phenomenological quality, which is as distinct from the intersubjective relations that define the social world as from the 'interobjective' relations with the bodies of animals.

Following the analogy with the pronominal set (Benveniste 1966a; 1966b) we can see that between the reflexive 'I' of culture (the generator of the concepts of soul or spirit) and the impersonal 'it' of nature (definer of the relation with somatic alterity), there is a position missing, the 'you', the *second person*, or the other taken as other subject, whose point of view is the latent echo of that of the 'I'. I believe that this concept can aid in determining the supernatural context. An abnormal context wherein a subject is captured by another cosmologically dominant point of view, wherein he is the 'you' of a non-human perspective, *Supernature is the form of the Other as Subject*, implying an objectification of the human I as a 'you' for this Other. The typical 'supernatural' situation in an Amerindian world is the meeting in the forest between a man – always on his own – and a being which is seen at first merely as an animal or a person, then reveals itself as a spirit or a dead person and speaks to the man (the dynamics of this communication are well analysed by Taylor 1993a).<sup>21</sup> These encounters can be lethal for the interlocutor who, overpowered by the non-human subjectivity, passes over to its side, transforming himself into a being of the same species as the speaker: dead, spirit or animal. He who responds to a 'you' spoken by a non-human accepts the condition of being its 'second person', and when assuming in his turn the position of 'I' does so already as a non-human. The canonical form

of these supernatural encounters, then, consists in suddenly finding out that the other is 'human', that is, that *it* is the human, which automatically dehumanizes and alienates the interlocutor and transforms him into a prey object, that is, an animal. Only shamans, multinatural beings by definition and office, are always capable of transiting the various perspectives, calling and being called 'you' by the animal subjectivities and spirits without losing their condition as human subjects.<sup>22</sup>

I would conclude by observing that Amerindian perspectivism has a vanishing point, as it were, where the differences between points of view are at the same time annulled and exacerbated: myth, which thus takes on the character of an absolute discourse. In myth, every species of being appears to others as it appears to itself (as human), while acting as if already showing its distinctive and definitive nature (as animal, plant or spirit). In a certain sense, all the beings which people mythology are shamans, which indeed is explicitly affirmed by some Amazonian cultures (Guss 1989: 52). Myth speaks of a state of being where bodies and names, souls and affects, the I and the Other interpenetrate, submerged in the same pre-subjective and pre-objective milieu – a milieu whose end is precisely what the mythology sets out to tell.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>A shorter version of this article was presented as a Munro Lecture at the University of Edinburgh earlier this year. The article is the result of an extended dialogue with Tania Stolze Lima, who, in parallel with and synchronous to its earlier version (published first in Portuguese), has written a masterful article on perspectivism in Juruna cosmology (Lima 1996). Peter Gow (who, together with Elizabeth Ewart, translated most of the article into English), Aparecida Vilaça, Philippe Descola and Michael Houseman made invaluable suggestions at various stages in the elaboration of the materials I present here. Bruno Latour (1991) was an indirect but crucial source of inspiration. After this article had reached its present form, I read an essay by Fritz Krause (1931, mentioned by Boelscher 1989:212 n.10) which advances ideas strikingly similar to some developed here.

<sup>2</sup>This notion of the body as a 'clothing' can be found amongst the Makuna (Århem 1993), the Yagua (Chaumeil 1983: 125-7), the Piro (Gow, pers. comm.), the Trio (Rivière 1994) the Upper Xingu societies (Gregor 1977: 322). The notion is very likely pan-American, having considerable symbolic yield for example in North-west Coast cosmologies (see Goldman 1975 and Boelscher 1989), if not of much wider distribution, a question I cannot consider here.

<sup>3</sup>For some examples see amongst many others: Weiss 1969: 158; 1972 (Campa); Baer 1994: 102, 119, 224; Renard-Casevitz 1991: 24-31 (Matsiguenga); Grenand 1980: 42 (Wayapi); Viveiros de Castro 1992a: 68 (Arawete); Osborn 1990: 151 (U'wa); Jara 1996: 68-73 (Akuriyo).

<sup>4</sup>See for example, Saladin d'Anglure 1990; Fienup-Riordan 1994 (Eskimo); Nelson 1983; McDonnell 1984 (Koyukon, Kaska); Tanner 1979; Scott 1989; Brightman 1993 (Cree); Hallowell 1960 (Ojibwa); Goldman 1975 (Kwakiutl); Guédon 1984 (Tsimshian); Boelscher 1989 (Haida). See also Howell 1984; 1996; and Karim 1981, for the Chewong and Ma'Betisék of Malaysia; for Siberia, Hamayon 1990.

<sup>5</sup>See Århem 1993; Crocker 1985; Hugh-Jones 1996; Overing 1985; 1986; Vilaça 1992.

<sup>6</sup>Or, as we may add, the case of the Ojibwa, where the co-existence of the systems of *totem* and *manido* (Levi-Strauss 1962a: 25-33) served as a matrix for the general opposition between totemism and sacrifice (Levi-Strauss 1962b: 295-302) and can be directly interpreted within the framework of a distinction between totemism and animism.

<sup>7</sup>See Radcliffe-Brown 1952: 130-1, who, amongst other interesting arguments, distinguishes *processes of personification* of species and natural phenomena (which 'permits nature to be thought of as if it were a society of persons, and so makes of it a social or moral order'), like those found amongst the Eskimos and Andaman Islanders, from *systems of classification* of natural species, like those found in Australia and which compose a 'system of social solidarities' between man and nature – this obviously calls to mind Descola's distinction of animism/totemism as well as the contrast of *manido/totem* explored by Lévi-Strauss.

<sup>8</sup>The uncomfortable tension inherent in such antinomies can be gauged in Howell's article (1996) on Chewong cosmology, where the Chewong are described as being both 'relativist' and 'anthropocentric' – a double mischaracterization, I believe.

<sup>9</sup>Such is the foundation of perspectivism. It does not express a dependency on a predefined subject; on the contrary, whatever accedes to the point of view will be subject ...' (Deleuze 1988: 27).

<sup>10</sup>Human beings see themselves as such; the Moon, the snakes, the jaguars and the Mother of Smallpox, however, see them as tapirs or peccaries, which they kill' (Baer 1994: 224).

<sup>11</sup>If salmon look to salmon as humans to humans - and this is 'animism' - salmon do not look human to humans (they look like salmon), and neither do humans to salmon (they look like spirits, or maybe bears; see Guedon 1984: 141) - and this is 'perspectivism'. Ultimately, then, animism and perspectivism may have a deeper relationship to totemism than Descola's model allows for.

<sup>12</sup>The attribution of human-like consciousness and intentionality (to say nothing of human bodily form and cultural habits) to non-human beings has been indifferently denominated 'anthropocentrism' or 'anthropomorphism'. However, these two labels can be taken to denote radically opposed cosmological outlooks. Western popular evolutionism is very anthropocentric, but not particularly anthropomorphic. On the other hand, 'primitive animism' may be characterized as anthropomorphic, but it is definitely not anthropocentric: if sundry other beings are 'human', then we humans are not a special lot.

<sup>13</sup>The point of view is located in the body, says Leibniz' (Deleuze 1988: 16).

<sup>14</sup>The counterproof of the singularity of the spirit in our cosmologies lies in the fact that when we try to universalize it, we are obliged - now that supernature is out of bounds - to identify it with the structure and function of the brain. The spirit can only be universal (natural) if it is (in) the body.

<sup>15</sup>The rarity of unequivocal examples of spirit possession in the complex of Amerindian shamanism may derive from the prevalence of the theme of bodily metamorphosis. The classical problem of the religious conversion of Amerindians could also be further illuminated from this angle; indigenous conceptions of 'acculturation' seem to focus more on the incorporation and embodiment of Western bodily practices (food, clothing, interethnic sex) rather than on spiritual assimilation (language, religion etc.).

<sup>16</sup>The traditional problem of Western mainstream epistemology is how to connect and universalize (individual substances are given, relations have to be made); the problem in Amazonia is how to separate and particularize (relations are given, substances must be defined). See Brightman (1993: 177-85) and Fienup-Riordan (1994: 46-50) - both inspired by Wagner's (1977) ideas about the 'innate' and the 'constructed' - on this contrast.

<sup>17</sup>In Amazonian cannibalism, what is intended is precisely the incorporation of the subject-aspect of the enemy (who is accordingly hyper-subjectivized, in very much the same way as that described by Harrison [1993: 121] for Melanesian warfare), not its desubjectivization as is the case with game animals. See Viveiros de Castro 1992a: 290-3; 1996: 98-102; Fausto 1997.

<sup>18</sup>Peter Gow (pers. comm.) tells me that the Piro conceive of the act of putting on clothes as an animating of clothes. See also Goldman (1975: 183) on Kwakiutl masks: 'Masks get "excited" during Winter dances'.

<sup>19</sup>"Clothing" in this sense does not mean merely a body covering but also refers to the skill and ability to carry out certain tasks' (Riviere in Koelwijn 1987: 306).

<sup>20</sup>Religions based on the cult of the ancestors seem to postulate the inverse: spiritual identity goes beyond the bodily barrier of death, the living and the dead are similar in so far as they manifest the same spirit. We would accordingly have superhuman ancestry and spiritual metamorphosis on one side, animalization of the dead and bodily metamorphosis on the other.

<sup>21</sup>This would be the true significance of the 'deceptiveness of appearances' theme: appearances deceive because one is never certain whose point of view is dominant, that is, which world is in force when one interacts with other beings. The similarity of this idea to the familiar injunction not to 'trust your senses' of Western epistemologies is, I fear, just another deceitful appearance.

<sup>22</sup>As we have remarked, a good part of shamanistic work consists in de-subjectivizing animals, that is in transforming them into pure, natural bodies capable of being consumed without danger. In contrast, what defines spirits is precisely the fact that they are inedible; this transforms them into eaters *par excellence*, i.e. into anthropophagous beings. In this way, it is common for the great predators to be the preferred forms in which spirits manifest themselves, and it is understandable that game animals should see humans as spirits, that spirits and predator animals should see us as game animals and that animals taken to be inedible should be assimilated to spirits (Viveiros de Castro 1978). The scales of edibility of indigenous Amazonia (Hugh-Jones 1996) should therefore include spirits at their negative pole.

# Cannibal Metaphysics

Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, 2014. Edited and translated from Portuguese by Peter Skafish. Excerpted.

## Part One: Anti-Narcissus

...

## Chapter Two: Perspectivism

... *Grosso modo*, the Wagnerian semiotic can be said to be a theory of human and nonhuman practice conceived as exhaustively consisting in the reciprocal, recursive operation of two modes of symbolization: (1) a collectivizing, conventional (or literal) symbolism where signs are organized in standardized contexts (semantic domains, formal languages, etc.) to the extent that they are opposed to a heterogeneous plane of ‘referents’ — that is, they are seen as symbolizing something other than themselves; and (2) a differentiating, inventive (or figurative) mode in which the world of phenomena represented by conventional symbolization is understood to be constituted by “symbols representing themselves,” that is, events that simultaneously manifest as symbols and referents, thereby dissolving the conventional contrast. It should be observed, first of all, that the world of referents or the “real” is defined here as a semiotic effect: what is other to a sign is another sign having the singular capacity of “representing itself.” The mode of existence of actual entities qua events or occasions is a tautology. It should be stressed that the contrast between the two modes is itself the result of a conventionalist operation (and perception): the distinction between invention and convention is itself conventional, but at the same time every convention is produced through a counter-invention. The contrast is thus intrinsically recursive, especially if we understand that human cultures are fundamentally in conflict over the mode of symbolization they (conventionally) privilege as an element appropriated for action or invention, in reserving to the other the function of the “given.” Cultures, human macrosystems of conventions, are distinguished by what they define as belonging to the sphere of the responsibilities of agents—the mode of the constructed — and by what belongs (because it is counter-constructed as belonging) to the world of the given or non-constructed.

The core of any and every set of cultural conventions is a simple

distinction as to what kind of contexts—the nonconventionalized ones or those of convention itself—are to be deliberately articulated in the course of human action, and what kind of contexts are to be counter-invented as “motivation” under the conventional mask of “the given” or “the innate.” Of course [...] there are only two possibilities: a people who deliberately differentiate as the form of their action will invariably counter-invent a motivating collectivity as “innate,” and a people who deliberately collectivize will counterinvent a motivating differentiation in this way. (Wagner 1981: 51)

...

The fact that the condition of the person (whose universal apperceptive form is human) could be “extended” to other species while “denied” to other collectives of our own immediately suggests that the concept of the person—a center of intentionality constituted by a difference of internal potential—is anterior and logically superior to the concept of the human. Humanity is in the position of the common denominator, the reflexive mode of the collective, and is as such derived in relation to the primary positions of predator and prey, which necessarily implicates other collectives and personal multiplicities in a situation of perspectival multiplicity. This interspecific resemblance or kinship arises from the deliberate, socially produced suspension of a given predatory difference and does not precede it. This is precisely what Amerindian kinship consists of: “reproduction” as *the intensive stabilization and/or deliberate non-achievement of predation*, in the fashion of the celebrated Batesonian (or Balinese) intensive plateau that so inspired Deleuze and Guattari. It is not by chance that in another text of Lévi-Strauss’ that deals with cannibalism, this idea of identity-by-subtraction receives a formulation perfectly befitting Amerindian perspectivism:

[T]he problem of cannibalism ... would not be a search for the “why?” of the custom, but, on the contrary, for the “how?” of the emergence of this lower limit of predation by which, perhaps, we are brought back to social life. (L.-S. 1987b: 113; see also L.-S. 1981: 690)

This is nothing more than an application of the classic structuralist precept that “resemblance has no reality in itself; it is only a particular instance of difference, that in which difference tends toward zero” (L.-S. 1981: 38). Everything hinges on the verb “to tend,” since, as Lévi-Strauss observes, difference “is never completely annulled.” We could even say that it only blooms to its full conceptual power when it becomes as slight as can be: like the difference between twins, as an Amerindian philosopher might say.

The notion that actual nonhumans possess an invisible prosopomorphic side is a fundamental supposition of several dimensions of indigenous practice, but it is only foregrounded in the particular context of shamanism. Amerindian shamanism could be defined as the authorization of certain individuals to cross the corporeal barriers between species, adopt an exospecific subjective perspective, and administer the relations between those species and humans. By seeing nonhuman beings as they see themselves (again as humans), shamans become capable of playing the role of active interlocutors in the trans-specific dialogue

and, even more importantly, of returning from their travels to recount them; something the “laity” can only do with difficulty. This encounter or exchange of perspectives is not only a dangerous process but a political art: diplomacy. If Western relativism has multiculturalism as its public politics, Amerindian shamanic perspectivism has multinaturalism as its cosmic politics.

Shamanism is a mode of action entailing a mode of knowledge, or, rather, a certain ideal of knowledge. In certain respects, this ideal is diametrically opposed to the objectivist epistemology encouraged by Western modernity. The latter’s telos is provided by the category of the object: to know is to objectify by distinguishing between what is intrinsic to the object and what instead belongs to the knowing subject, which has been inevitably and illegitimately projected onto the object. To know is thus to desubjectify, to render explicit the part of the subject present in the object in order to reduce it to an ideal minimum (and/or to amplify it with a view to obtaining spectacular critical effects). Subjects, just like objects, are regarded as the results of a process of objectification: the subject constitutes or recognizes itself in the object it produces, and knows itself objectively when it succeeds in seeing itself “from the outside” as a thing. Our epistemological game, then, is objectification; what has not been objectified simply remains abstract or unreal. The form of the Other is the thing.

Amerindian shamanism is guided by the inverse ideal: to know is to “personify,” to take the point of view of what should be known or, rather, *the one* whom should be known. The key is to know, in Guimarães Rosa’s phrase, “the who of things,” without which there would be no way to respond intelligently to the question of “why.” The form of the Other is the person. We could also say, to utilize a vocabulary currently in vogue, that shamanic personification or subjectivation reflects a propensity to universalize the “intentional attitude” accorded so much value by certain modern philosophers of mind (or, more accurately, philosophers of *modern* mind). To be more precise, since the Indians are perfectly capable of adopting “physical” and “functional” attitudes *sensu* Dennett (1978) in everyday life, we will say that here we are faced with an epistemological ideal that, far from seeking to reduce “ambient intentionality” to its zero degree in order to attain an absolutely objective representation of the world, instead makes the opposite wager: true knowledge aims to reveal a maximum of intentionality through a systematic and deliberate abduction of agency. To what we said above about shamanism being a *political* art we can now add that it is a *political art*.<sup>1</sup> For the good shamanic interpretation succeeds in seeing each event as being, in truth, an *action*, an expression of intentional states or predicates of an agent. Interpretive success, then, is directly proportional to the successful attribution of intentional order to an object or *noeme*. An entity or state of things not prone to subjectivation, which is to say the actualization of its social relation with the one who knows it, is shamanically insignificant—in that case, it is just an epistemic residue or impersonal factor resistant to precise knowledge. Our objectivist epistemology, there is no need to recall, proceeds in the opposite direction, conceiving the intentional attitude as a convenient fiction adopted when the aimed-for object is too complex to be decomposed into elementary physical processes. An exhaustive scientific explanation of the world, it is thought, should be capable of reducing every object to a chain of causal events, and these, in turn, to materially dense interactions (through, primarily,

action at a distance).

Thus if a subject is an insufficiently analyzed object in the modern naturalist world, the Amerindian epistemological convention follows the inverse principle, which is that an object is an insufficiently interpreted subject. One must know how to personify, because one must personify in order to know. The object of the interpretation is the counter-interpretation of the object.<sup>2</sup> The latter idea should perhaps be developed into its full intentional form—the form of a mind, an animal under a human face—having at least a demonstrable relation with a subject, conceived as something that exists “in the neighborhood” of an agent (see Gell 1998).

Where this second option is concerned, the idea that nonhuman agents perceive themselves and their behavior under a human form plays a crucial role. The translation of “culture” in the worlds of extrahuman subjectivities has for its corollary the redefinition of several natural objects and events as indexes from which social agency can be inferred. The most common case is the transformation of something that humans regard as a brute fact into another species’ artifact or civilized behavior: what we call blood is beer for a jaguar, what we take for a pool of mud, tapirs experience as a grand ceremonial house, and so on. Such artifacts are ontologically ambiguous: they are objects, but they necessarily indicate a subject since they are like frozen actions or material incarnations of a nonmaterial intentionality. What one side calls nature, then, very often turns out to be culture for the other.

Here we have an indigenous lesson anthropology could benefit from heeding. The differential distribution of the given and the constructed must not be taken for an anodyne exchange, a simple change of signs that leaves the terms of the problem intact. There is “all the difference of/in the world” (Wagner 1981: 51) between a world that experiences the primordial as bare transcendence and pure anti-anthropocentric alterity—as the nonconstructed and noninstituted opposed to all custom and discourse<sup>3</sup>—and a world of immanent humanity, where the primordial assumes a human form. This anthropomorphic presupposition of the indigenous world is radically opposed to the persistent anthropocentric effort in Western philosophies (some of the most radical included) to “construct” the human as the nongiven, as the very being of the nongiven (Sloterdijk 2000). We should nevertheless stress, against fantasies of the narcissistic paradises of exotic peoples (a.k.a. Disney anthropology), that this presupposition renders the indigenous world neither more familiar nor more comforting. When everything is human, the human becomes a wholly other thing.

So there really are more things in heaven and earth than in our anthropological dream. To describe this multiverse, where every difference is political (because every relation is “social”), as though it were an illusory version of our universe—to *unify* them by reducing the inventions of the first to the conventions of the second—would be to decide for a simplistic and politically puerile conception of their relationship. Such facile explanations end up engendering every sort of complication, since the cost of this ersatz ontological monism is its inflationary proliferation of epistemological dualisms—emic and etic, metaphoric and literal, conscious and unconscious, representation and reality, illusion and truth (I could go on...). Those dualisms are dubious not because all such conceptual dichotomies are in principle pernicious but because

these in particular require, if they are to unify (any) two worlds, discriminating between their respective inhabitants. Every Great Divider is a mononaturalist.

### Chapter Three: Multinaturalism

“We moderns possess the concept but have lost sight of the plane of immanence....” (D. G. 1994: 104). All the foregoing is merely the development of the founding intuition, deductively effectuated by indigenous theoretical practice, of the mythology of the continent, which concerns a milieu that can rightly be called prehistorical (in the sense of the celebrated absolute past: the past that has never been present and which therefore is never past, while the present never ceases to pass), and that is defined by the ontological impenetrability of all the “insistents” populating and constituting this milieu—the templates and standards of actual existents.

As the *Mythologiques* teach us, the narrativization of the indigenous plane of immanence articulates in a privileged way the causes and consequences of speciation—the assumption of a specific corporeality—by the personae or actants therein, all of whom are conceived as sharing a general unstable condition in which the aspects of humans and nonhumans are inextricably enmeshed:

I would like to ask a simple question. What is a myth?

It’s the very opposite of a simple question [...]. If you were to ask an American Indian, he would most likely tell you that it is a story of the time before men and animals became distinct beings. This definition seems very profound to me. (L.-S. and Eribon: 1991: 139)

In fact, the definition is profound, even if showing this requires taking a slightly different direction than the one Lévi-Strauss had in mind in his response. Mythic discourse registers the movement by which the present state of things is actualized from a virtual, precosmological condition that is perfectly transparent—a chaosmos where the corporeal and spiritual dimensions of beings do not yet conceal each other. Far from evincing the primordial identification between humans and nonhumans commonly ascribed to it, this precosmos is traversed by an infinite difference (even if, or because, it is internal to each person or agent) contrary to the finite and external differences constituting the actual world’s species and qualities. Whence the regime of qualitative multiplicity proper to myth: the question, for example, of whether the mythic jaguar is a block of human affects having the form of a jaguar or a block of human affects having a human form is strictly undecidable, as mythic “metamorphosis” is an event, a change on the spot: an intensive superposition of heterogeneous states rather than an extensive transposition of homogenous states. Myth is not history because metamorphosis is not a process, was not yet a process and will never be a process. Metamorphosis is both anterior and external to the process of process—it is a figure (a figuration) of becoming.

The general line traced by mythic discourse thus describes the instantaneous sorting of the precosmological flux of indiscernibility that occurs when it enters the cosmological process. Following that, the feline and human dimensions of jaguars (and of humans) will alternately function as figure and potential ground



for each other. The original transparency or infinitely bifurcated *complicatio* gets explicated in the invisibility (of human souls and animal spirits) and opacity (of human bodies and animal somatic “garb”<sup>4</sup>) that mark the constitution of all mundane beings. This invisibility and opacity are, however, relative and reversible, even as the ground of virtuality is indestructible or inexhaustible; the great indigenous rituals of the recreation of the world are precisely *dispositifs* for the counter-effectuation of this indestructible ground.

The differences coming into effect within myths are, again, infinite and internal, contrary to the external, finite differences between species. What defines the agents and patients of mythic events is their intrinsic capacity to be something else. In this sense, each persona infinitely differs from itself, given that it is initially supposed by mythic discourse only in order to be replaced, which is to say transformed. Such “self-”difference is the characteristic property of the notion of “spirit,” which is why all mythic beings are conceived of as spirits (and as shamans), and every finite mode or actual existent, reciprocally, can manifest as (for it was) a spirit when its reason to be is recounted in myth. The supposed lack of differentiation between mythic subjects is a function of their being constitutively irreducible to essences or fixed identities, whether generic, specific, or even individual.<sup>5</sup>

In sum, myth proposes an ontological regime ordered by a fluent intensive difference bearing on each of the points of a heterogeneous continuum, where transformation is anterior to form, relations superior to terms, and intervals interior to being. Each mythic subject, being a pure virtuality, “was already previously” what it “would be next” and this is why it is not something actually determined. The extensive differences, moreover, introduced by post-mythic speciation (*sensu lato*)—the passage from the continuous to the discrete constituting the grand (my)theme of structural anthropology—is crystallized in molar blocks of infinitely internal identity (each species is internally homogeneous, and its members are equally and indifferently representatives of the species as such).<sup>6</sup> These blocks are separated by external intervals that are quantifiable and measurable, since differences between species are finite systems for the correlation, proportioning, and permutation of characteristics of the same order and same nature.

The heterogeneous continuum of the precosmological world thus gives way to a discrete, homogeneous space in whose terms each being is only what it is, and is so only because it is not what it is not. But spirits are the proof that all virtualities have not necessarily been actualized, and that the turbulent mythic flux continues to rumble beneath the apparent discontinuities between types and species.

Amerindian perspectivism, then, finds in myth a geometrical locus where the difference between points of view is at once annulled and exacerbated. In this absolute discourse, each kind of being appears to other beings as it appears to itself—as human— even as it already acts by manifesting its distinct and definitive animal, plant, or spirit nature.<sup>7</sup> Myth, the universal point of flight of perspectivism, speaks of a state of being where bodies and names, souls and actions, egos and others are interpenetrated, immersed in one and the same presubjective and preobjective milieu.

The aim of mythology is precisely to recount the “end” of this “milieu”; in

other words, to describe “the passage from Nature to Culture,” the theme to which Lévi-Strauss attributed a central role in Amerindian mythology. And contrary to what others have said, this was not without reason; it would only be necessary to specify that the centrality of this passage by no means excludes its profound ambivalence—the *double sense* (in more than one sense) it has in indigenous thought, as becomes evident the farther one advances through the *Mythologiques*. It is likewise important to emphasize that what results from this passage is not exactly what has been imagined. The passage is not a process by which the human is differentiated from the animal, as the evolutionist Occidental vulgate would have it. *The common condition of humans and animals is not animality but humanity*. The great mythic division shows less culture distinguished from nature than nature estranged from itself by culture: the myths recount how animals lost certain attributes humans inherited or conserved. Non-humans are ex-humans—and not humans are ex-nonhumans. So where our popular anthropology regards humanity as standing upon animal foundations ordinarily occluded by culture—having once been entirely animal, we remain, at bottom, animals—indigenous thought instead concludes that having formerly been human, animals and other cosmic existents continue to be so, even if in a way scarcely obvious to us.<sup>8</sup>

The more general question raised for us, then, is why the humanity of each species of existent is subjectively evident (and at the same time highly problematic) and objectively non-evident (while at the same time obstinately affirmed). Why is it that animals see themselves as humans? Precisely because we humans see them as animals, while seeing ourselves as humans. Peccaries cannot see themselves as peccaries (or, who knows, speculate on the fact that humans and other beings are peccaries underneath the garb specific to them) because this is the way they are viewed by humans. If humans regard themselves as humans and are seen as nonhumans, as animals or spirits, by nonhumans, then animals should necessarily see themselves as humans. What perspectivism affirms, when all is said and done, is not so much that animals are at bottom like humans but the idea that as humans, they are at bottom something else—they are, in the end, the “bottom” itself of something, its other side; they are different from themselves. Neither animism, which would affirm a substantial or analogic resemblance between animals and humans, nor totemism—which would affirm a formal or homological resemblance between intrahuman and interanimal differences—perspectivism affirms an intensive difference that places human/nonhuman difference *within each existent*. Each being finds itself separated from itself, and becomes similar to others only through both the double subtractive condition common to them all and a strict complementarity that obtains between any two of them; for if every mode of existent is human for itself, none of them are human to each other such that humanity is reciprocally reflexive (jaguars are humans to other jaguars, peccaries see each other as humans, etc.), even while it can never be mutual (as soon as the jaguar is human, the peccary ceases to be one and vice versa).<sup>9</sup> Such is, in the last analysis, what “soul” means here. If everything and everyone has a soul, nothing and no one coincides with itself. If everything and everyone can be human, then nothing and no one is human in a clear and distinct fashion. This “background cosmic

humanity” renders the humanity of form or figure problematic. The “ground” constantly threatens to swallow the figure.

But if nonhumans are persons who see themselves as persons, why then do they not view all other kinds of cosmic persons as the latter view themselves? If the cosmos is saturated with humanity, why is this metaphysical ether opaque, or why is it, at best, like a two-way mirror, returning an image of the human from only one of its sides? These questions, as we anticipated apropos the Antilles incident, grant us access to the Amerindian concept of the body. They also make it possible to pass from the quasi-epistemological notion of perspectivism to a veritable ontological one—multinaturalism.

The idea of a world that comprises a multiplicity of subjective positions immediately evokes the notion of relativism. Frequent mention, both direct and indirect, is made of it in descriptions of Amerindian cosmologies. We will take, almost at random, the conclusion of Kaj Århem, an ethnographer of the Makuna. After describing the perspectival universe of this Northwest Amazonian people in minute detail, he concludes that the idea of a multiplicity of perspectives on reality entails, in the case of the Makuna, that “every perspective is equally valid and true” and “a true and correct representation of the world does not exist” (1993: 124).

This is no doubt correct, but only in a certain sense. There is a high probability that the Makuna would say, on the contrary, that where humans are concerned, there is a true and accurate representation of the world. If a human begins to see, as a vulture would, the worms infesting a cadaver as grilled fish, he will draw the following conclusion: vultures have stolen his soul, he himself is in the course of being transformed into one, and he and his kin will cease being human to each other. In short, he is gravely ill, or even dead. In other words (but this amounts to the same thing), he is en route to becoming a shaman. Every precaution, then, has to be taken to keep perspectives separate from each other on account of their incompatibility. Only shamans, who enjoy a kind of double citizenship in regard to their species (as well as to their status as living or dead), can make them communicate—and this only under special, highly controlled conditions...<sup>10</sup>

Multinaturalism does not suppose a Thing-in-Itself partially apprehended through categories of understanding proper to each species. We should not think that Indians imagine that there exists a something=X, something that humans, for example, would see as blood and jaguars as beer. What exists in multination are not such self-identical entities differently perceived but immediately relational multiplicities of the type blood/beer. There exists, if you will, only the limit between blood and beer, the border by which these two “affinal” substances communicate and diverge.<sup>11</sup> Finally, there is no X that would be blood to one species and beer to another; just a “blood/beer” that from the very start is one of the characteristic singularities or affections of the human/jaguar. The resemblance Amazonians frequently draw between humans and jaguars, which is that both of them drink “beer,” is only made so that what creates the difference between humans and jaguars can be better perceived. “One is either in one language or another—there is no more a background-language than a background-world” (Jullien 2008, 135). In effect, one is *either* in the blood or in the beer, with no one drinking a drink-in-itself. But every beer has a

background-taste of blood and vice-versa.

We are beginning to be able to understand how *Amerindian perspectivism* raises the problem of translation, and thus how to address the problem of translating perspectivism into the onto-semiotic terms of Occidental anthropology. In this way, the possession of similar souls implies the possession of analogous concepts on the part of all existents. What changes from one species of existent to another is therefore body and soul as well as the referents of these concepts: the body is the site and instrument of the referential disjunction between the “discourses” (the semiograms) of each species. Amerindian perspectivism’s problem is thus not to find the referent common to two different representations (the Venus behind the morning star and the evening star) but instead to circumvent the equivocation that consists in imagining that a jaguar saying “manioc beer” is referring to the same thing as us simply because he means the same thing as us. In other words, perspectivism presumes an epistemology that remains constant, and variable ontologies. The same “representations,” but different objects. One meaning, multiple referents. The goal of perspectivist translation—which is one of the principle tasks of shamans—is therefore not to find in human conceptual language a *synonym* (a co-referential representation) for the representations that other species employ to indicate the same thing “out there”; rather, the objective is to not lose sight of the difference concealed by the deceiving *homonyms* that connect/separate our language from those of other species. If Western anthropology is founded on the principle of interpretive charity (goodwill and tolerance as what distinguishes the thinker from the rest of humanity in its exasperation with the other), which affirms a natural synonymy between human cultures, Amerindian alter-anthropology contrarily affirms a counter-natural homonymy between living species that is at the source of all kinds of fatal equivocations. (The Amerindian principle of precaution: a world entirely composed of living foci of intentionality necessarily comes with a large dose of bad intentions.)

In the end, the concept of multinaturalism is not a simple repetition of anthropological multiculturalism. Two very different conjugations of the multiple are at stake. Multiplicity can be taken as a kind of plurality, as happens in invocations of the “the multiplicity of cultures” of beautiful cultural diversity. Or, on the contrary, multiplicity can be the multiplicity *in* culture, or culture as multiplicity. This second sense is what interests us. The notion of multiculturalism becomes useful here on account of its paradoxical character. Our macroconcept of nature fails to acknowledge veritable plurality, which spontaneously forces us to register the ontological solecism contained in the idea of “several natures” and thus the corrective displacement it imposes. Paraphrasing a formula of Deleuze’s on relativism (1993: 21), we could say that Amazonian multinaturalism affirms not so much a variety of natures as the naturalness of variation—variation *as* nature. The inversion of the Occidental formula of multiculturalism bears not simply on its constitutive terms—nature and culture—as they are mutually determined by their respective functions of unity and diversity, but also on the values accorded to term and function themselves. Anthropological readers will recognize here, of course, Lévi-Strauss’ canonical formula (1963e[1955]: 228): perspectivist multinaturalism is a transformation, through its double twist, of Occidental multiculturalism, and signals the crossing of a

historico-semiotic threshold of translatability and equivocation—a threshold, precisely, of perspectival transformation...<sup>12</sup>

## Part Three: Demonic Alliance

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### Chapter Eight: The Metaphysics of Predation

The contrariwise reading of structuralism proposed below will first require some digression into intellectual autobiography. I beg the reader's indulgence, as the story concerns my experience as an Americanist ethnologist in its bearing on the issues.

In *Totemism Today* and *The Savage Mind*, the two transitional works where the prestructuralism of *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* gives way to the post-structuralism of the *Mythologiques*,<sup>13</sup> Lévi-Strauss establishes a paradigmatic contrast between totemism and sacrifice that for me had a status that could be described as properly mythic, allowing me to more distinctly formulate what I had previously only confusedly perceived as the limits of structural anthropology. These were as much limits in the geometric sense—the perimeter of the jurisdiction of Lévi-Strauss' method—as they were mathematico-dynamic: the attractor toward which its virtualities tended. The totemism/sacrifice contrast was crucial for my reevaluation of Amazonian ethnography in light of the fieldwork I had done among the Araweté (a people, again, of the Tupi language of the Eastern Amazon), the main resource in my attempt to rethink the meaning of warrior cannibalism and shamanism, both of which are central (or rather “de-central”) cosmopolitical institutions of Tupi and other Amerindian societies.

The question of the existence of “sacrificial” rites in indigenous Amazonia raised certain problems about the historical and typological relations between the cultures of the South American lowlands and the state-based formation of the Andes and Mesoamerica, for which sacrifice is a key theologico-political *dispositif*: Behind this problem, in turn, lay an even larger one concerning the emergence of the state in primitive societies. Amazonianists interested in the question tended to focus on shamanism, since the region appeared to yield no counter-examples to the literature's portrait of the shaman as a proto-sacerdotal delegate of transcendence. But the Americanist consensus was that the classic, French sociological definition taken from Hubert and Mauss (1964) (which remained the chief reference in the discipline) failed to satisfactorily account for the South American shamanic complex.

Yet the link between Araweté ethnography and the problem of sacrifice was directly suggested to me not by their shamanic practices but by their eschatology. Araweté cosmology reserves a special place of honor for posthumous cannibalism. The celestial divinities, known as the Mai, devour the souls of the dead upon their arrival in the heavens, in a prelude to the metamorphosis of the latter into immortal beings like those eating them. I argued in my monograph on the Araweté that this mystico-funerary cannibalism is a structural transformation of the bellico-sociological cannibalism of another group, the Tupinambá,

who inhabited the Brazilian coast in the 17th century, and who were the most important tribe speaking the Tupi language, which prevailed at the time all the way from Rio de Janeiro to Bahia.

It will be necessary to spell out the basic features of Tupinambá cannibalism, which was a very elaborate system for the capture, execution, and ceremonial consumption of their enemies. Captives of war, who frequently shared both the language and the customs of their captors, lived for long periods among the latter before being subjected to solemn, formal execution in the village center. During that time, they were well treated, living in freedom under the watch of their captors while the long preparations for the execution ritual were being undertaken. In fact, the captor's custom was to give the victims women from their group as spouses, thereby transforming them into brothers-in-law—the same term, *tojavar*, meant in ancient Tupi both “brother-in-law” and “enemy,” its literal sense having been “opponent”—which shows us how Amerindian predation is implicated, as Lévi-Strauss observed, in the problem of affinity. The ritual cycle culminated in the event of the captive's killing, an act that held an initiatic value for the executioner-officiant (who thereby received a new name, commemorative scarifications, the right to marry and have children, access to paradise, etc.) and was followed by the ingestion of his body by those in attendance—guests from neighboring villages as much as their hosts—with the sole exception of the officiant. Not only would he not eat the captive, but afterward he would also enter into a funerary confinement, a period of mourning. He entered, in other words, into a process of identification with this “opponent” whose life he had just taken.

This Tupinambán anthropophagy was often interpreted as a form of human sacrifice, whether figuratively, per the authors of the first colonial chronicles, or conceptually, as Forestan Fernades, one of the founding fathers of Brazilian sociology, did in applying Hubert and Mauss' schema to the 16th century materials. To do this, however, Fernandes had to postulate a detail that nowhere appeared in his sources: a supernatural entity supposed to be the recipient of the sacrifice. According to him, the sacrifice was intended for the spirits of the dead of the group, who were avenged and honored by the captive's execution and ingestion.

In my study on the Araweté, I contested the idea that supernatural entities were somehow involved in Tupi cannibalism, and that their propitiation had been the reason for the rite. Although it is true that the Araweté case (but it alone) sees certain “supernatural entities” occupying the active pole in the cannibal relation, reading their eschatology through the Tupinambá sociology showed this to be of little importance. My argument was that the Araweté *Mai* /gods held the place otherwise occupied by the group functioning as the subject in the Tupinambá rite—the group of the killer and his allies, those ingesting the captive—while the position of the object of the sacrifice, the captive in the Tupinambá ritual, was held by the Araweté dead. The living Araweté, finally, occupied the position of the “cosubjects” that was held in the Tupinambá case by the enemy group from which the victim had been taken.<sup>14</sup> In short, the transformation imposed on divine Araweté cannibalism by Tupinambá human cannibalism bore not on the symbolic content or social function of the former practice but instead consisted in a pragmatic sliding, a twist or translation of

perspective that affected the values and functions of subject and object, means and ends, and self and other.

From there, I concluded that the notion of a coordinated change of perspectives was much more than a description of the relation between the Araweté and Tupinambá versions of the cannibal motif. It manifests a property of Tupi cannibalism itself qua actantial schema, which I defined as a process for the transmutation of perspectives whereby the “I” is determined as other through the act of incorporating this other, who in turn becomes an “I”... but only ever *in* the other—literally, that is, *through* the other. Such a definition seemed to resolve a simple but quite insistent question: what was really eaten in this enemy? The answer could not be his matter or substance, since this was a ritual form of cannibalism where the consumption of (a quantity of) the victim’s flesh was effectively insignificant; the extant sources, moreover, only rarely offer testimony that a physical or metaphysical virtue was attributed to the victim’s body and are, at any rate, far from conclusive. The “thing” eaten, then, could not be a “thing” if it were at the same time—and this is essential—a body. This body, nevertheless, was a sign with a purely positional value. What was eaten was the enemy’s relation to those who consumed him; in other words, *his condition as enemy*. In other words, what was assimilated from the victim was the signs of his alterity, the aim being to reach his alterity as point of view on the Self. Cannibalism and the peculiar form of war with which it is bound up involve a paradoxical movement of reciprocal self-determination through the point of view of the enemy.

I was obviously proposing with this thesis a counter-interpretation of certain classic precepts of the discipline. If the goal of multiculturalist European anthropology was to describe human life as it is experienced from the indigenous point of view, indigenous multinaturalist anthropophagy presumed as a vital condition of its self-description the “semiophysical” prehension—taking life through eating—of the point of view of the enemy. Anthropophagy as anthropology.<sup>15</sup>

All this first dawned on me while pondering Araweté war songs, where the warrior, through a complex, anaphoric use of deixis, speaks of himself from the point of view of his slain enemy: the victim, who is in both senses the subject of the song, speaks of the Araweté he has killed, and speaks of his own killer—the one who “speaks” by singing the words of his deceased enemy—as a cannibal enemy (although among the Araweté, it is words alone that one eats). *Through* his enemy, that is, the Araweté doing the killing sees himself *as* the enemy. He apprehends himself as a subject at the moment that he sees himself through the gaze of his victim, or, to put it differently, when he declares his singularity to himself through the voice of the latter. Perspectivism.

Tupi warrior semiophagy was not at all a marginal development in Amerindian territories. The notion that there exists an indigenous philosophy of cannibalism that is also a political philosophy was extensively outlined by Clastres in his theorization of war (Clastres 2010; see Clastres and Sebag, 1963; Clastres, 1968 and 1972 for the theory’s inception). Yet its ethnographic generality and complexity were only starting to be recognized at the time I was first working on the Tupi materials. The work of several Amazonianist colleagues was suggesting that an economy of predatory alterity might be something like the basal metabolism of Amazonian sociality: the idea, in brief, was that the interior-

ity of the social body is integrally constituted through the capture of symbolic resources—names and souls, persons and trophies, words and memories—from the exterior. By taking for its principle this movement of the incorporation of the enemy's attributes, the Amerindian socius had to “define” itself with these same attributes. We can see that this was at work in the great Tupinambá ritual event of the putting to death of the captive, where the place of honor was reserved for the twin figures of the killer and his victim, who reflect each other and reverberate to infinity. These, in the end, are the essentials of the “metaphysics of predation” Lévi-Strauss spoke of: primitive society is a society lacking an interior that only comes to be “itself” *outside itself*: Its immanence coincides with its transcendence.

So it was less through shamanism than war and cannibalism that I first encountered the problem of sacrifice. Yet if the Maussian definition felt inappropriate—neither the sacred nor a recipient were present—the notion Lévi-Strauss had forwarded in his discussion of totemism seemed to cast the Tupi anthropology in a new light.

The contrast Lévi-Strauss draws between totemism and sacrifice is first presented in the form of the orthogonal opposition between the Ojibwa *totem* and *mandido* systems discussed in the initial chapters of *Totemism Today* (L.-S. 1963a: 22-23). This opposition is then generalized, reworked (L.-S. 1966: 225), and systematized in the seventh chapter of *The Savage Mind* along the following lines:

Totemism postulates the existence of a homology between two parallel series—natural species and social groups—and does so by establishing a formal, reversible correlation between them qua two systems of globally isomorphic differences.

1. Sacrifice postulates the existence of a single, at once continuous and directional series through which a real, irreversible mediation between two opposed, nonhomologous terms (humans and divinities) is carried out; the contiguity between the series is established through identification or successive analogical approximations.
2. Totemism is metaphoric, and sacrifice metonymic, the first being “an interpretive system of references,” and the second “a technical system of operations.” One belongs to language, and the other to speech.

From this definition it can be deduced that sacrifice actualizes processes that are, at first glance, quite different from the proportional equivalences at work in both totemism and the other “systems of transformation” taken up in *The Savage Mind*. The logical transformations of totemism are established between terms whose reciprocal positions are modified by permutations, inversions, chiasms, and other combinatory, extensive redistributions—totemism is a *topos* for discontinuity. Sacrificial transformations, on the other hand, activate intensive relations that modify the nature of the terms themselves; something passes between them. Transformation is here less a permutation than a *transduction*, in Gilbert Simondon's sense, requiring an energetics of the continuous. If the



objective of totemism is to set up a resemblance between two series of given differences discrete unto themselves, the goal of sacrifice is to induce a zone or moment of indiscernibility between two poles presumed to be self-identical, which thus approaches difference entirely differently (from the inside rather than the outside, so to speak). Resorting to a mathematical analogy, we could say that the model for totemic structural transformations could be said to be combinatory analysis, while the instrument for exploring what Lévi-Strauss dubbed the “kingdom of continuity” of sacrifice’s intensive metamorphoses directs us, instead, to differential calculus. Imagine the death of the victim as the path of a tangent, the best approximation of the curve of divinity . . .

So while Lévi-Strauss defines totemism as a system of forms, his conception of sacrifice suggests a system of forces. A veritable fluid mechanics, in fact: he characterizes sacrifice in terms of a schema of communicating vases, referring, for example, to a “continuous solution” between “reservoirs,” a “deficit of contiguity” refilled “automatically,” and other, similar formulas. All of which irresistibly evokes the key idea that a *difference of potential* would be the principle of sacrifice.

◇ The same hydraulic-energetic language reappears in the analysis, in the “Finale” of *The Naked Man*, of laughter and aesthetic emotion as a discharge of accumulated symbolic energy. Lévi-Strauss had further recourse to it in his celebrated reference to “hot,” historical societies that struggle against entropy by using the difference of potential contained in class inequalities or the exploitation of other peoples to engender becoming and energy (L.-S. and Charbonnier, 1969: 38-42). The notion of difference of potential plays a decisive role, however little remarked on, in the construction of the concept of mana in *The Outline of a General Theory of Magic*. Hubert and Mauss argue that mana is the idea of the differential value of things and beings (“in magic it is always a matter of the respective values recognized by a society”) and thus of their hierarchical arrangement, and that this hierarchical difference of value (Mauss with Nietzsche!) is coherent with the translation of *mana*, *orenda*, etc. by Hewitt as “magical potential.” “What we call,” they conclude, “the relative position or respective value of things could also be called a difference in potential, since it is due to such differences that they are able to affect one another. [...] [T]he idea of *mana* is none other than the idea of these relative values and the idea of these differences in potential. Here we come face to face with the whole idea on which magic is founded, in fact with magic itself” (Mauss 2001: 148-49). Lévi-Strauss’ interpretation of *mana* in terms of a lack of adequation between signifier and signified (L.-S. 1987a: 62), then, is a compromise between an explanation that could be called totemic, insofar as it appeals to a model of differences between a signifying and signified series, and a sacrificial account that registers a perpetual disadjustment (the absence of a *péréquation*) between the two series, a disequilibrium that very much resembles Hubert and Mauss’ “difference of potential.”

In sum, two different images of difference—one extensive, the other intensive (form and force). Images that are different enough to be “incompatible,” suggests the author (L.-S. 1966: 223), a judgment I will take the liberty of interpreting as an indication that they are *complementary* in the sense given the term by Niels Bohr, whom Lévi-Strauss frequently cited.<sup>16</sup> But in this case, totemism and sacrifice designate not two distinct systems but rather two necessary yet mutually exclusive descriptions of the same phenomenon: sense or semiosis as the articulation of heterogeneous series.

Yet this complementarity, at least where Lévi-Strauss is concerned, is clearly asymmetrical. In his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, he affirms that

structural anthropology should, in contrast with history, “adopt a *transformational* rather than a *fluxional* method” (L.-S. 1978c: 18) and thereby suggests an algebra of groups rather than a differential dynamic. It should be recalled that “method of fluxions” was the name Newton gave to what subsequently came to be known as differential calculus. And in fact everything happened as if structural method in anthropology—perhaps the interpretive habits of this method would be better—had been conceived in order to account for form rather than force, the combinatory and the corpuscular over the differential and the wave-like, and language and categorization to the detriment of speech and action.<sup>17</sup> As a consequence, those aspects that appeared resistant to structural analysis were habitually treated by Lévi-Strauss as minor semiotic (or even ontological) modes—the invocation of a “minor anthropology” at the outset of the present work was no coincidence—either because they would have attested to the limits of the thinkable, or foregrounded the asignificant, or else expressed certain illusory powers. Thus, as we know, sacrifice is deemed imaginary and false, and totemism as objective and true (L.-S. 1978a: 256-57), a judgment repeated and generalized when myth is counter-posed to ritual at the close of *The Naked Man* (L.-S. 1981: 667-75)—a judgment, I am tempted to say, that teaches us more about the cosmology of Lévi-Strauss than that of the peoples he so effectively studied.<sup>18</sup>

Totemism today finds itself dissolved into the general classificatory activity of the savage mind,<sup>19</sup> with sacrifice awaiting a comparable constructive dissolution. The story of how totemism was unmade by Lévi-Strauss is well known: it ceased to be an institution to become a method of classification and system of signification referring to natural and contingent series. Would it be possible to rethink sacrifice along similar lines? Would it be possible, in short, to see the divinities functioning as the terms of the sacrificial relation as being as contingent as the natural species of totemism? What would a generic schema of sacrifice resemble if its typical institutional crystallizations are only one of its particular cases? Or, to formulate the problem in language more sacrificial than totemic, what would a field of dynamic virtualities be if sacrifice was just a singular actualization of it? What forces are mobilized by sacrifice?

Whatever judgments could be made here about Lévi-Strauss aside, the contrasts he established between metaphoric discontinuity and metonymic continuity, positional quantity and vectorial quality, and paradigmatic reference and syntagmatic operation were all extremely clarifying in that they led me to inscribe Tupi ritual cannibalism in the column (the paradigm!) of sacrifice. Being a veritable anti-totemic operator, cannibalism realizes a transformation that is potentially reciprocal—the imperative of vengeance that gives it meaning in Tupinambá society—but really irreversible in relation to the terms it connects through these acts of supreme contiguity and “discontiguity” (the violent physical contact of execution, the decapitation and consumption of the body of the victim) which involve a movement of indefiniteness and the creation of a zone of indiscernibility between killers and victims, eater and eaten. There is no need to postulate the existence of supernatural entities in order to account for the fact that one is in the presence of sacrifice. In the tripolar interpretation of Tupinambá ritual developed in my ethnography on the Araweté, the actants are the consuming group, the dual person of the executioner/victim, and the en-

emy group. The “death” is only a vicarious function alternately and successively assumed by these three poles of the ritual; but it is nonetheless what drives the forces circulating in the process.

All that is well and good. But does the concept of “sacrifice,” in this new Lévi-Straussian sense, truly account for what occurs in ritual cannibalism? There is nothing imaginary or even false in Tupi cannibalism. Not even vengeance, which is rigorously impossible, would be imaginary, as it was above all a schematism of social *poiesis* or mechanism for the ritual production of collective temporality (the interminable cycle of vengeance) through the installation of a perpetual disequilibrium between enemy groups.<sup>20</sup> And in any case, if it is always necessary to imagine an enemy—to construct the other as such—the objective is to *really* eat it ... in order to construct the Self as other. Something indeed does not pass through the concept of sacrifice, even if more things do than through totemism.

## Chapter Nine: Transversal Shamanism

We have circled back to shamanism, which was dealt with above in our summary of perspectivist theory. On account of their capacity to see other species as the humans that these species see themselves as, Amazonian shamans play the role of cosmopolitical diplomats in an arena where diverse socionatural interests are forced to confront each other. In this sense, the function of the shaman is not entirely different from that of a warrior. Both are “commuters” or conductors of perspective, the first operating in a zone of interspecificity and the second in an interhuman or intersocietal one.<sup>21</sup> These zones are in a relation more of intensive superposition than of horizontal adjacency or vertical encompassment. Amazonian shamanism, as is often remarked, is the continuation of war by other means. This has nothing to do, however, with violence as such<sup>22</sup> but with communication, a transversal communication between incommunicables, a dangerous, delicate comparison between perspectives in which the position of the human is in constant dispute. And what, exactly, does that human position come down to? That is the question raised when an individual finds itself face to face with allogenic bundles of affections and agentivity, such as an animal or unknown being in the forest, a parent long absent from one’s village, or a deceased person in a dream. The universal humanity of beings—the “cosmic background humanity” that makes every species of being a reflexive genre of humanity—is subject to a principle of complementarity, given that it is defined by the fact that two different species that are each necessarily human in their own eyes can never simultaneously be so in the other’s.

It would be equally correct to say that war is the continuation of shamanism by other means: in Amazonia, shamanism is as violent as war is supernatural. Both retain a link with hunting as the model of perspectival agonism, configuring a transhuman ethogram that manifests an entirely metaphysical attraction to danger (Rodgers 2002) and that remains marked by the profound conviction that every vital activity is a form of predatory expansion.<sup>23</sup>

If cast in terms of the opposition Lévi-Strauss draws between totemism and sacrifice, shamanism would certainly end up on the side of the latter. Shamanic activity certainly consists, it is true, in establishing correlations and/or transla-

tions between the respective worlds of each natural species, and this through finding active homologies or equivalences between the perspectives in confrontation (Carneiro da Cunha 1998). But the shaman himself is nevertheless a real relater, not a formal correlater: he must always move from one point of view to another, transform into an animal in order to transform that animal into a human (and vice versa). The shaman utilizes—"substantiates" and incarnates, establishes a rapport (a relation) and report [*rapporte*] (a narration) between—the differences of potential inherent in the divergences of perspective that constitute the cosmos: his power as much as its limits derive from these differences.

Here at last is where the Maussian theory of sacrifice begins to yield some returns. We can imagine the sacrificial schema constituting a complete or saturated mediating structure that joins the polarity between the agent of the sacrifice (who offers the sacrifice and reaps its benefits) and the recipient by means of the double intermediation of the sacrificer (the officiant/executioner) and the victim. The two Amazonian "sacrificial" figures can be imagined as degenerations of the Maussian schema in the same sense that Lévi-Strauss said restricted exchange is a mathematically degenerated case of general exchange.

A distinctive characteristic of Amazonian shamanism is that the shaman is *simultaneously* the officiant and the vehicle of sacrifice. It is in him that the "deficit of contiguity" is realized—the void created by the separation of body and soul, the subtractive externalization of the parts of the person of the shaman—which can release a beneficial semiotic flux passing between humans and nonhumans. And it is the shaman himself that passes to the other side of the mirror; he does not send delegates or representatives in the form of victims but is himself the victim: he is "condemned" (so to speak) to death, as in the case of the Araweté shaman, whose people's cannibal divinities hail him, during his celestial voyages, as "our future sustenance"—the same expression employed five centuries prior by the Tupinambá to mock their captives.<sup>24</sup> The threshold to another sociocosmic regime is crossed when the shaman switches to sacrificing the other—when he becomes, for example, an executioner of human victims or an administrator of the sacrifices of the powerful, someone who sanctions movements that he alone can supervise. This is where the shadow of the priest looms behind the shaman.

The opposition should of course not be taken as absolute. "Amazonian shamanism" is a term that contains an important difference, identified by Hugh-Jones (1996), between "horizontal" and "vertical" shamanism. The contrast is particularly salient apropos the Bororo of central Brazil or the Tukano and the Arawak of Rio Negro, who all distinguish between two categories of mystical mediators. Those shamans that Hugh-Jones classes as horizontal are specialists whose powers derive from their inspiration and charisma, and whose actions, which are directed outside the socius, do not preclude aggression and moral ambiguity; their chief interlocutors are animal spirits, who are perhaps the most frequent cause of illness in indigenous Amazonia (illness is frequently conceived as a case of cannibal vengeance on the part of animals who have been consumed). As for the vertical shamans, these comprise the master-chanters and ceremonial specialists, the peaceful guardians of an esoteric knowledge indispensable if reproduction and internal group relations (birth, initiation, naming,

funerals, etc.) are to come off properly.

The shaman I term the “sacrificer-victim” is the horizontal kind; this particular specialist, as Hugh-Jones observes, is typical of those Amazonian societies having an egalitarian, bellicose ethos. The vertical shaman, on the other hand, is present only in hierarchical, pacific societies, and verges on being a priest-figure. Yet it should be noted that nowhere is there to be found an Amazonian society in which vertical shamans alone preside; wherever only one kind of shaman can be perceived, the tendency is for it to take on the functions of the two types of the Bororo and Tukano but with the attributes and responsibilities of the horizontal clearly predominating.

Hugh-Jones acknowledges the contrast to be a highly simplified, schematic ideal type. But by no means does that undermine its analytic relevance, which is, from where I stand, entirely justified by the ethnography. The division of cosmopolitical mediational labor between the two types has an important comparative dimension when placed in the series of mediatory divisions enumerated by Lévi-Strauss in “The Structural Study of Myth”: “messiah > dioscuro > trickster > bisexual being > sibling pair > married couple > grandmother-grandchild > four-term group > triad” (L.-S. 1963[1955]: 226). For this reason, the asymmetric duality of shamans points to a characteristic property of Amerindian cosmological structures—the “dualism in perpetual disequilibrium” treated in *The Story of Lynx*. But before opening that box, it should be noted that messianism, the first term of the series, is effectively a central component of the problem Hugh-Jones elaborates apropos the distinction between the two shamans. The numerous millenarian movements that have emerged in the Northwest Amazon from the mid-19th century on were all led, Hugh-Jones stresses, by shaman-prophets fitting the horizontal profile. What this suggests is that the distinction has less to do with two types of specialists, the shaman *stricto sensu* (or shaman-warrior) and the shaman priest, than two possible trajectories of the shamanic function: sacerdotal transformation and prophetic transformation. Prophetism would result, in that event, from the historical warming of shamanism, and the emergence of the sacerdotal function so defined from its political cooling—its subsumption by social power.

Another way of formulating this hypothesis would be to say that sacerdotal transformation—its differentiation of a baseline shamanism—is bound up with the constitution of social interiority qua the appearance of values of ancestrality, which express diachronic continuity between the living and the dead, and of political hierarchy, which establish and consecrate synchronic discontinuities between the living. In effect, if the horizontal shaman’s archetypal Other is theriomorphic, the Other of vertical shamanism tends to assume the anthropomorphic traits of the ancestor.

Horizontal Amerindian shamanism is situated in a cosmological economy where the difference between living and dead humans is of less importance than the resemblance shared by dead humans and living nonhumans. The world of the dead counts no animals among its inhabitants, as Conklin (2001) remarked of the Western Amazonian Wari’s cosmology, and this is because the dead are themselves animals—animals in their game version—having been transformed into the quintessential meat, wild boars, and thus food. Other people turn at death into jaguars, who constitute the other pole of animality, a hunter- or

cannibal-version.<sup>25</sup> Just as animals were human in the beginning, so humans will be animals when they meet their end such that the eschatology of (dis-)individuation rejoins the mythology of prespeciation. The ghosts of the dead are, in the realm of ontogenesis, like animals are in the order of phylogenesis. (“In the beginning, all animals were humans....”) No surprise, then, that the dead, being images defined by their disjunctive relation to the human body, are attracted to the bodies of animals. This is why death in Amazonia involves being transformed into an animal: if the souls of animals are conceived as possessing a primordial human corporeal form, then it is logical that human souls would be conceived as having the posthumous form of a primordial animal, or as entering a body that will eventually be killed and eaten by the living.

The emergence of vertical shamanism can thus be linked to the separation of the dead and animals into two distinct positions of alterity. At a certain moment (precisely when it happens, I must admit, eludes me), dead humans begin to be seen more as humans than as dead, and this opens the symmetric possibility of a more realized “objectification” of nonhumans. In sum, the separation of humans from nonhumans, the projection outward of a generic figure of animality qua the Other of humanity, is a function of this prior separation of the dead from animals, which accompanies the emergence of a generic figure of humanity objectified in the form of the ancestor. The basic eschatological fact that the dead become animals, then, simultaneously humanized animals and altered the dead. Once the split between the dead and animals was achieved, the former remained humans (or even became superhuman) and the latter slowly ceased to be, drifting into sub- or anti-humanity.

To summarize several aspects of Hugh-Jones’ dichotomy, we could say that horizontal shamanism is exopractical while vertical shamanism is endopractical. Let me suggest that in indigenous Amazonia, exopraxis is logically, chronologically, and cosmologically anterior to endopraxis and that it furthermore always remains operational as a residue blocking the constitution of chiefdoms or states having a realized metaphysical interiority (and this applies even to more hierarchical formations, such as those of the Northwest Amazon). The dead never cease to be partially animal, since every dead individual, to the extent that it has a body, engenders a ghost; and to that extent, while some are born aristocrats, no one immediately dies an ancestor; if we are in the precosmological, precorporeal plane of myth and not the spacetime of the inside, then there are no pure ancestors, for humans and animals communicate directly among themselves there. On the other hand, animals, plants, and other Amazonian categories of beings never cease to be completely human; their post-mythic transformation into animals, etc., counter-effectuates an original humanity, which is the foundation of the access to shamanic logopraxis enjoyed by their actual representatives. All of the dead continue to be somewhat beast, and every beast continues to be somewhat human. Humanity remains immanent by largely reabsorbing the pockets of transcendence that flicker on and off in the dense, teeming forest that is the Amazonian socius.

The horizontal shaman’s omnipresence in the region indicates that it is impossible for political power and cosmopolitical force to coincide, which makes the elaboration of a classical sacrificial system quite difficult. The institution of sacrifice by the so-called “high cultures” of the Andes and Mesoamerica would

thus involve a sort of capture of shamanism by the State that puts an end to the former's cosmological *bricolage* while at the same time initiating the theological engineering of the priest.<sup>26</sup>

The distinction between horizontal and vertical shamanism has sometimes been coupled with that between transcendence and immanence (Pedersen 2001; Holbraad and Willerslev 2007). As with the perspectivism that makes up its backdrop, Amazonian shamanism is effectively a practice of immanence. However, this does not at all imply that the humans and extrahumans shamanism connects are "equal in status," an inference sometimes made when immanence is confused with equality (as often happens in the Amazonianist literature). On the contrary, there is instead an absence of a fixed point of view between beings. Amazonian perspectivism should not be interpreted as a hierarchical scale of perspectives that progressively include each other along a "chain of ontological dignity"<sup>27</sup> and even less as some kind of "point of view of everything." Shamanism's *raison d'être* is the differences of transformative potential between existents, but no point of view contains another in a unilateral way. Every point of view is "total," and no point of view knows its like or equivalent. Horizontal shamanism is therefore not truly horizontal but *transversal*. The relation between points of view (the relation that is a point of view qua multiplicity) is of the order of a disjunctive synthesis or immanent exclusion, and not of a transcendent inclusion. In sum, the perspectivist system is in perpetual disequilibrium, to once again invoke Lévi-Strauss' characterization of Amerindian cosmologies.

If all this is indeed the case, then the interpretation of (horizontal) Amazonian shamanism as a structural reduction of the Maussian schema proves, in the end, inadequate. Shamanism escapes the presumedly exhaustive division between totemic logic and sacrificial practice. The shaman is not a larval, inchoate priest; shamanism is a low-impact prophetism instead of a quasi-sacerdotal religion. Shamanic operations, if we do not allow them to be reduced to the symbolic play of totemic classifications, can no longer be said to endeavor to produce the fusional continuum sought in the imaginary interseriality of sacrifice. Exemplars of a third form of relation, they dramatize the communication that occurs between the heterogeneous terms constituting preindividual, intensive multiplicities: the blood/beer, to return to our example, implied in every becoming-jaguar.

Through this—by way of becoming—we find ourselves back with Deleuze and Guattari. And it is not at all by chance that we meet them again in *A Thousand Plateaus*, at the very point in the book where they propose a reinterpretation of the opposition between totemism and sacrifice.

## **Chapter Ten: Production Is Not Everything: Becomings**

... The notion of becoming was central to Deleuze beginning with his studies on Bergson and Nietzsche, and occupies a well-known role in *The Logic of Sense*. But beginning with the co-authored essay on Kafka (D. G. 1986), it acquired a singular conceptual inflection and intensity that only reached a truly evasive speed in one of the plateaus, "1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal,

Becoming-Imperceptible.” Becoming is that which literally evades, flees, and escapes *mimesis*, whether imitative or reproductive (“Mimicry is a very bad concept”),<sup>28</sup> as much as *memesis*, both mnemonic and historical. Becoming is amnesic, prehistorical, aniconic, and sterile: it is difference in practice.

Chapter 10 of *A Thousand Plateaus* gets underway with a treatment of the opposition Lévi-Strauss makes between serial-sacrificial and totemic-structural logic: the imaginary identification between human and animal, on the one hand, and the symbolic correlation of social and natural differences on the other. Between the two analogical models of series and structure, Deleuze and Guattari introduce the Bergsonian motif of becoming, a type of relation irreducible to serial resemblance as much as to structural correspondence. The concept of becoming describes a relation whose apprehension is, at first glance, difficult for the analytic framework of structuralism, where relations function as molar logical objects, essentially apprehended in extension (oppositions, contradictions, mediations). Becoming is a real relation, molecular and intensive, that operates on another register than that of the still-too morphological relationality of structuralism. The disjunctive synthesis of becoming is, according to the rules of the combinatory play of formal structures, not possible; it operates in areas far from equilibrium and that are inhabited by real multiplicities (DeLanda 2002: 75). “Becoming and multiplicity are the same thing...”<sup>29</sup>

If serial resemblances are imaginary and structural correlations symbolic, becomings are real. Neither metaphor nor metamorphosis, a becoming is a movement that deterritorializes the two terms of the relation it creates, by extracting them from the relations defining them in order to link them via a new “partial connection.” In this sense, the verb to become designates neither a predicative operation nor a transitive action: being implicated in a becoming-jaguar is not the same thing as becoming a jaguar. The “totemic” jaguar, whereby a man is “sacrificially” transformed, is imaginary, but the transformation itself is real. It is the becoming itself that is feline; in a becoming-jaguar, the “jaguar” is an immanent aspect of the action and not its transcendent object, for becoming is an intransitive verb.<sup>30</sup> From the moment a human becomes jaguar, the jaguar is no longer there (which is why we appealed to the formula “human/jaguar” above to designate that specific disjunctive multiplicity of becoming). As the authors say, while citing, significantly, certain Amerindian myths:

Lévi-Strauss is always encountering these rapid acts by which a human becomes animal at the same time as the animal becomes... (“Becomes what? Human, or something else?”). (D. G. 1987: 237)

Becoming, they continue, is a verb having a consistency unto itself; it is not to imitate, to appear, to be, or to correspond. And—surprise—becoming “is not producing, producing a filiation or producing through filiation” (D. G. 1987: 292). Neither production nor filiation. As Dorothy would have said to Toto: “I don’t think we’re in *Anti-Oedipus* any more.”

“Intensive thinking in general is about production,” Manuel DeLanda affirms (2003). Well, perhaps things are not as “in general” as that.... The concept of becoming effectively plays the same axial cosmological role in *A Thousand Plateaus* as production does in *Anti-Oedipus*. Not because “everything is becoming”—that



would be a solecism—nor because the book does not contain other interesting ideas, but because the consummate anti-representative *dispositif* of *A Thousand Plateaus*, the one that blocks the work of representation, is the concept of becoming—just as production was *Anti-Oedipus*' anti-representative *dispositif*: Production and becoming are two distinct movements. Certainly, both bear on nature, and both are intensive and prerepresentational; in a certain sense, they are two names for the same movement: becoming is the process of desire, desire is production of the real, becoming and multiplicity are one and the same thing, becoming is a rhizome, and the rhizome is a process of unconscious production. But in another sense, they are definitely not the same movement: the way between production and becoming, as we saw Zourabichvili put it, “is not the same in both directions.” Production is a process that realizes the identity of the human and nature and that reveals nature to be a process of production (“the human essence of nature and the natural essence of man become one within nature in the form of production or industry” [D. G. 1983: 4]), while becoming, on the contrary, is a “counter-natural” participation of the human and nature; it is an instantaneous movement of capture, symbiosis, and transversal connection between heterogeneities (D. G. 1987: 240). “That is the only way Nature operates—against itself. This is a far cry from filiative production or hereditary reproduction” (D. G. 1987: 242). Becoming is the other side of the mirror of production: the inverse of an identity. An identity “with the opponent.” or opposite, to recall the Tupinambá word for enemy.

“The Universe does not function by filiation” (D. G. 1987: 242); read: the universe in all its states, the intensive-virtual as much as the extensive-actual. But if it does not work through *filiation*, and not anything whatsoever, then we could be tempted to believe it possible that it functions by *alliance*. And in effect, we can read in the first plateau that “the tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance” (D. G. 1987: 25). And now, we also find that

becoming is not an evolution, at least not an evolution by descent and filiation. Becoming produces nothing by filiation; all filiation is imaginary. Becoming is always of a different order than filiation. It concerns alliance. (D. G. 1987: 238)

Very well then. What exactly happened between *Anti-Oedipus*' affirmation of the intensive, ambiguous, and nocturnal filiation of the Dogon myth and *A Thousand Plateaus*' refusal to attribute any positive role to the same relational mode? How could an affiliation that was *intensive* become *imaginary*?

The change, I think, reflects a major shift of focus from an intraspecific to an interspecific horizon: from a human economy of desire—a world-historical desire, no doubt, that was racial and sociopolitical and not familial, personal, and Oedipal, but a *human* desire all the same—to an economy of trans-specific affects ignorant of the natural order of species and their limiting synthesis, connecting us, through inclusive disjunction, to the plane of immanence. From the perspective of the desiring economy of *Anti-Oedipus*, extensive alliance limits intensive, molecular filiation by actualizing it in the molar form of a filiation group; but from the perspective of the cosmic economy of affect—of desire as *inhuman force*—it is now filiation that limits, through its imaginary identifications, an alliance between heterogeneous beings that is as real as it is counter-natural: “If evolution includes any veritable becomings, it is in the

domain of symbioses that bring into play beings of totally different scales and kingdoms, with no possible filiation” (D. G. 1987: 238).

What follows is the favored example of the wasp and the orchid, an assemblage [*agencement*] “from which no wasp-orchid can ever descend”—and, without which, they add, no known wasp or orchid could descend, for the natural filiation at the heart of each species depends on this counter-natural alliance between the two species.

The conceptual deterritorialization of sexuality set in motion in *Anti-Oedipus* is achieved here: the binary organization of sexes, including bisexuality (cf. “the atom of gender” on page 135) gives way to “n sexes,” which in turn connects with “n species” on the molecular plane: “*Sexuality proceeds by way of the becoming-woman of the man and the becoming-animal of the human: an emission of particles*” (D. G. 1987: 278-79). And if every animal implicated in a becoming-animal is a multiplicity (“What we are saying is that every animal is fundamentally a band, a pack” [D. G. 1987: 239]), it is because it defines a multiple, lateral, heterogenetic, extrafilial, and extrareproductive sociality that pulls human sociality into a universal demonic metonymy:

We oppose epidemic to filiation, contagion to heredity, peopling by contagion to sexual reproduction, sexual production. [...] Unnatural participations or nuptials are the true Nature spanning the kingdoms of nature. (D. G. 1987: 241)

Alliance, perhaps ... but not every alliance. As we have seen, the first volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* postulates two filiations: an intensive and germinal one, and another that is extensive and somatic, with the latter being counterposed to alliance, the extensive principle that plays the role of the “repressing representation” of the representative of desire or germinal impulse. Now in *A Thousand Plateaus*, we find two alliances: the one dissected in *Anti-Oedipus*, which is internal to the socius and even to the masculine gender (primary collective homosexuality), and another, immanent to becoming, that is as irreducible to production and imaginary metamorphosis (mythic genealogy, animal filiation) as to exchange and symbolic classification (exogamic alliance, totemism).

Every becoming is an alliance. Which does not mean, once again, that every alliance is a becoming. There is extensive, cultural, and sociopolitical alliance, and intensive, counter-natural, and cosmopolitical alliance. If the first distinguishes filiations, the second confuses species or, better yet, counter-effectuates by implicative synthesis the continuous differences that are actualized in the other direction (the way is not the same ...) through the limiting synthesis of discontinuous speciation. When a shaman activates a becoming-jaguar, he neither “produces” a jaguar nor “affiliates” with a reproductive line of jaguars: he *adopts* and *coopts* a jaguar—establishes a feline alliance:

Rather, a zone of indistinction, of indiscernibility, or of ambiguity seems to be established between two terms, as if they had reached the point immediately preceding their respective differentiation: not a similitude, but a slippage, an extreme proximity, and absolute contiguity; not a natural filiation, but an unnatural alliance. (D. 1997: 78)

We can observe the way this definition of becoming (for that is exactly what is at stake here) transversally sets up a paradigmatic dualism: {filiation, metonymic continuity, serial resemblance} vs. {alliance, discontinuity, oppositional difference}. The “absolute contiguity” of the tangential-differential kind established by counter-natural alliance is certainly different from the absolute, contrastive “discontiguity” between filiative lineages that is established by symbolico-cultural alliance (exogamy). But at the same time, needless to say, it does not come down to an imaginary identification or nondifferentiation between “two terms.” It is not a matter of opposing, as classical structuralism did, natural filiation and cultural alliance. The counter-naturality of intensive alliance is equally counter-cultural or counter-social.<sup>31</sup> What we are discussing is an included third, or another relation—a “new alliance”:

“Alliance” is a good and a bad word. Every word is good if it can be used to cross the boundary between people and things. So alliance is a good word if you use it for a microbe. Force is a good word if you use it for a human. (Latour 1993: 263)

There is no need to leave Africanist territory to find a first example of such a transborder alliance, this affinity (affine=*ad-finis*) between humans and non-humans. In a section of the second plateau entitled “Memories of a Sorcerer II,” Deleuze and Guattari evoke animal-men, such as the “sacred deflowerers,” studied by Pierre Gordon, or the hyena-men of certain Sudanese traditions that G. Calame-Griaule described. Both of them stimulated a commentary that I take as decisive:

[T]he hyena-man lives on the fringes of the village, or between two villages, and can keep a lookout in both directions. A hero, or even two heroes with a fiancée in each other’s village, triumphs over the man-animal. It is as though it were necessary to distinguish two very different states of alliance: a demonic alliance that imposes itself from without, and imposes its law upon all of the filiations (a forced alliance with the monster, with the man-animal), and a consensual alliance, which is on the contrary in conformity with the law of filiations and is established after the men of the villages have defeated the monster and have organized their own relations. This question of incest can thus be modified. For it is not enough to say that the prohibition against incest results from the positive requirements of alliance in general. There is instead a kind of alliance that is so foreign and hostile to filiation that it necessarily takes the position of incest (the man-animal always has a relation to incest). The second kind of alliance prohibits incest because it can subordinate itself to the rights of filiation only by lodging itself, precisely, between two distinct filiations. Incest appears twice, once as a monstrous power of alliance when alliance overturns filiation, and again as a prohibited power of filiation when filiation subordinates alliance and must distribute it among distinct lineages. (D. G. 1987: 540, n.21)

“The question of incest can thus be modified....” The authors would seem to be alluding here to the theory of *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, but the observation equally applies to the way the question was treated in *Anti-Oedipus*. Because now it is the notion of alliance that appears twice over; it is not only “sexuality as a process of filiation” but also “a power of alliance inspiring illicit unions or abominable loves,” and its goal is not just to manage but also “to prevent procreation” (D. G. 1987: 246): an anti-filiative alliance, an alliance against filiation. Even the exchangeist, repressing alliance productive of filiation from *Anti-Oedipus* starts here to exhibit certain savage and obscure powers—as if it had been contaminated by the other, “demonic” alliance.<sup>32</sup> “It is true that the relations between alliance and filiation come to be regulated by laws of marriage, but even then alliance retains a dangerous and contagious power. Leach was able to demonstrate [...]” (D. G. 1987: 246).<sup>33</sup> We can see that the word “power” [*puissance*] insistently qualifies alliance in general in this key chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus*. Alliance ceases to designate an institution—a structure—and begins to function as a power and potential; a becoming. From alliance as form to alliance as force, by way of a leap over filiation qua substance? This is why we are no longer in the mystical-serial element of sacrifice or the mythical-structural one of totemism but in the magical-real element of becoming.

Neither are we, moreover, in the element of the social contract. “Desire knows nothing of exchange, *it knows only theft and gift [...]*” (D. G. 1983: 186). But as with the case of alliance, there is exchange, and then there is exchange. There is an exchange that cannot be called “exchangeist” in the market/capitalist sense of the term, since it belongs to the category of theft and gift: the exchange, precisely, characteristic of so-called gift economies—the alliance established by the exchange of gifts, the perpetual, alternating movement of double capture in which the partners commute (counter-alienate) invisible perspectives through the circulation of visible things: it is “theft” that realizes the immediate disjunctive synthesis of the “three moments” of giving, receiving, and returning.<sup>34</sup> Because even though gifts can be reciprocal, that does not make exchange any less of a violent movement; the whole purpose of the act of giving is to force the recipient to act, to provoke a gesture or response: in short, to steal his soul (alliance as the reciprocal soul theft). And in this sense, that category of social action called gift exchange does not exist; every action is social as and *only as* action on action or reaction on reaction. Here, *reciprocity* simply means *recursivity*. No insinuation of sociability, and still less of altruism. Life is theft.<sup>35</sup>

The allusion to African sorcerers, naturally, is not accidental. Deleuze and Guattari link becomings to sorcery as both practice and discourse (magical tales), opposing them, on the one hand, to the clear and distinct world of myths and totemic institutions and, on the other, to the obscure and confused world of the priest and sacrificial technology. Their observation is of major importance, as transversal Amazonian shamanism belongs to the “obscure and distinct” world of magic, sorcery, and becoming.

There is something here that will require subsequent reflection and about which I will only suggest some leads, inspired by an article of Goldman’s (Goldman 2005). Where Mauss is concerned, it would obviously be necessary to return, if shamanism is to be understood, to the study of magic, not the text

on sacrifice—to the dated, despised *Outline of a Theory of Magic* that he drafted with Hubert, and that contains in potentia the entirety of the celebrated *Essay on the Gift*, in which case the *Essay's* *hau*, which lies at the origin of the principle of reciprocity of *The Elementary Structures*, is but an exchangeist version of the *Outline's* *mana*, which in turn is the preconcept of “the floating signifier” (L.-S. 1987a: 63).<sup>36</sup> In Lévi-Strauss, in turn, the relevant text is less “The Sorcerer and His Magic” than a rather mysterious commentary found in the third volume of the *Mythologiques* (1979), which will be adumbrated here.

Just after the summary of M60, “The Misadventures of Cimidyüë,” Lévi-Strauss mentions, in almost one breath, the existence of mythic narrations having a serial form and their unique oneiric atmosphere, in which meetings with deceiving spirits who induce conceptual distortions and perceptual equivocations abound, as do cryptic allusions to sorcery practices—hence their association with rituals for the ingestion of hallucinatory drugs that induce “identifications” with animals.

For a brief instant this commentary allows us to glimpse *another* Amerindian mythopraxis running alongside, sometimes even as its counter-current (like one of those bidirectional rivers the book evokes), the etiological mythology that Lévi-Strauss privileges: the stories of transformation or, as Deleuze and Guattari call them, “sorcery tales” in which variations of perspective affecting the characters (“these rapid acts”) are the narrative focus. *Perspectivism directly refers us to the becoming-sorcerer of Amerindian mythology.*

Not so much a novelized linear historical involution of myth (as Lévi-Strauss imagines things in the chapter of *The Origin of Table Manners* concerning it), this would be a lateral becoming internal to myth that causes it to enter into the regime of multiplicity, in which the fragments of an infinite, scattered rhapsody on *quasi-events* glistens.<sup>37</sup> Anecdotes, rumors, gossip, family and village folklore—the “small tradition” of Redfield—as well as humorous anecdotes, hunting incidents, visitations of spirits, bad dreams, sudden frights, and pre-cognitions ... such are the elements of *minor myth*, myth when it is the register and instrument of simulacra, hallucinations, and lies. And if the myth of “the great tradition” (myth submitted to a major use by the philosophies and religions of the world: Ricoeurian Near Eastern myth) is the bearer of dogma and faith, of *credo quia absurdum*, Lévi-Strauss’ minor myth (Amerindian myth in its becoming-sorcerer) illustrates instead the doubly inverted maxim of Henri Michaux: “This is false, even if it is true.”<sup>38</sup> As we can still witness today in the Science Wars, the distance between religion and magic is far greater than the one that separates religion from science.

In the end, neither sacrifice nor totemism will suffice. “People say, ‘It’s either this or that, and it’s always something else’” (Lévi-Strauss and Éribon 1991: 125). The conclusion will have to be that *The Savage Mind's* concept of sacrifice confuses two *faux amis* by fusing two operations—interserial resemblance and extraserial becoming—into one. Moreover, it would be necessary to further conclude that the other operation of the savage series, totemism, is in the end not the best model for difference; or rather, it is precisely a *model*, and thus does not provide us with all the *processes* of difference. We must not let ourselves be hypnotized by the proportional analogies, Klein groups, and permutation tables; instead, we have to drop correlational homology for transformational staggering

(Maniglier 2000: note 26).

According to the formula of the 1962 books, totemism is a system of classificatory relations in which nothing happens between correlative series: a model, apparently, of perfect equilibrium. The totemic “differences of potential” are internal to each series, and incapable of producing effects on the alternate one. Becoming, on the contrary, affirms relation as pure exteriority, and the extraction of terms from the series they belong to—their insertion into rhizomes. It calls not for a theory of relations locked inside terms but a theory of terms open to relations. To some extent, becoming, as we saw, constitutes not a third *type* of relation but a third *concept* of it, one through which sacrifice as much as totemism should be read: that is, as secondary reterritorializations of a primary relational difference, as alternative ways of actualizing becoming as universal intensive multiplicity. Actualized simultaneously in totemic sacrifices and sacrificial mixtures (or: Latour’s purification and mediation), becoming is endlessly counter-effectuated at the margins of sacrificial devices and in the intervals of totemic taxonomies—at the peripheries of “religion” and the borders of “science.”

◇That said, one must all the same grasp the consequences of the fact that the analogical schema of totemism, with the symmetrical correspondence it makes between natural and social differences, is based on an asymmetry that is its *raison d’être*, which is the fact that totemic species are endopractical—bears marry bears, lynxes marry lynxes—which makes them suitable for signifying exopractical social species, in which the bear and the lynx marry. External differences become internal differences, distinctions become relations, and terms become functions. A canonical formula lies in wait behind totemism, and it transforms, as the fourth chapter of *The Savage Mind* shows, the totemic *dispositif* into one of castes. It would seem significant that it would be exactly here, in his demonstration of the limits of symmetry (L.-S. 1966: 126) between the functional specialization of endogamous castes and the functional homogeneity of exogamous clans, that Lévi-Strauss describes totemism with terms like “imaginary,” “illusion,” “empty form,” “deceitful usurpation....” If totemism will later in the book be declared fundamentally true, in opposition to the pure power of the false of sacrifice, the analysis of caste in this chapter shows that illusion and truth are not so simply distributed: “castes naturalize a true culture falsely, totemic groups culturalize a false nature truly” (L.-S. 1966: 127). Which is to say that it is as if nature and culture were in perpetual disequilibrium, as if there could be no parity between them, and as if “truth” in the one series corresponded to “illusion” in the other. This motif, which could be called the principle of complementarity of sense, accompanies Lévi-Strauss everywhere in his thought, from “Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss” to *The Story of Lynx*.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The relation between artistic experience and the process of the “abduction of agency” was analyzed by Alfred Gell in *Art and Agency* (1998).

<sup>2</sup>As Marilyn Strathern observes of an epistemological regime similar to that of Amerindians: “The same convention requires that the objects of interpretation—human or not—become understood as other persons; indeed, the very act of interpretation presupposes the personhood of what is being interpreted. [...] What one thus encounters in making interpretations are always counter-interpretations” (1991: 23).

<sup>3</sup>“Yet nature is different from man: it is not instituted by him and is opposed to custom, to discourse. Nature is the primordial—that is, the nonconstructed, the noninstituted” (Merleau-Ponty 2003: 3-4).

<sup>4</sup>The motif of perspectivism is nearly always accompanied by the idea that the visible form of each species is a simple envelope (a “clothing”) hiding an internal human form that is only accessible, as we have seen, to the gaze of members of the same species, or certain perspectival “commutators,” like shamans.

<sup>5</sup>I have in mind the detotalized, “disorganized” bodies that roam about Amerindian myths: the detachable penises and personified anuses, the rolling heads and characters cut into pieces, the eyes

transposed from anteaters to jaguars and vice versa, etc.

<sup>6</sup>As we know, myths contain various moments where this convention is “relativized” (in the sense of Wagner’s 1981 book) since, given that infinite identity does not exist, difference is never entirely annulled. See the humorous example from *The Origin of Table Manners* on the subject of poorly matched spouses: “What do the myths proclaim? That it is wicked and dangerous to confuse physical differences between women with the specific differences separating animals from humans, or animals from each other.... [A]s human beings, women, whether beautiful or ugly, all deserve to obtain husbands. [...] When contrasted in the mass with animal wives, human wives are all equally valid; but if the armature of the myth is reversed, it cannot but reveal a mysterious fact that society tries to ignore: all human females are not equal, for nothing can prevent them from being different from each other in their animal essence, which means that they are not all equally desirable to prospective husbands” (L.-S. 1979: 76).

<sup>7</sup>“No doubt, in mythic times, humans were indistinguishable from animals, but between the non-differentiated beings who were to give birth to mankind on the one hand and the animal kingdom on the other, certain qualitative relationships pre-existed, anticipating specific characteristics that were still in a latent state” (L.-S. 1981: 588).

<sup>8</sup>The revelation of this ordinarily hidden side of beings (which is why it is conceived in different ways as “more true” than its apparent side) is intimately associated with violence in both intellectual traditions: the animality of humanity, for us, and the humanity of the animal, for the Amerindians, are only rarely actualized without destructive consequences. The Cubeo of the Northwest Amazon say that “the ferociousness of the jaguar has a human origin” (Irving Goldman).

<sup>9</sup>We can thus see that if for us “man is a wolf to man,” for the Indians, the wolf can be man for wolves—with the proviso that man and wolf cannot be man (or wolf) simultaneously.

<sup>10</sup>To paraphrase F. Scott Fitzgerald, we could say that the sign of a first-rank shamanic intelligence is the capacity to simultaneously hold two incompatible perspectives.

<sup>11</sup>Etymologically, the affine is he who is situated *ad-finis*, whose domain borders on mine. Affines are those who communicate by borders, who hold “in common” only what separates them.

<sup>12</sup>For “the crossing of a threshold” in Lévi-Strauss, see 2001: 29; see also the essential commentary on this by Mauro Almeida (2008).

<sup>13</sup>See Viveiros de Castro 2008c.

<sup>14</sup>Insofar as ceremonial death was considered a *kalos thánatos* (a good/beautiful death), the relation between enemy groups was endowed with an essential positivity. Not only did it give access to individual immortality, but it also allowed for collective vengeance, which was the motor and leitmotif of Tupinambá life. Soares de Souza offered this lapidary formula: “As the Tupinambá are very warlike, all their guiding principles consist in knowing how to make war with their opponents” (1972: 320). As for the dialectic between the death of the individual and the life of the group, see this passage from Thevet: “And do not think that the prisoner surprised to receive this news [that he will be executed and quickly devoured] thus is of the opinion that his death is honorable and that he would much prefer to die thusly than in his home through some contagious death: for (they say) one cannot avenge death, which offends and kills men, but one avenges those who have been slain and massacred in war” (1953[1575]).

<sup>15</sup>Or, in the vein of the ferocious humor of the author of the celebrated 1928 *Cannibal Manifesto*, Oswald Andrade: odontology as ontology (de Andrade 1997).

<sup>16</sup>See, for example, L.-S. 1963c: 296; 1963d: 364; 2004: 42; L.-S. and Charbonnier 1969: 18, 23.

<sup>17</sup>That said, Deleuze had, in 1972, already observed the following about the mathematics of structuralism: “Sometimes the origins of structuralism are sought in the area of axiomatics, and it is true that Bourbaki, for example, uses the word “structure.” But this use, it seems to me, is in a very different sense [...] The mathematical origin of structuralism must be sought rather in the domain of differential calculus, specifically in the interpretation which Weierstrass and Russell gave to it, a *static and ordinal* interpretation, which definitively liberates calculus from all reference to the infinitely small, and integrates it into a pure logic of relations” (D. 2004: 176).

<sup>18</sup>The opposition between myth and ritual made in *The Naked Man* was a huge impediment to structuralism’s posterity, as witnessed by the numerous attempts at its modalization, reformulation, or outright rejection (and with it, whole swathes of the Lévi-Straussian problematic). Americanist ethnology in particular was forced to reckon with the opposition in at least two of the chief studies of Amazonian ritual systems (Hugh-Jones 1979, Albert 1985).

<sup>19</sup>With the important exception, already noted, of the work of Philippe Descola, for whom the typical cases of totemism are to be found in aboriginal Australia.

<sup>20</sup>“Perpetual disequilibrium” is a key concept in *The Story of Lynx* (L.-S. 1995) and was elaborated, as if by chance, on the basis of an analysis of the Tupinambá twin myth gathered by Thevet circa 1554.

<sup>21</sup>It should not be forgotten that each species has its own shamans, and that the relations human shamans develop with the latter primarily occur with the species they ally themselves with.

<sup>22</sup>Shamans nonetheless are frequently indispensable auxiliaries in war, whether as oracles or invisible warriors.

<sup>23</sup>This is why the supposed importance Amerindians attribute to the values of “conviviality” and “tranquility”—a subject recent Amazonianist literature has spilled enormous amounts of ink and moral

tears on—seems to me a comically equivocal interpretation of the ambiguous powers of predatory alterity assumed by indigenous thought qua universal ontological horizon.

<sup>24</sup>It is through this Araweté shortcut that we encounter cannibalism again, which is an even more dramatic reduction of sacrificial schema: not only is the sacrificer-executor identified with the victim (mourning, symbolic death, interdiction of the manducation of the enemy), but the sacrificing group (those who devour the victim) coincides with the recipient of the sacrifice. Simultaneously, following a characteristic twist, the schema doubles, and the group the enemy comes from, driven to ritual vengeance, becomes on the one hand co-sacrificing—those who seem to “offer” the victim—while also, on the other, getting defined as a future recipient, the holder of the title to a warrior vengeance that will be fatally exercised against the devouring group.

<sup>25</sup>We are reminded of the “Caititu Rondo” of *The Raw and The Cooked*, in which pigs and jaguars are presented as two opposed animal archetypes of affinity (the bad and the good affine, respectively), which is to say of humanity as structured by alterity; and we also recall, with Carneiro da Cunha (1978) that the dead and affines are basically the same.

<sup>26</sup>I am casting this distinction between the shaman and the priest in terms of the opposition Lévi-Strauss draws between the bricoleur and the engineer; it also corresponds, furthermore, to the one made in *A Thousand Plateaus* between the presignifying or primitive semiotics of segmentarity, multidimensionality, and anthropophagy and a signifying or despotic semiotics of interpretosis, infinite debt, and faciality (D. G. 1987: 111 et seq.). In Descola’s terms, the contrast would be between animism and analogism.

<sup>27</sup>What I am suggesting here is that Eduardo Kohn’s (2002, 2005) discrepant remarks about the Ávila Runa should be interpreted as manifestations of a tendency, which is probably quite old, toward “verticization” among forest Quechua people. See on this point Taylor (2009) on the Jivaro Achuar: “Neither the classes of spiritual beings nor the forms of interaction that humans develop with them are ordered according to a scale of dignity or power, and neither sex exclusively benefits from a capacity to enter into relations with nonhumans.”

<sup>28</sup>D. G. 1987: 11.

<sup>29</sup>D. G. 1987: 249.

<sup>30</sup>And hyperdefective, given that its only mode is the infinitive, the mode of extrahistorical instantaneousness.

<sup>31</sup>Counter-social to the extent, we could say, that human sociality is necessarily counter-intensive, once it is engendered as the extensification of the “primary energy of the intensive order.”

<sup>32</sup> “[The] potential wild beast which, in social terms, is what a brother-in-law amounts to, since he has taken away your sister” (L.-S. 1981: 485). As the author himself cautions us, one must know how to take such mythical equivalences literally, via “a meaning which transcends the distinction between the real and the imaginary: a complete meaning of which we can now hardly do more than evoke the ghost in the reduced setting of figurative language” (L.-S. 1966: 265).

<sup>33</sup>The reference here is to Leach’s “Rethinking Anthropology,” in which it is observed (1961: 20) that there is a general “metaphysical influence” exercised between allies by marriage. For a recent commentary on this, see Viveiros de Castro 2008a.

<sup>34</sup>On exchange and perspective, see Strathern, 1988: 230, 271, 327; 1991: *passim*; 1992a: 96-100; 1999: 249-56; Munn, 1992/1986: 16; Gregory, 1982: 19, and on the notion of double capture, see Deleuze and Parnet 1987: 1-3; Stengers 2010 [1996]: 266, n. 11.

<sup>35</sup>“Language can work against the user of it. [...] Sociality is frequently understood as implying sociability, reciprocity as altruism and relationship as solidarity” (Strathern 1999: 18). “Action on action” is one of those formulas to which Foucault had recourse, as we know, to describe power (there are only forces applied to forces, as Deleuze’s Nietzsche would say), and “reaction to reaction” is the way Bateson explained the concept of schizmogonesis, which was of as much importance to Lévi-Strauss’ structural analysis as to Deleuze-Guattarian schizoanalysis. As for the theft that is life, see Alfred North Whitehead: “Life is robbery, and the robber requires a justification” (*apud* Stengers 2011: 31). Shall we call this justification “the gift?”

<sup>36</sup>The condition of the relational potentialization the incest prohibition institutes, which comes, as we know, from Lévi-Strauss’s reading of *Essay on The Gift*, and is fundamentally linked to the perpetual disequilibrium between signifier and signified that he discussed in the *Outline*.

<sup>37</sup>On the notion of “quasi-events,” see Rodgers 2004 and Viveiros de Castro 2008b.

<sup>38</sup>The *Mythologiques* warn us several times that they do not include in their itinerary the stories associated with esoteric doctrines, learned brotherhoods, and theological elaborations (they thus exclude the mythology of the continent’s Highlands, along with a part of the mythologies of the Northwest Amazon and the North American Southwest). As if Amerindian mythology—etiological structural myth—constantly anticipates the bifurcation of its trajectory: the becoming-sorcerer of minor myth, which transforms it into tales of transformation—myth as rhizomatic multiplicity—and the arborescent drift toward cosmogony and theology, toward monarchic *logos*: the myth of the state. Might there be here a possible analogy with the double trajectory of Amazonian shamanism toward both prophetism and priesthood? For it is true that from the point of view, for example, of someone like Paul Ricoeur, the *whole* of the Amerindian mythology analyzed by Lévi-Strauss belongs to minor myth.



# Gap [Hautes Alpes], France: About an attack on a vaccination centre

Anonymous, 2021. Translated from French by Act for freedom now!  
Note by Attaque. Originally submitted to Indymedia Brussel.

Gap. City centre. Night of the 1st to the 2nd of June 2021. Individuals break down a door at the back of a theatre converted into a vaccination centre. The door is easily broken open and they find themselves in a long corridor, which leads from the left to other rooms. A door on the right is not locked, it opens on a large room, where presumably vaccinations take place. Hastily, piles are made with the furniture that is present. Bottles of alcoholic gel are added to the petrol. A flick of the lighter, the whole thing catches fire, and the silhouettes disappear into the night. The whole thing lasted only a few minutes, enough to destroy a good part of the building.

It was a rather symbolic act, since another centre opened the same day, and according to what we know from the press, the attack of the same kind in Nyons [Haut de France] a few weeks earlier only caused a slight delay in the opening, which was quickly resolved. This shows the need to look for the heart of the monster rather than attacking all its tentacles, but let's move on.

Having in mind that this act would be above all symbolic, we also wanted it to provoke debate. We are therefore surprised by the silence of anarchist blogs and magazines on the subject of this night and the previous one (as well as the most recent ones, since the government's announcement on the extension of the health pass, the acts of destruction of vaccination centres are multiplying, and they are not all accompanied by signs suggesting that they emanate from reactionary or far-right circles).

Is it inconceivable that anarchists could have attacked anti-covid vaccination centres? Could it be that they did not want to risk being lumped in with the not always very nice, or even frankly problematic, critics who have gained in strength with the arrival of the pandemic? Could it be that no one was aware of these attacks, or that the target seemed inappropriate? However, at the time of the sanitary pass, and at the moment when the initially recalcitrant part of the population ends up changing its mind (to present it to the nurse...), in front of the pressure of the government and because it will be impossible to maintain a "normal" life without it, attacking the good progress of the vaccination campaign seems most relevant for those who refuse to accept the forward march of the world. It is a pity that these acts did not get the echo they deserve. So here is a text that hopes to make up for this silence, clarify a few points, and make room for debate.

If I am enthusiastic about the idea of vaccination centres being attacked, it is not because I think that the CIA is taking advantage of this to chip the population, or that the Covid virus does not exist. Nor because I think humanity should disappear, and that the virus is a fair attack on the planet's parasites, even if this story makes one laugh. It is because, understanding Covid as a "logical" consequence of our crowded and globalized social organization, I want to fight against this capacity of the techno-industrial world to sacrifice everything to continue to exist. Also because I would like "us" to accept being sick, and even mortal, even if it goes without saying that I deplore many of the deaths of the Covid; just as I deplore the deaths sacrificed on the altar of techno-scientific progress, human or non-human animals that serve as guinea pigs, war for the raw materials that this mega-machine devours, and without which, there is no scientific research, no vaccine.

I am not interested in being part of this human herd that is forced to be healthy whatever the cost, so that it can produce and consume. I am more interested in finding forms of care that do not consist of destroying everything surrounding us.

The choice of target is certainly not consensual. Attacking the medical profession, which is active on so-called vital issues, is not a trivial matter, nor a decision to be taken lightly. But are we going to allow ourselves to be caught up in this trap that reverses responsibilities, according to which it is our attacks that harm social well-being? Do we need to repeat that it is above all this techno-industrial world that mutilates, poisons and then wants to administer its medicines by force? Attacking it at the root is still necessary, and if the level of dependence on this world is such that our actions can endanger lives (or seem to be able to do so) then it is a serious time, and we have to make some difficult decisions. We cannot wait until everyone has found the means of their autonomy before we attack the very thing that makes that autonomy ever more remote.

At the risk of playing the oracle, I would say that this dependence can only increase. So what will we do, poor souls in revolt, when the blackmail will be such that we will no longer be able to lift a finger without risking human lives? Voices, not always so far away, are already being raised to speak of the dangers linked to relay antenna attacks. Judicial enquiries have been opened following deaths during the few hours when Orange was unable to provide network to emergency numbers. The time seems to be approaching when attacking telecommunications will be seen as endangering the lives of others, in the same way as suspending a person over a bridge.

I am digressing, but in doing so I am trying to pre-empt the criticisms that are bound to arise from the publication of this statement. Also because I hope to invite reflection on how much our room to manoeuvre is shrinking, and how much we are shrinking when faced with choices that are increasingly fraught with consequences. Let's not let the radicalism (in the original sense of the word, at the root) of our speeches and our actions be lost, on the pretext that this world we want to destroy would become vital for a large part of the Western population.

We are responsible for our actions, but not guilty of their consequences.

Wanting to destroy the techno-industrial world also means, cynically, accept-

ing to put at risk the lives (ours included) that depend on it. I'm afraid there is no "soft method" to get out of this hell. It may seem like a no-brainer, but there is still time to improve our networks, our methods, our skills, our forms of mutual aid and care, so that attacking a social system does not mean attacking all the individuals forcibly kept inside it.

Let the deaths of covid not blind us to the horror of the rest.

Let the blackmail of the state not weaken our determination, and let the magnitude of the task not lead to resignation, but to an irrepressible desire to act.

More than ever, to those who attack AND who do not want to recreate a world as rotten as the previous one, even if it is less technological. To the others, let them know that I have no common fight with patriots or reactionaries, even if we obviously have the same targets sometimes.

A salute to Boris, and to the others kept in jail for their love of freedom.

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*\* Note of Attaque: It is undeniable that the far right and other reactionary cults are very involved and visible in the opposition to the mass vaccination against Covid-19 (as the latter are or have been in the opposition to the installation of the 5G network, also through multiple arsons of cell towers).*

*It is therefore up to anarchists to clearly distinguish themselves from this nauseating background, for example by claiming their actions (a simple tag could do the trick). Indeed, even though we may sometimes aim at the same targets as these reactionaries, we will never share their goals (and it is important that this be known).*

*But if an action, let's say for example vandalism against a vaccination centre, is not at all accompanied by signs that give away the intentions of the perpetrators, one could deduce that, at the very least, the likely attribution of this act to the conspiratorial extreme right (on the part of the media, for example) does not bother the said perpetrators too much.*

*Again, if someone has chosen not to accompany their action with words, are we sure we are the best ones to speak for them?*

*So welcome to this contribution, to open the debate.*

# Aubenas (Ardèche): Full moon / black out: first attempt

Offspring of Disaster, 2020. Translated from French by Act for freedom now! Originally submitted to Indymedia Nantes.

## Claim for an incendiary attack on an electricity transformer

At times there are doubts among us. Some have few. Others none.

Could we face the consequences of a large scale black out? The dead, the chaos it would cause? Would we ourselves be able to survive such a transformation of the world? Perhaps not.

But leaving the world as it is, is even more unbearable, submitting to the blackmail that it would be even worse if the human and technological institutions were not there to manage our lives on our behalf, rather than accept taking risks by acting.

It is not a question of silencing all doubts. It is a question of being able to act anyway. Understanding that if our actions have any impact, if they undoubtedly cause some harm to beings we didn't target, our passivity is just as murderous.

The so-much-spoken-of hospitals, cement anthills where devastated bodies and good intentions pile up that need to be protected at all costs because they make it possible «to save lives», need electricity supply and other raw materials in order to function, which definitely kill.

The technological peace drip-fed to the masses is a lie. The connected world is built on a mass grave and feeds on the dead and destruction. And the beautiful images of tablets in schools and care homes won't change anything. The aperitifs on Skype taste of blood. The doubts we might have are traces of the humanist and State masquerade telling us that the system is indispensable to us. That everything carries on in the best way in the best possible world, and that it would be irresponsible for a few individuals to act selfishly by harming what belongs to all. This is not the time for a debate on selfishness. Our desire is to smash the myth according to which letting things continue has no consequences. What is common to all doesn't interest us in the least, but it should be pointed out that it is limited to a certain part of the human population, without touching all the beings that live on this big stone we call Earth, of course.

For us it will always be preferable to act with possible doubts rather than let the latter feed a sense of impotence.

Because out of our impotence our death will come, and what we want more than anything is to live. To live by returning the blows we receive. To live without the human and technological mediation that is imposing itself between

us and the rest of the world. And when we become aware of being conditioned, when we think of all the horror the world generates, our doubts matter little.

We attacked the electricity network because today, without it, this civilization would collapse. We don't desire to return to some time in the past. We have no illusions about the fact that some civilizations were built without electricity. All we know is that this one relies on it so much as to be unable to do without it. And that this is one of its weak points. And even if we are its offspring, and it couldn't be otherwise, we are struggling to kill the germs it was able to leave in us. We are struggling against our domestication, our submission to norms, our cowardice and our love of security.

But we use some of the instruments it provides us with. Because it is no longer possible for rebels to communicate by smoke signals, and we are still interested in putting words to our actions, which can reach those who wish to read them, and can also be a considerable component of our attacks against docility, the people who create it and those who defend it. The acts of destruction around us in recent times are many.

Thank you brave hands that refuse to be confined in times when even part of the «radical» movement want to see us shut at home because it is more important to be «safe» than to try to be free.

Thank you to those for whom writing means something because it is necessary to share our thoughts so that our acts resound with the intentions that animate us. Because the fact of reading texts calling for attack, sharp analyses and claims plays a part in modelling our ideas, conceiving new strategies of attack. Besides, that is the reason for wanting to inscribe our attack in the call to conflict launched by the text «In May do what you like: a call to conflict», whose numerous questions we have made our own, to which, with our attack, we wanted to give some elements of response. Because, whatever you say about it, these texts come out of the dematerialized horror of the Internet to nourish debates, reflections and give strength to the living.

Attempts are made, sometimes without even knowing exactly what one will come up against. The only thing we do know is that through our acts things won't remain intact.

We chose to attack an electricity transformer without knowing what damage we would cause, but hoping for beautiful electric arcs, a lot of smoke and fewer lights to give space to the full moon. We need nothing else to brighten us up and artificial lights are an offence to the beauty of the night.

As we were approaching the site, in the Aubenas area, we carried with us the imaginary memory of all the tormented souls who have rebelled against the civilizations that tried to destroy their wild lives. We set fire to six spots, mainly on cables assembled beneath cement slabs, noisy but easy to lift. We took care not to touch metal structures and apart from some slight discomfort, a buzzing sensation in the head, nothing serious happened to us as we walked around the terminal point of three high voltage lines. As we were leaving the site, our bodies tensed with adrenaline and smiles under our scarfs, the fires had caught well.

Unfortunately the artificial lights surrounding us didn't go out. We will probably never know what damage was done to the electricity network because the media didn't mention it. One more reason for us to do it ourselves, so as not

to give them the opportunity to silence our efforts. Presumably, neither the city nor the surrounding valleys suffered much damage. Too bad! We tried. The only real way to know where it is good to attack is to try everywhere. We have no doubts about the fact that there will be further attempts.

Our hearts are burning with the desire to extinguish the monster-machine once and for all. Because hatred and disgust for the civilized human mass seep through all the pores of our skin. Because only lights we like at night are those of flames and reflections of the moon.

*Des Rejetons du Désastre. / Offspring of Disaster*

# Lachapelle-sous-Aubenas (Ardèche), France: Sabotage of an Electrical Station, “The Fairies Will Never Be Electric”

Anonymous, 2021. Translated from French by Act for freedom now!  
Originally submitted to Sans nom.



*Don't forget to turn off the light on your way out*

The modern world has held us hostage non stop, ever since childhood, venting the merits of security and making us forget the copious dose of servitude we must accept in return for progress through a series of increasingly poorly kept promises.

As the horizons that present themselves at the forefront of civilisation's advances continue to darken – the ravaging of wilderness, the increasing domestication of the living, the artificialisation of beings – the present world continues its frantic race, making it ever more dependent on energy infrastructures and the products they consume and produce: oil, uranium, electricity.

In the space of less than two centuries, the production of electricity and the increasing electrification of spaces has continued to expand and colonise every part of our lives.

Initially, only a few businesses and industries used electric energy. Then the technique gradually spread to domestic use. Today, we carry and use more and more accessories in our daily lives at every moment, in our pockets or on our wrists, and they give rhythm to the slightest moment of our existence to the point of their use being completely normalized.

What is clear is that a technique that was once marginal and reserved for a few industries has taken on an exponential and diffuse dimension, imposing its reign in the span of a few generations.

If getting out of the digital web seems an increasingly complex challenge to realize, trying to escape from a world in which all relationships are subject to electricity is even more so.

What is now apparent is that as society becomes more dependent on electricity, it is in danger of not being able to sustain its organisational existence without it. It took these same few generations to lose the use and knowledge of a set of acts and practices, once again accelerating the reign of dependency. Beyond comfort, what the electric world builds in us above all is an experience of the dispossession of our choices and autonomy. Most of the life experiences that we can have often take place within an increasingly normalised reality.

Electrical infrastructure is then revealed as the cornerstone of what, under the guise of a world of progress and emancipation, turns out to be a totalitarian and murderous system that often forces us, willingly or not, to move forward in the direction of its development.

**If, through our act of sabotage, we attacked an important electrical transformer in the Aubenas basin during the night of 13 July 2021, it is because we wanted to direct our rage against the whole of what the electrical system embodies and represents. At the same time, we wanted to remove ourselves from the ideological blackmail that the march of the techno-industrial world is subjecting us to.**

In order to be heard by the greatest number of people, the critique of the current world often refuses to radically upset the conditions of existence.

It is said that, from the confines of your domestic space, it is possible to put a certain use of electricity in question, resort to given processes to gain autonomy and self-sufficiency from a certain point of view.

As it has become so complicated for the majority to imagine a world without electricity, "acts of resistance" are transformed in a technical way, in the image of the world by which they are produced. Rather than question techno-scientific domination as a whole, we will be seduced by the illusory possibility of re-appropriating bits and pieces of a world that, for a long time, has no longer been thought of on the scale of our needs but responds above all to the rise of the reign of machines.

The Revolution of small daily gestures will not take place. In any case, from now on it is acclaimed by domination and takes the form of a smokescreen distilling the illusion of action. This so-called Revolution seems to us a fundamental renunciation, the loss of our ability to imagine a radically different world in which norms would no longer be dictated by the scientific and indus-



trial imagination. We wish to continue to desire and envisage a world in which technical progress would no longer be the only positive narrative shaping the future.

If we believe in individual possibilities, we think it is a pity that they have to be pacified by overvaluing small daily gestures, turning the choice of an eco-friendly soap or a timed shower in a modern flat into a subversive practice. The choice of turning on or off the light is increasingly like false electoral possibilities, as if the criticism of the present world could only be made within an imposed framework (electoral system, digital infrastructure. . .).

Today, whoever knowingly attacks what is connected to the indispensable flows of the contemporary world is systematically considered the hostage-taker of many human lives.

It seems curious that contemporary Western morality, while it has never ceased to build itself on a series of mass murders and individual enslavements (slavery, colonisation), while it has treated entire populations as nuclear guinea pigs (Polynesia, Algeria, . . .), while it organises servitude for the majority of people, barely disguised by consumption, while it knows without flinching that its entire standard of living is the fruit of the enslavement of living beings and other out of sight humans, treats as terrorists any individuals who would question the general level of dependency on infrastructures and untouchable flows that are supported by most people.

By attacking the electricity infrastructure directly we want to pierce the absciss of blackmail that this world is forcing upon us. To hear the technocrats: anyone wanting to go against the modern, benevolent world is attacking the weakest and most dependent of the system.

We are tired of delegating our strength, our capabilities and our security to a world that locks us in, maintains our dependence and often organises our weakening.

Contrary to everything they might say, progress is not a philanthropic project.

In the age of capitalism, technical advances are above all commercial projects. The ultimate goal is not and never has been to make some people happy or contribute to the comfort of others. In this mirage in which we live, everything is maintained to make the rules of the economy and the State invisible. It is easier to accept hell when it is paved with good intentions.

We are currently deprived of exploring other possibilities of existence by the construction of infrastructures that are increasingly chaining us to a murderous societal project. When everything and everyone is caught and held by the same dominant reality, it is no longer possible to oppose it without directly opposing the whole system and its infrastructures.

While it seems important to disconnect individually, the very nature of the interconnected grid makes individual disconnection an incomplete and insufficient act.

Attacking the infrastructure is a much greater guarantee that the electric world will stop capturing us and imposing its reign of speed.

To unplug this electric world is to reveal the extent of what it affects and governs.

To unplug this electric world is to acknowledge that it is increasingly difficult to act and think for ourselves beyond its grip and that it is becoming increasingly

important to do so.

Unplugging this electrical world is an attempt to create a chain reaction, affecting all the infrastructures and things that function thanks to electricity (digital, communication, banking, state, industry and business networks, military and police infrastructures, etc.).

Disconnecting this electrical world means attacking the myth of clean energy that lies behind nuclear power.

To unplug this electric world is to take a step into the unknown.

**During the night, at a very late hour, we entered an electric depot on the outskirts of the town of La Chappelle Sous Aubenas in Ardèche. After cutting a large hole in the fence, we sneaked into the infrastructure to attack it at various points.**

**Several fires were started inside buildings that we had opened previously.** These buildings contained generators and backup batteries that we suspect would take over if the rest of the infrastructure were damaged.

**We also set fire to several electrical meters around and in the central building, which we believed housed a gigantic converter.**

**Finally, after lifting two separate metal plates, we set fire to some electric cables snaking between the various installations on the site.**

**In all, 9 fires were illuminating the night when we escaped.**

As far as we could see, the towns and villages around the act were not plunged into darkness. **Despite what we imagine to have been significant damage, with several well established fires at the site, the rest of the power grid did not appear to have been touched by the damage we caused.**

This has not discouraged us from wanting to keep on attacking the electrical society.

*We greet the authors of the Toulouse communique for the attack on an electric transformer. The words of the text touched our hearts and our minds.*

*Courage to those who resist in the present against the destruction of life and freedom.*

*A special thought for the comrade Boris, still in coma.*

More than ever, in these nauseating times, we prefer the risk of the situation going off the rails to the false peace of deadly comfort.

Better the darkness of a night without neon lights than the brightness of a path into the abyss.

*For magic to return to our lives. Because the fairies will never be electric.*

PS: Don't forget to turn off the light on your way out !

# Nine Theses on Insurgency

The Institute For The Study of Insurgent Warfare, 2014. In *Insurgencies: A Journal of Insurgent Strategy*.

**Thesis 1: Up until this point critiques of activism have tended to focus upon the characteristics of activists that we find reprehensible.**

It is easy to despise leftists. The popularity of their position inclines them toward slow and flabby thoughts, reassured by the supportive murmurings of their fellows and the ease with which they rebuke the equally inept ideas of their traditional opponents on the right. It is simple to look at their love of the democratic form, of representation and protest, and read into the frequency with which self-described activists are also leftists, a conflation of the two. We find these critiques of activism proliferating in the anarchist milieu as of late, revulsion at the cycle of endless meetings, as well as a rejection of consensus and the concept of the all-controlling general assembly, the legislative form that permeates this sort of action, gutting the very possibility of volatility. However, as critics we are, as with so much else, inclined to first pluck the low hanging fruit and with activism reach immediately for the theatrical antics of incoherent protesters and the joyful naivety of the charitable who would build a better world one filled belly at a time. It takes little effort to dismiss their politics as nonsense, their motives as exhibitionist, their practices as invasive, or their endeavors as ultimately ineffectual, but the sort of examination which seeks merely to dismiss the activist position fails to grasp its conceptual underpinnings as the font from which these other things spring. It is not as though activists fail because they have long meetings or enjoy screaming at empty buildings; these are merely symptoms of a more general sickness. Rather, the failure of activism appears at the core of the activist injunction to act in all moments on the discursive terrain of a mythologized “social conversation,” and to declare ourselves victorious so long as “something” happens, that we did “something.”

**Thesis 2: Activism constructs a symbolic terrain of engagement in a conceptual space, one defined by a politics of complaint fused with an injunction to act against problems defined in a completely despatialized way.**

By activism we do not mean that thing that leftists do. Rather activism is defined by its enclosure within an absurd Kantian narrative of the so-called democratic space, in which opinion polls substitute for actual fighting, but the critique of

activism can just as easily become containable within the limits of our disdain for leftists. We cannot equate the annoyances that are generated by leftists for activism. Rather, activism is an enjoinder to act politically against bad things whether that political act is the representation of discontent through theatrics and complaint, or as divergent from that as the assassination of an appropriately public figure as a sign of seriousness, encompassing activities on the political right as readily as on the left, and direct action as readily as protest. By this we mean that the bomber of an abortion clinic is likely every bit as much an activist as is the campaigner for women's rights caught in the blast in that they both have constructed completely despatialized symbolic terrains within which to represent their discontent, merely differing as to their preferred symbols and the audience with whom they lodge their respective complaints.

Fundamentally, activism is based in the attempt to influence the symbolic operations of some unitarily defined concept-enemy that exists in an abstract and generalized terrain in which there are no local features, and in which logistical imbalance never occurs. The terrain of engagement becomes removed from the spaces within which actions occur, and the enemy becomes decentered from actual material things. It is not then a question of activists having a phobia of discussions of material fighting or narratives of effectiveness, discussions of terrain variance and police force movements, but rather it is that within their conceptual plane of engagement none of these things matter. It is not even that activists are unable to discuss these things, it is that within the conceptual limitations of activism they are nonsense.

**Thesis 3: It is this formation that has led us to our current impasse, where attempts to transcend activism replicate the same formation but through actions of greater magnitude.**

The move beyond activism is not effected by giving up the terms and tropes of the leftists. Activistic histrionics and theatrics find ample room to play amidst burning cars and glass filled streets, reminding us that a message can be wordless and an object can be a symbol too. Reacting to the lived conservatism of the left, by which we mean activists, it can be expected that the thinking will arise that one may transcend activism, by which we mean leftism, through simply going beyond the limits of the sorts of actions they would be willing to undertake. Through bigger and more beatifully destructive displays the post-left activist constructs a mishmash collage by which to represent their dissatisfaction. In this way shallow criticism allows activism to don new colors and appear under other banners, its essential strategic principles and tactical formations unchanged. To be avoided is a mythology which pervades militancy in which institutions are treated as bodies through which one may strike blows, where linear escalations of force, *more smashy! Bigger bombs!* are interpreted as directly increasing efficacy, as though blowing up lobby of an IBM office disrupted the functional logistics of apartheid any more than smashing an ATM in the middle of the night disrupts banking.

**Thesis 4: To overcome the impasse is not a question of moving past complaint into other forms of symbolic action against despatialized enemies, but of defining the enemy in an immediate and material sense.**

Implicit in the operation of activism is the existence of a shared project to which the activist, their opponents, and various neutral entities are all party. An activist's enemies then are the particular set of abstract bad things they endeavor to set aright and their opponents are fellows who merely happen to be on the wrong side of the issue. By comparison, an insurgent's enemies are never abstract, but rather discrete entities of flesh, stone, or steel, from bodies to buildings, which at a specific time and place obstruct their interests. These enemies are not party to the insurgent's project and are instead defined by their exteriority to it, making elimination of the opposition the basic mode of conflict. Engagement with this sort of enemy is not defined by the effort toward annihilation in the sense that the enemy must die, or that things must be destroyed, but rather in such a way that they cease to be the enemy. This does not mean that there will be some Habermasian moment in which a sort of communicative commonality will form where everything will become rational; conflict, action in itself, is arational as a material movement. Rather, this means that engagement with the enemy ends where they become logistically incapable of continuing to obstruct our interests. At the point of total attenuation of their force, conflict evaporates, but this can only be an immediate calculation.

**Thesis 5: To define the enemy in an immediate and material sense means moving beyond hatred or rejection into a posture of hostility, or an immediate antagonism, in this case hostility in relation to policing.**

In defining the enemy we have to move beyond aligning ourselves against abstraction and into a posture of hostility toward enemies which are immediate and material. The enemy is that which is directly hostile toward one's objectives regardless of simple claims of political affinity. This means that in defining the enemy we must fundamentally shift our understanding of affinity, away from aligning ourselves along political theory or identity and into a conception which recognizes the potential presence of enemies all around us. This is clear to any of us who have dealt with the drudgery of working with liberals, only to find that they are a more effective force of deceleration than the actual uniformed police. Enemies surround us, but these enemies are not concepts, they are not the mythologized police as they are generally understood, the specter of the wealthy, or something like this. We do not fight ghosts and see no reason to become political exorcists: disembodied things cannot harm us.

Rather "enemy" is only a relevant categorization in relation to a material clash, finding its meaning in the immediacy of conflict itself, on a plane of engagement, in terms of where we fight, and when we fight. It is on this level that the enemy presents a direct threat, here that the enemy may be engaged, and it is only here that actual hostility exists. When we declare friends and enemies we are not merely claiming a structure of affinity, but more specifically we are distinguishing those we consider able to aid in our objectives from those that will impede this line of flight. Friends need not even be those that we trust, but only those we can either work alongside, or whom we can use.

Class war can be an effective mythology, as Sorel discusses, but only to the degree that it generates conflict. In our case this conflict is not with the police as an abstract unity, but policing as an operation, as an actual logistics of force that functions in space and at a time. And for us this is a boon as to destroy the logistics of policing need not even require destroying police, necessarily, but only the disruption of their ability to manifest, to function in the streets. At the point that we understand the material operation of the police as it actually confronts us in our homes and on our streets to be the enemy then our engagement becomes immediate and material, arraying us against the effort to define our existences through force. At the point of immediacy everything breaks down to strategy and tactics, and on this level direct clash is not a fight we will, or can win, at least for now. But hostilities need not require direct frontal clash as an enemy, even a single body, is always also a logistical operation the disruption of which can be accomplished through smart subversion and intelligence as well as through direct fighting.

**Thesis 6: This move into hostility requires a reattachment of action to the space and time of the act, the immediate and material tactical terrain formed by conflict.**

In reattaching the question of action to the actual dynamics of action we move back into the material, away from the symbolic, and have to completely realign our understandings of where we are fighting. In activism the terrain of conflict is formed around conceptual relationships; chasing the connections between some specific corporation and global finance, demonstrating on Saturdays in an empty downtown where a bunch of liberals yell slogans at empty federal buildings, engaging in the game of attempting to “change consciousness” by openly debating some hopeless fascist conservative. All of these forms of action are founded on the myth of a symbolic enemy that we may fight on some general discursive terrain. What becomes lost is any actual engagement, which vanishes along with an understanding of where the enemy actually functions, how they function, and what the features of that terrain of functionality actually are.

Take for instance Deep Green Resistance, where the terrain of action is reduced to inert points on a map, “infrastructure”, that is thought of as immobile terrain, a mentality that functions along the lines of strategic bombing, the reduction of targets to immobile points in space observed from 30,000 feet. Even within this metaphor they fail to grasp the functionality of strategic bombing in the age of the guided bomb which, understood through Parallel Strike doctrine, is an attempt to disrupt enemy command and control in order to set the stage for a material clash in a dynamic terrain, rather than as an end in itself. What is lost in this discussion of inert space, terrain reduced to maps, is that the enemy adapts, the enemy moves, the enemy rebuilds. Attack begets counterattack, and this continues until the enemy is unable to function, to move, to maintain a logistical ontology. To begin to make this move beyond inert conceptual enemies not only requires an understanding of the enemy in an immediate and material way, but also requires a recognition that all strategy becomes obsolete at the moment of clash; as Moltke said, “no plan of operations extends with any certainty beyond the first contact with the main hostile force.”

During hostilities the terrain becomes reconfigured by the very actions that

are taken and adjustments must be made. On this level it is not only important to grasp the physical terrain, the features of terrain and their variance, but it is also important to understand the dynamics in that terrain, the things that occur, the other forces present, whether they are antagonistic or not. We will never fully grasp this terrain, as single actors of collections thereof. At most we can, through intense intelligence gathering come to understand some of the dynamics in a terrain, and develop a more or less effective way of making sense of things. In this we must never allow our abstractions to unmoor themselves from the material and, so liberated, wander away from us. And, if they do, by no means should we let ourselves be dragged off with them.

**Thesis 7: The reattachment of action to the immediate and material separates the question of strategy/fighting from the question of why we fight, from the terrain understood conceptually.**

In the move away from symbolic terrains of engagement into a material understanding of action and conflict grounded in the immediacy of fighting, another fundamental shift must occur in which the meta-conceptual question of why we fight is separated from the question of what fighting is. Activists complete their absurd move into the symbolic with a simple assertion that we become our enemy if we are willing to employ the same means. Underlying this assertion is an odd sort of technological essentialism, one that mirrors the positions of futurists and primitivists, which would have us imagine a world where technologies have an essential content independent of their deployment. What is missed here is the use of means on the level of their positioning within a wider technics, one which must take into account the method and purpose of deployment, and the actual existence of a technology, or technique, as it developed in some particular historical moment in response to the dynamics of that history. We have to abandon the Ghandian reduction that underlies this assumption of some necessary connection between means and goals, and come to understand something simple about conflict: the means of conflict take on meaning only within their deployment.

To be honest with ourselves, the ways that we make sense of the world are always interpretive, arbitrary, limited, and dynamic, in light of which the idea that we can understand the present, let alone some post-revolutionary future, is an absurdity. And this absurdity carries a danger along with it that far surpasses the limitation of weapons or means by ideological concerns. In the effort to speak the totality of the present or to plan some future that is supposed to occur after a series of events so catastrophic that the categories we use to make sense of life are now no longer relevant, whether revolution or collapse, we lose sight of some-actual present, an immediate terrain of engagement of which we can at least attempt to make sense.

There is no ultimate tactic to be developed, no possibility that the past will recreate itself in the present or the future, no understanding what we have to do to cause shit to go down, there is no eternal moment and featureless terrain in which something like this could even be grounded or to which it could actually respond. There are only present capacities, present dynamics and some objective that we conceive as being important. Given that we cannot actually understand the totality of the world, or even of a single moment, "putting our

ideals into action” is impossible; both due to the impossibility of this sort of unity or consensus in an actualized form, but also due to our inability to ever inscribe some necessary meaning into our actions; things occur, for innumerable reasons, and we are left the task of making sense of them in vain, from across the infinite distance that divides the concept from the moment.

We each have our reasons for engaging in the ways that we do, and it is not as though we can opt out. We cannot opt out of history, everything we do sets the conditions for future moments. We cannot opt out of the social war; the state is a logistics of force that operates to the degree that this deployment of force is total. Warfare has become generalized in a shifting dynamics of innumerable immediate contingencies; it is on the level of immediate contingencies that engagement occurs; it is on this level that the decision must be made as to how we engage with total war. What side we choose, whether we side with the state or with the insurgency, is one that we have to answer for ourselves, for our own arbitrary, provisional, conceptual reasons. The question of what this implies, as an immediate form of the decision, can only be answered in the moment of strategy, necessarily embedded as it is within the dynamics of this clash. We have to decouple action from passion and come to terms with the stakes and risks of fighting. Insurgency is neither romantic nor passionate, it is material, strategic, and often tragic. The ultimate tragedy is that we have been put in a position where this decision must be made at all, but once a decision is made, the conceptual question becomes secondary, trumped by the question of survival, and strategic movement.

**Thesis 8: This realignment is the move from activism to insurgency.**

At its core the current and seemingly perpetual impasse, summarized in the question what is to be done, replicates the core of activism on a series of levels. The question itself, when spoken, implies an “us” that will answer this question, and a body of discursive engagement that exists on some consistent plane, replicating the mythology of consensus. More importantly the idea that there is even an answer to this question, one that can take hold on a wide scale, assumes a consistent terrain of engagement across time and space. It is here that all symbolic engagements are fundamentally structured, on the level of thinking that we are fighting a common struggle together, assuming that we are fighting this in the same way, or that there is an essential commonality to the dynamics in which we fight.

To move beyond this series of assumptions, which cause us to replicate the failures of activism, means to re-conceive the fundamentals not only of what one does, but also the context in which one does them. This is not a question of whether we should engage with activism in some general sense, whether the “movement” is something we should take part in, or a question of the foci or the underground. These discussions all, still, assume a generalized symbolic terrain of engagement in which it is tacitly understood that theoretical efficacy may be equated with material effectiveness. But there is no right tactic, nor universal form of engagement, and certainly no answer to the question of “what is to be done.” We must abandon the entire symbolic terrain of action itself, but this does not mean that we must abandon engaging with activism. Activism can be an effective tactic in escalation, as Marighella discusses, but it does mean that



we have to abandon activism as an assumed mode of engagement, and begin to ground ourselves in actual dynamics and in a hostility toward the immediate enemy. This means embracing insurgency, an immediate material engagement on an immediate and material terrain, one focused on strategy rather than abstract political theory; a reorientation of the question of action and waiting around engaging when and how engagement is strategic, and only to generate the maximum effect.

We should not fool ourselves, we are facing nothing less than a war; one without defined battlefields, without limit and without end. A war so all pervasive that it conditions our possibilities for existence, that it has become the standard for normalcy. This is a war that structures our terrain, inspires our cities, and organizes our lines of movement through space. It is a war, nothing less, and it is on that plane that we must conceive our engagement. Pithy attempts to engage with passion are often poorly thought out, and just as often contact no strategic points of intervention. We see this often with the glorified lone wolf or the urban guerrilla, with their symbolic strikes against a symbolic enemy whatever their very material consequences. This engagement with the dynamics of history, in all their immediacy, in all of their materiality, is the shift from activism to insurgency.

**Thesis 9: Insurgency is not something that can be defined in itself, except as an immediate and material engagement of hostility toward an immediate enemy within a context of warfare.**

To be an insurgent means re-evaluating our relationship to so-called social movements, and also our role outside of them. For example, liberals are not allies, even though there is often confusion on this question. Fundamentally, their goals always involve some paternalistic attempt to define everyday life, and to use the state to do so; it should then be no surprise that they often work with the police. This does not mean that they cannot be used, or that engagement with social movements may not be effective, but to be able to re-evaluate the relationship that any of us may have to social movements we have to re-conceive of what the so-called social movements are, and this requires a move away from understanding them as a necessity towards the conception of them as a tactic, a form of engagement that has dramatic limitations, but that may not be all together useless given the right conditions. But, to move to this point means moving beyond defining what we are doing as a thing that exists in some consistent way across time and space.

We have already discussed the need to move beyond the question of what is to be done, to recognize the particularity of the means and dynamics of engagement to specific terrains with which they evolve in parallel; the need to move beyond activism and into insurgency, an immediate engagement with the enemy in the context of warfare. But, as we make this move we have to be careful not to fall into the trap of defining insurgency as a thing, as some abstract object, as a series of tactics, as necessarily one thing or another outside of the immediacy of engagement. Insurgency is neither violent nor not, neither symmetrical nor not, neither armed nor unarmed. Insurgency is not a thing to be thought, but a form of engagement which plays out in a hostility toward the

enemy, and reveals itself in a posture toward the war that finds us, wherever we are, in our everyday lives.

When we speak about the necessity of moving from activism to insurgency we are not speaking of an increased militancy; militancy can be just as dangerous as pacifism and is a form of activism in its own right. Rather we are speaking of the need to avoid the tragedy of the Red Army Faction just as much as the tragedy of Occupy, the need to abandon symbolic terrains of engagement, in which we struggle against unspecified enemies on abstract political terrain through the elaboration of our passions. We are speaking of the necessity of grounding our understanding of what we are doing, separate from that of why we are doing it, in the space in which things actually occur, in the here and now, and to make the effort to base this engagement on concerns of strategy, of hostility toward the enemy in some specific sense, rather than some effort to make a point, “speak truth to power” or whatever might pass for action otherwise. We are speaking of a posture toward the enemy in which we strike when we have the advantage, wait when we do not, and use the means that will accomplish our objectives, rather than those which will leave us unburdened by conscience.

# Policing as Projection and Capacity

Tom Nomad, 2013. A section from the chapter “What is Policing?” in *The Master’s Tools: Warfare and Insurgent Capacity*.

*To create architecture is to put in order. Put what in order? Function and. objects. —Le Corbusier*

The police are an occupying force, but of an odd sort. When occupation is thought of it is usually as a blanket, total, form, one infecting all aspects of everyday life. But this is always an impossible totality. The *concepts* of the occupation are total, a space is occupied and defined by these operations, but occupation is never a total phenomena, it never actually enters into the possibility of actions to frame and determine actions. If it did, then resistance would be impossible. Rather, policing functions as a logistics of action, held together conceptually through logistical supply lines, uniforms, command structures, communications, and so on. This logistics enters into everyday life in a mythology of the unity of time and space as defined by the occupation, but this unity never actually functions, possibility is never actually defined. Policing is a deployment of force in a vain attempt to define actions, and in the process it must be positioned. It is not some ethereal force that exercises control over actions (although police violence definitely acts as a deterrent). All they can do is inject more or less organized action, which carries more or fewer consequences, in the attempt to control action, an attempt that is never fulfilled.

As Clausewitz argues, occupation always comes with two impossibilities. The first is simply numerical. If policing ever became total, if the constructs of the state ever came to frame and determine existence, policing would be irrelevant, and all of existence would be nothing but a drab, defined, playing out of a teleological script. But, since this is not the case, since theft still occurs, resistance still happens, people still get into confrontations with the police, refuse to snitch, and so on, it is simple to see that this totality does not exist. Therefore, we have to think of police, and the logistics of policing, as a limited and defined deployment of bodies and actions into space, and one that only covers a limited amount of space with a limited number of bodies. For example, take the G20 in Pittsburgh, which saw assembled the largest single police force in American history. If we line all of these cops up to the point where they could control all action in space in a direct way, without weapons, transportation or movement, they control a very limited amount of space in a city the size of Pittsburgh; add to this variances in terrain, which limit movement, the movements of the city and the density of actions that occur, and the security priorities

that keep certain numbers of police pinned to a location, and that space shrinks further. In a more extreme example— US military tactical shifts after the War in Iraq—we see this even more clearly. When the US invaded Afghanistan and then Iraq, they did so under the fantasy that occupation was unnecessary, that somehow their very presence would construct some total capitulation. But, as was found quickly, a low concentration of troops in resistant terrains allows for the conditions for insurgencies to flourish, organize, and arm. As a result, they flooded these regions with troops, stretching their capacity to the breaking point, and not only still failed to cover the totality of the terrain, but also left open other terrain, Northern Africa and the Yemen specifically. Their concentration of troops prevented their projection through space. So they shifted into low-concentration deployments, backed up by drone strikes and Special Ops raids, to attempt to cover as much space as possible, as consistently as possible, but this eliminated their ground presence and prevents them from holding any space. Literally, unless every square inch is covered, all the time, there is still the possibility of resistance action against or outside of the logistics of policing, making occupation not total. There are always gaps in coverage.

Secondly, action always changes the conditions and dynamics of action, a process that can never stop. Actions are within a time and space, a particular convergence of the dynamics of history, that both forms the conditions of that action, and also forms through action. Contrary to Aristotelean concepts of production and action as creation, we never act within or on some inert object, rather the object presents resistances that fundamentally change the dynamics of that action. Within the construction of history, all action generates resistances, shapes the generated effects of actions coming into conflict with the dynamics of other actions, in a process that fundamentally shapes the terrain of action. The state, on the other hand, exists as a definition of existence in a smooth, total, atemporal way. This means that it functions only to the degree that it functions totally in every moment, in all space, all the time, eliminating resistances and effects, and constructing actions in a smooth, resistanceless environment. The logistics of policing, the material manifestation of the attempt to construct the unity of the state in time and space, as time and space, only functions to the degree that it generates this total coverage prevented by numerical limitation. If this totality functioned, if all actions were defined, then we would be faced with a tragic, dystopian world: the world of immanence. For that to exist we would have to assume that every action was defined before being taken, the conceptual definition of that action would have to be the actual condition of possibility for all action. No actions could have any effects that were undefined, everything would arise as if disconnected to anything that occurred prior, if anything could occur at all. In other words, there would be no possibility of possibility, no ability to modify circumstance, only a total, metaphysically teleological definition of the totality of all existence, of which each and every existing thing is nothing but an expression. But, again, if this were the case then occupation, the logistics of policing, would be irrelevant. Therefore, we have to assume that the police act, and that these actions generate effects. Even in their deployment, even if nothing else occurred, the dynamics of action are changing, the terrain of action is being modified, and this is happening in ways that can never be determined. Conflict still occurs, even just in the relationship

of bi-pedal movement and hard ground, let alone in the collision and friction that action itself generates. In their very deployment, police generate friction, conflict, and open up other possibilities of action; history does not cease in its dynamics. We see this every time a counterinsurgency plan solicits an ambush, every time police crack down on a neighborhood and something occurs in another neighborhood, away from their concentration of force. Their movements change the terrain of action, and collide with the movements and actions of all other things that construct that terrain: the degradation of infrastructure, the growing hatred and resistance to the police, basic “crime” carried out by the desperate to survive within capitalism, worker absenteeism, strikes, and so on. Unless, magically, the deployment of the police actually overcomes the effects of their own actions, and somehow comes to freeze history in a defined moment, terrain will always shift, and this shift makes total occupation impossible.

The impossibility of the totality of occupation constructs policing as an attempt to project through ever greater volumes of space, in ever more constant ways. The entirety of the history of police methodology and operations centers around the development of the methods of projection. From the use of the car to the use of the radio, from the development of the surveillance matrix (ever more pervasive) to the construction of task forces, from the move into paramilitary operations to the development of so-called community policing—these shifts are undertaken in order to further project through space in more and more consistent ways. But there are limits to this projection, as we see with the transition from counterinsurgency to counter-terrorism methodologies within the US military, where a strategic choice has been made to avoid long occupations with large force footprints in favor of maximum projection across space with minimal numbers. With limited numbers choices must be made: allocation of force, structuring of logistics, maintenance of supply lines and so on. This becomes more and more difficult the more resistant the terrain becomes. For example, within the team-policing structures in Pittsburgh, the police space themselves throughout a sector, with numerous sectors per zone and six zones within the city limits. Within a sector police within a team will space out as far as possible, patrolling streets alone, with one cop per car, and then converge on a site of response, for example a traffic stop. This methodology tries for the best of both worlds: spreading out through a limited amount of space while still being able to swarm a specific area. Capacity is sacrificed in this operational methodology. As force spreads throughout the city and is divided between sectors, whenever there is a point of response (for example in sector a) the entire team converges, leaving the rest of that sector open, unless force is pulled from sector b to the empty spots in sector a.

Projection exists in two forms: visual and material. Visual projection is the capacity to see space and things in space, to develop what in modern military parlance is termed *topsight*. In the 19th Century, police had tended to march through streets in formation, largely so that they could communicate with one another.<sup>1</sup> This is an often misunderstood aspect of Napoleonic warfare, and the phenomena of soldiers marching into lines of gunfire. These formations existed in the absence of forms of communication that could cross distance. With the noise of combat, the smoke generated by gunfire, and the lack of radios, all commands were transmitted either through hand signal or some form of audible

command, and early police forces were no different.

This column formation began to space itself out with the use of whistles or other noise-makers, but, even with this mild form of projection, the area that could be projected through was limited. Vision was also limited, and the ability to gather and transfer information. With the advent of the radio, then the car, and finally the helicopter and surveillance camera, policing was able to project through space at greater speed and communicate over wider distances, allowing for greater projection.<sup>2</sup> But, even with the total surveillance structure that cities like New York, Chicago and Cleveland are building, where private security cameras are linked into the police camera matrix and private, semi-official police begin to act as support for city police, this coverage is remarkably limited. Cameras, mechanical vision, cannot in themselves analyze information—yet. This means that, even with the most sophisticated tools of surveillance, and the most sophisticated, highly trained, human analysts, there is only a certain amount of information that can be processed— even though the amount of information generated multiplies exponentially with the addition of each new surveillance apparatus.

Even the most sophisticated surveillance agency, the National Security Agency, which pulls terabytes of information every hour, only has around 35,000 analysts to look into all this information: millions of phone calls, millions of emails, millions of web-searches, library records, on the ground surveillance and so on. Analysis is the chokepoint, and this gets infinitely more complicated with the anonymity methods that are used by many of the internet generation. This gap between information and analysis becomes all the more stark when there is an attempt to analyze in realtime. At that point, to the degree that a command structure functions, information is being compiled, sent up the chain of command, analyzed, turned into orders, and communicated back to the ground. If actions are quick, even if this analysis becomes absurdly fast, there is still a gap, both temporal and interpretive, between action and the analysis of information about action within the command structure. Secondly, this is still limited to line of sight and information that can be combined with this vision. This is a primary difficulty when there is an attempt to crush any sort of insurgency; as David Galula argues, insurgencies must become the terrain, meaning that they are incredibly difficult to differentiate from the “population” (of course assuming that these are not the same thing). Many experienced people know that it always helps to have a change of clothes at actions, especially if they make you look like a hipster. A quick change of clothes when dispersing means often the police will drive right past you—the simple change of clothes makes them blind. Anonymity isn’t what exists when our faces are covered, anonymity, as Baudelaire argued, is the condition that we are relegated to in the capitalist metropolis. The distance that vision can encompass can be elongated with helicopters, drones, surveillance planes, cameras and satellites, but every time this distance multiplies the ability to pick out the micro-details of that space become more limited.

Material projection is the actual projection of force through space. Again, this occurs within a balance of concentration and projection. As policing began to spread out through space, and force concentration became more and more diffuse, the means of deploying a magnitude of force increased. Initially, police

may have carried nothing more than night-sticks and sometimes cuffs. Combined with movement on foot, force could only be projected on a line of bodily movement, and only at the speed of a quick run, along with the range of movement of the human arm. As force spread out, through the use of the car and the radio, and then the helicopter and the armored personnel carrier, this became combined with the handgun and automatic weapon to increase that projection dramatically. While the arm may only reach a couple feet from the body, the gun can project a bullet on a straight line for hundreds of meters, and with lethal force. This ability to project through the projectile was again furthered by the grenade, and grenade launcher, pepper spray and now the Taser, to project different levels of force out from the body onto a target, with the LRAD<sup>3</sup> able to project concentrated and targeted soundwaves over a quarter mile. These projections, along with increasing scales of force, are all ways of projecting force into space, to make the visibility achieved through topsight material and operative.

This reliance on the ground force is absolutely essential. Surveillance can act as a deterrent but not an actual material deployment of force as the US military found after the first phase of the invasion of Afghanistan. At the beginning of the war Special Operations and CIA were on the ground, acting as forward spotters. They would find a target, send coordinates to a drone overhead, which would send them to a base in Saudi Arabia, which would beam them to a satellite, and the satellite would send these to a B-52 that would drop a guided bomb on the area. This process would take 18 minutes. However, for all the destruction that can be caused within this structure, the ability to hit targets evaporated when insurgents abandoned infrastructure and hid vehicles in mountain passes, making them impossible to spot. This made the US respond with the commitment of ground forces, which insurgents can track, which have supply lines, etc, that must be supplied, and so on, creating a plethora of targets. Even with huge numbers in an area, the US ability to control the space by physical presence and the projection of projectiles was incredibly limited. As is often witnessed within insurgencies, the movement of main force concentrations into an area meets little resistance, insurgents melting away only to reemerge after the main force moves on. Material projection is not just a spatial question regarding the amount of space covered, but also one of time, of the constancy of that ability to move through space. As Clausewitz argues, this ability to move through space becomes increasingly difficult, and force projects less, the more uncertain and resistant the terrain becomes. Even a single attack can force an entire occupying force to shift into increasingly dense, defensive, concentrations, limiting their ability to project through space. The more they concentrate force physically the less able they are to project themselves across space as a seemingly constant presence.

Projection of force, visually and materially, is the attempt to construct a terrain that is conducive to the movements and operations of policing. We have seen numerous aspects of this within the tactical terrains that we inhabit: the proliferation of surveillance cameras, the networking of private cameras into the police surveillance matrix, the proliferation of private security and semi-official police departments, and the growth of neighborhood snitch networks, also known as Neighborhood Watch, but also the leveling of vacant buildings,

the mowing of vacant lots, and so on. Most innovative in the methods of projection is not a technology, but merely the construction of metropolitan space itself. The street grid developed in the 19th Century and the freeway systems in the early and mid-20th Century made movement through space easier and more efficient. Projection does not just involve the ability to latently hold space, even outside of immediate presence,<sup>4</sup> but the ability to move through space. However, like any technological innovation, the development of the road structure, standardizing space within Cartesian models, may have made movement easier, but also disperses concentrations of force and largely confines police movements to the roads themselves. As in Paris where Reclus suggested turning into gun turrets the row buildings lining the newly-built wide boulevards (that now characterize that city), this confinement to the road generates zones of elongated vision and projectile movement,<sup>5</sup> but also limits the vision of what occurs off these roads, in zones of indiscernability, whether Iraq's open desert plains, Afghanistan's mountains, or the "unbuildable" spaces on the sides of wooded hills in the middle of Pittsburgh. These zones of indiscernability, of invisibility and possibility, become wider the more resistance is waged within a space, the less that people snitch each other out, the more open space off the roads there may be within a terrain, and the density of the dynamics and physical objects (whether trees in a forest or barricades on streets) within the lines of flight within that terrain.

One can easily trace this trajectory of containing land for policing beginning with land enclosure and the standardization of naming and surveillance structures in the 16th and 17th centuries, of policing saturating space more and more thoroughly, as the dynamics of this space come to shape policing. The co-immanent dynamic between policing and space can be seen everywhere. In the suburbs we find the proliferation of private security, on every corporate campus, on every college campus, in every mall and shopping center, as well as the growth of increasingly fortified gated communities. In the core of the metropolis the street grid, the walls around the security buildings and precinct stations, the proliferation of private and public cameras, the deputization of pseudo-police forces at colleges and hospitals, the proliferation of non-police and "task forces" hired by development organizations, the rise of the community watch group, and the growth of the federal security apparatus have come to form spaces that are almost entirely framed around the movements and operations of police. With the enclosure of space, and the elimination of the commons, the "public" has become something to protect against. Surveillance saturates the workplace and the park. Police roll down the street looking for someone that looks suspicious; the streets in the poorest neighborhoods are cordoned off and Baghdad-style armed checkpoints are set up on the streets of LA. Paramilitary tactics are adopted by SWAT teams that increasingly become aspects of everyday police operations and the flip-side of the velvet glove of "community policing." Everywhere we look the metropolis has become structured around the separation of space, the separation of bodies, the dispersal of the street<sup>6</sup> and the fortification of the private. This does not occur in a vacuum, or in the absence of the attempt to amplify projection across space and time. As space becomes increasingly striated, increasingly operated upon, space itself begins to shift around a new series of imperatives. As static as many of us may feel built space is, the solidity of



terrain is largely mythological. But just as space shifts in order to allow for the smooth operation of policing (or prevent it),<sup>7</sup> policing has been modified to operate in the post-WWII metropolis with the incorporation of ever faster forms of communication, ever more sophisticated forms of monitoring and surveillance, and ever heavier weapons and paramilitary tactics.

What we are witnessing is nothing short of a constant security operation, a constant attempt to eliminate these zones of indiscernability, structured not only to respond to actions but also to prevent actions from arising or becoming apparent. Every day this more defines the spaces that we exist within; it is nothing short of the expansion of the prison outside of the walls. As in the prison, a terrain conducive to police movements and operations necessarily involves an almost total vision, a complete ability to project across space, the ability to justify unlimited uses of force. But, along with this, we come into contact with the primary paradox of counterinsurgency (policing is necessarily a form of occupation, and thus a form of counterinsurgency). As policing becomes more and more all-pervasive, as the police become more and more able to mobilize overwhelming concentrations of force, their very movements generate resistance, resentment, conflict. As they project through space they become visible, and the methods of tracking their movements and avoiding their detection are becoming more and more effective. Even with this growth of the prison, to encompass all space to varying degrees, illegality<sup>8</sup> still persists. Every day, acts of economic disruption, like theft and worker absenteeism, are rampant. The state only functions in the space in which policing functions, and to more or less of a degree. In these gaps in coverage, generated by the sheer limitation of police spatial occupation and the limits of the range of vision and weapons, the concentration of state logistics is low, and the possibility of action proliferates; this becomes even more pronounced within spaces where there is an ethic of noncooperation or outright resistance.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Williams, 2007

<sup>2</sup>Delanda, 1991

<sup>3</sup>long range acoustic device

<sup>4</sup>Many police tactics, including patrols, are meant to serve as a deterrent, to project their perceived presence outside of immediate presence. They may not be immediately present, but the altering of patrol patterns and the use of swarming tactics always make their presence possible.

<sup>5</sup>US Army *FM 3-19.15*: The development of the road grid was meant to make movement more efficient, but also allowed for bullets to be projected longer distances without hitting buildings, allowed vision to project further down wide straight streets, and made streets more difficult to barricade.

<sup>6</sup>"And he who becomes master of the city used to being free and does not destroy her can expect to be destroyed by her, because always she has as pretext in rebellion the name of liberty and her old customs, which never through either length of time or benefits are forgotten, and in spite of anything that can be done or foreseen, unless citizens are disunited or dispersed, they do not forget that name and those institutions..."; Machiavelli, *The Prince*, as quoted by Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*.

<sup>7</sup>In *Hollowland* Weizman recounts the debate around the rebuilding of Jenin after the invasion and destruction of the camp by the Israeli Defense Forces. The UN wanted to use the rebuilding process as an opportunity to rationalize the camp, by building permanent structures, widening roads, and imposing a grid pattern to the streets. Palestinians rejected the plan, arguing that permanence would sacrifice their claim to return to their previous land while the rationalization of the streets would make it easier for the IDF to invade in the future and easier to monitor, defeating the intentional chaos of the original development, built to resist invasion by structuring the space around dense winding streets (difficult for armor to move through and troops to maintain visual contact in).

<sup>8</sup>“Illegality” is a term that is only defined within the framework of law and the ability of the police to arrest, but all illegality presents a gap in police coverage.

# Acéphale (1936-1939)

Acéphale 5 by Georges Bataille, Contributors to other issues include Roger Caillois, Pierre Klossowski, André Masson, Jules Monnerot, Jean Rollin, Jean Wahl, 1936-1939. 2021 Contagion Press Edition: Introduction & (re)translations from French by anonymous anti-political anarchists. Excerpted.

## Introduction

... [“]He who begets something which is alive must dive down into the primal depths in which the forces of life dwell. And when he rises to the surface, there is a gleam of madness in his eyes because in those depths death lives cheek by jowl with life. The primal mystery is itself mad – the matrix of the duality and the unity of disunity. We do not have to appeal to the philosophers for this. . . . All peoples and ages testify to it through their life experiences and their cult practices.

Man’s experience tells him that wherever there are signs of life, death is in the offing. The more alive this life becomes, the nearer death draws, until the supreme moment – the enchanted moment when something new is created – when death and life meet in an embrace of mad ecstasy. The rapture and terror of life are so profound because they are intoxicated with death. As often as life engenders itself anew, the wall which separates it from death is momentarily destroyed.” [Walter Otto, *Dionysos: Myth and Cult*]

Christianity, and the secular modernity that is its decomposition, denies the life that lives cheek by jowl with death. Unable to affirm a life that is inextricable from suffering, tragedy, death, it can only affirm a false eternal life while denying life itself. Dionysian existence is the affirmation of life as tragedy. How better to affirm life as tragedy than to celebrate the greatest tragedy: the death of God! Attempt to understand this paradox through the head and you are condemned to confusion. Escape the head and the paradox becomes painfully, joyfully clear. Learn joy in the face of death, and you learn to live. For what is life but the joyful, violent impulse for play, calling new worlds into being?...

## Acéphale 5: Madness, War, and Death

### … The Practice of Joy Before Death

#### 1

“I abandon myself to peace unto the point of annihilation.

“The sounds of struggle lose themselves in death like rivers in the sea, like the radiance of stars in the night.

“The power of combat fulfills itself in the silence of any action.

“I enter into peace as into a dark unknown.

“I fall in this dark unknown.

“I become myself this dark unknown.

## 2

"I AM the joy before death.

"Joy before death carries me.

"Joy before death precipitates me.

"Joy before death annihilates me.

"I dwell in this annihilation and from there I apprehend nature as a play of forces expressed in a multiplied and incessant agony.

"I lose myself thus slowly in a space unintelligible and without bottom.

"I reach the bottom of worlds.

"I am gnawed by death.

"I am gnawed by fever.

"I am absorbed in somber space.

"I am annihilated in the joy before death.

### 3

“I AM the joy before death.

“The sky’s depth, lost space is joy before death: everything is deeply broken.

“I apprehend the earth turning vertiginously in the sky.

“I apprehend the sky itself slipping, turning, and losing itself.

“The sun like an alcohol, turning and shining breathlessly.

“The sky’s depth like an orgy of icy light losing itself.

“Everything that exists destroying itself, consuming itself and dying, every moment not happening but in the annihilation of the one before it and itself not existing but as mortally wounded.

“Me destroying myself and consuming myself ceaselessly in myself in a great festival of blood.

“I apprehend the chilling moment of my own death.<sup>1</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>One night, in dream, X. feels himself struck by lightning: he realizes that he is dying and is immediately miraculously dazzled and transfigured; at this moment of the dream, he attains the *unexpected* but he awakens.