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## On Body and Soul

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## On Body and Soul

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Since thought is inseparable from action and motivation, we are not so much dealing with different “logics” or rationalities as with total modes of being, of inventing self and society.

—Roy Wagner (1981 [1975]:117)

... the Piaroa do not tend to oppose, in the way we do, thinking and acting. We cannot use our gloss of “mind” and “body” to capture their way of understanding this distinction. They, in fact, have no term for “body.”

—Joanna Overing (1996:14)

### INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses the plausibility of notions of “body” and “soul” within the dual universe of the Marubo from Southwestern Amazonia.<sup>1</sup> At two levels the discussion implies “an acquaintance with the epistemologies and ontologies of other cultures” (Overing 1985:7). The first concerns a poststructuralist perspective on epistemological issues in Amazonia. The second, which has taken place in the twenty years since the publication of *Reason and Morality*, concerns a shift in understanding of indigenous ontology, that is, as the “presentation”—rather than the “investigation” or “account” of the origins of the cosmos and all forms of being therein—toward the knowledge of the performance of a cognitive ethos.

These two views correspond to those set out by Dan Rosengren (*infra*). My own conclusions point to a step beyond Overing’s past preoccupations, one she herself seems intent to take: from “attention to ordinary language use, the pragmatics of ordinary speech acts” to the *form*, poetic or otherwise, of what “others say about their social worlds” (Overing 1985:7–19).<sup>2</sup>

The following ethnographic excerpts have been largely left out from my previous writings on myth among the Marubo, an indigenous people from the Upper Javari Valley (Brazilian Amazonia). My previous writings

have analysed one or a few fragments or aspects of their mythology (see Melatti 1985, 1986, 1989; and Werlang 2002, 2003). An exhaustive account is still yet to be made.<sup>3</sup> My focus has been primarily on music. The Marubo call their *saiti*, which I translate as “myth-chants.”

Fernando Santos-Granero suggests (*intra*) that Aristotelian psychophysiology can offer precepts affecting our bodies before our souls conceptualize them.<sup>4</sup> With this in mind, I analyze *saiti* as myth in song, as song in myth. Marubo “psychophysiology” can, as for the Yanomami, analytically be placed in dialogue with Aristotle and Plato. In *saiti*, the Marubo enact an encounter among themselves and between their own body-constituent souls, which is quite alien to cognitive hierarchies. It is an intercommunal festival, and as such *saiti* arises as a foremost event in Marubo social lives. In this regard and in its musicality, *saiti* transcends the Platocratic discourses about the divine, the heroic, and dystopic. It is rather an “encounter between humans and gods, in a world that, at each of these encounters, is the scenario wherein each encounter unfolds” (Sousa 1973:118). It is an encounter that enfolds bodies and souls, humanity and animality.

Marubo ontology is, in *saiti*, performative. It has as much to do with “gods” as with “bodies” and “souls.” As such, “being” among the Marubo has less to do with epistemology and more to do with religion and ritual.<sup>5</sup> This is as far from a positivist statement as it is from a platitude (cf. Sousa 1975).

## SAITI MYTH-MUSIC

What follows is a brief transcribed summary of five *saiti*, with their corresponding musical cell:

*Mokanawa Wenia*: “the emergence of the bitter-wild peoples”:



*Shane Memi Yōsha*: “old blue-green *Memi* woman”:<sup>6</sup>



*Yawa Tivo*: “prototypical peccary”:



*Teté Teka*: “the shooting of the hawk”



*Vei Vai Yoya*: “the guide to the dangerous-transformational path”:



All these *saiti* present some sort of dualism, due to their intrinsic duality qua myth-chants (myth texts against chant intonations), and due to their musicality (the very poetic quality that shall be left apart—apart from the musical cells that, for each *saiti*, the scores above summarize). Note that each reiterative cell (*saiti* is minimalist music to the utmost) presents two contrasting sections—a feature that is self-evident, and emphasized by the distribution of verbal verses (see Werlang 2001).

In their content, all of these *saiti* deal in some way with humans and animals. Inferentially, it is in such narrative deployment that we may infer an indigenous dualism and the cogency (or lack thereof) of the body/soul duality in Marubo ontology. The reader shall decide for themselves the extent to which this interpretative approach succeeds in saying something additionally informative about these peoples—or better still, about *saiti* myth-music.

## MYTHICAL-MUSICAL DUALISM

The foregoing dual dialectics of form in *saiti* refer neither to the musical dimension of the myth-chants alone, nor only to the tonal character of the words in the chants above. The conspicuous formal character of the *saiti* vocal genre is also apparent when words take their verbal level in pitchless phonetics: in strophes, rhymes, and poetical devices. The recurrence of certain verbal formulas characterizes every *saiti*. More often than not, a wider verbal structure of the *saiti* myth-chants appears on paper, in the visual bidimensionality of their verbal translation. Still, in some myth-chants, shown at a more encompassing level than that of the musical cell,

the division (between the visual and the verbal) reveals something other than pure semantic clusters or narrative stages. The main significance of these musical cells resides in those thematic-formal groupings (strophes, rhymes, poetical devices) of several verbal verses that move beyond the cellular dimension of their intonation while still emulating it. More often than not, this boils down to a formal dualism.

Take the *saiti* of *Shane Memi Yōsha*, where the linear narrative is twofold in its widest dimension, that is, one narrates the story, then the “story,” “Old” *Shane Memi*, “Blue-Green” *Memi* “narrates itself,” repeating the first verbal section almost word for word. This alone confers an overall unity to the one hundred and eight verses and the corresponding isomorphic cells of this *saiti*. Then its concluding verse, the ending of its verbal discourse, reaffirms the secondary or, in fact, third-person viewpoint taken in the course of the narrative by means of a recurrent formula in myth-chants: *a ikiao i*, “thus spake” *Shane Memi Yōsha*.<sup>7</sup> The centrality of this main character provides the agential voice of the narrative, more than that of a protagonist. The *saiti* performers silence their own agency through the very sound of their voices.

Singers in festivals always respond to a leading voice. The “chant-leader,” (*yoya*) intones a verbal verse that a chorus repeats *ipsis litteris* successively, always to the same musical cell. In each *saiti*, each verse corresponds to one of the respective cells above: for *n* verbal verses; and for each *saiti*, one and the same musical cell. The chant-leader constructs the narrative while the responding singers walk in pairs, in circles, “journeying” as they say.

The verbal content of this *saiti* might shed light on the musical journey of *Shane Memi Yōsha*. It may distract our attention from the indigenous meanings as well, and could also lead us into an essentialist blunder. But its comparisons and generalizations might be worth the risk, if such distraction directs us back to the *saiti* sonic dialectics of verbal phoneme and musical pitch, and their own hierarchies of form.

As with other mythical characters in Amazonia (e.g., Stolze Lima 1999:43), *Shane Memi* becomes a victim of abduction. She is taken away as a result of her unfortunate intent to procure a tapir liver right through the anus of the sleeping animal. The tapir wakes up and dashes away wildly through a toponymic and ethnonymic route, taking *Shane Memi* for a journey up and down the earth and sky. When her children find *Shane Memi*, they can hardly recognize her. She was nearly a tapir herself, lying on a trap set by her own sons.

Taken from variations in myth, a structural syllogism would lead us to think that the Marubo myth/chants use similar relations between prey animals as other Amazonian mythic themes do in general. Indeed, as in the

stories told by Rosengren (*intra*), *Shane Memi* suffers because of improper predatory intercourse with the tapir, a deviant behaviour resulting in an excessive identification with the animal. As in other Amazonian myths, the protagonist shares food with the animal, or alternatively produces offspring with it. Here, such substantial identification with the animal fades away when a third, human-consanguineous party, preys on it with traps or arrows. The ludicrous fate of the transgressor (having been taken away by an anus) is structurally similar to a shamanic trip. It is a form of access to a celestial realm or the very transmutation of the body. The successful hunt puts an end to the pseudopredatory intercourse, which identifies prey and predator before (or beyond) the act of predation.

Beyond analogical syllogisms, however, we must devote our attention to literal as well as local paradoxes. These appear to be the basis for the more comparative aspect of the *saiti* myth-chants, being indeed more than mere common traits found throughout the region. From alien to grand universalistic formulations, this analytical stance shall allow for ethnographic synthesis, because the same identification between human and animal that myth posits and negates remains latent in its musical ontology.

## PERSONS AND PEOPLES, SPIRITS AND DOUBLES

The Marubo speak Panoan. In their language, for every *yora*—a nonethnic-specific self-designation—there exists an array of self-constitutive “souls.” For every individual “body” there are several souls which, in their integration, define the concept of humanity that *yora* implies. For each human *yora*, there is a left-side soul *mechmirí vaká* that is a potential *yochí* (an “animal double” and disease agent), and there is a right-side soul *mekiri vaká* that is a potential *yové* (“spirit”).

The *yochí* is the most suitable candidate for a hypostasis of evil in missionary speech.<sup>8</sup> Missionaries translate it as *bicho*, a local idiom for “animal,” or “beast.” It emanates from sexual intercourse between humans and animals while hunting. Immoral behavior between human prey and predator, as in the story above, liberates noxious *yochí*. Also, this “double” identifies with excreta and corpses, and with all that degenerates, all things past. It is the material counterpart of memories that infuse the belongings and dwellings of those who have passed away.<sup>9</sup> It favors dwelling in places of solitude and the forest.

The *yové* spirit is an acquirable capacity, a skill that inheres to the human voice and sense of sight, and in consequence, to human thoughts. A shaman once heard my singing and saw my *yové*. He said he saw designs

on my throat, *kene mōnti*. “Hearing ‘beauty’ (*roaka*) is seeing spirit,” he said.

In vision, the *yové* manifests as latency rather than actuality. When it manifests as actuality, it does so as musical performance. Besides the synesthetic association of design and sound, so familiar to panologists (e.g., Gebhart-Sayer 1985), the *yové* manifests itself as mannikins who inhabit the forest canopy. Similar to gnomes or fairies, they constitute a “supernatural” reality which only shamans can see. Conversely, the perception of shamans coheres with the way one perceives these. Shamanic bodies and bodily transformations—fragrant, melodious, and ornamental—though of this world, point toward an otherworldly reality of mortal becoming and of immortal renovation in the supernal abode of the dead (*shoko nai shavaya*). The *yové* actuality is performative, anthropomorphic, and rather synesthetic. Its latency in humans, in the form of *mekiri vaká* (right-hand soul) has a temporal tenure.

The gloss “spirit,” or spirituality, might evoke the body versus soul dichotomy to many of us, thus precluding any corporeality. But the *yové* “other” reality, as mannikin, precludes such a dichotomy, while implying another dichotomy of nature versus “supernature.” A counterdistinction against *yochí* doubles would lead, in turn, to that of humanity versus animality. Readers should take my glosses with a grain of salt. Here “spirit” refers to *spirare*, to breathing rather than to “spirituality,” while duplicity refers to ambiguity rather than dichotomy.

Let me qualify this. While the *yochí* is the present double of animals, and the past and future animal double of humans (living and dead)—of their left-hand *mechmirí vaká* soul—the epitome of the *yové* spirit is the *mawa* bird, an occasional healing helper, the counterpart of the human *mekirí vaká* (the spirit-becoming right-hand soul). Although we may gloss *yochí* as “animal double” while we gloss *yové* as “spirit,” these animistic diacritics for corporeal, “left” and “right” *vaká* have much in common. Both *yochí* and *yové* are entities encountered in the shaman’s discourse. In this discourse, both are indiscriminately akin to animals first and foremost (and to dead humans and living shamans too), but not to literal animality only. Between the animality and spirituality of these entities, the binomial distinction has more to do with psychophysiology and eschatology, that is, what the person is in relation to and to what they shall be. After death, while the left-hand *mechmirí vaká* should linger on earth, the right-side *mekiri vaká* ascends to the skies.

In the Marubo sublunar world, however, there is no conformation of *yochí* and *yové* as antinomies. What predictably would have been paradoxical of one or the other, in a (Platocratic) ontological hierarchy,

cannot conform to generational and degenerational forms of existence set against a realm of eternity. In this epistemology, the glosses “animal” and “spirit” cannot be taken at face-value. These terms offer semantic temporal inflections—given in the words and notes of myth-chants—the successive verbal lines and reiterative musical circles of its poetics.

As latent inflections, the *saiti* myth-chants represent a duality of transforming entities. The *vaká* souls of the *yora* body are multiple and transformative, although at their substratum is individually integrated. Marubo souls and bodies have the latent possibility among themselves of ambiguous relationships, that is, dialectical relationships not amenable to our familiar syllogisms. The souls transcend bodies, becoming literally immanent to human beings. This is so to the extent that *saiti* circular lines (the musical-mythical past and future) occur at all levels of human “breathing consciousness” (*chiná*), i.e., not as concept, but as performance: shamanic chant-leader and generic chorus; male elder and apprentice; and gender-generic youth.

The issue of soul transformability, once taken as irreducible to invariant bodies, could indeed lead to wide generalizations for the whole of Amazonia. Marubo bodies do, in fact, change over time as a response to (or as a cause of, since there is little room for teleology here) the spatiotemporal dynamics of cosmic souls, both within and outside of humans. But the widest, collective definition of humanity for these peoples, their ethnonymic self-designation as *-nawa*, their notion of “being of a kind” stands in distinction to bodies as such, that is, to *yora*. As among other Amerindians, such as the Piaroa (Overing 1996), here “being of a kind” means the most intimate, convivial kinship. Still these *-nawa* peoples, while cultivating conviviality, epitomize an exogenous perspective that is fundamental to indigenous ethnicity. Among the Marubo, one cannot confuse alterity with a differential corporeality. For the Marubo, unlike the Matsigenka (Rosengren *intra*), homogeneous multiplicity gains a positive identifying value, and although the Marubo ultimately have an exogenous perspective, *nawa* as a single word (and not as a suffix) means “foreigner.” This is what panologists have called “constituent alterity” (Erikson 1986, 1996).

Among the Marubo, all *-nawa* peoples gain their *-nawa* names after various inanimate entities, as well as plants and animals. Yet it is within *yora* bodies proper that the *yové* versus *yochí* latency of all souls allows for the proper identification between humans and animals. This is of particular importance and a prerequisite for hunting. Here, as elsewhere in South America, in attracting it to the predatory situation, one has to lure game by addressing it in either affinal or consanguineal terms. A shamanic

agreement or pact can be set beforehand. Whichever is done, this pact always disguises the dissimilarity of prey and predator (as an actuality, at least) in order to reassert it in the actual act of predation. Shamanic intervention may actualize a subliminal ontological identity within cosmological ecosystems, thus establishing a given soul commonality that contradicts body variability. The claim seems to be valid enough among the Marubo, as generally in Amazonia, that shamanic capabilities (notably cynegetic ones) presuppose the variable bodily forms that one soul can assume, rather than extraneous souls within a single material body. This is of course true only when assuming that a face-value opposition between bodies and souls exists.<sup>10</sup>

This assumption of a body and soul distinction precludes such a fascinating and promising comparison among these shamanic practices. One is hard pressed, at a performative level, to render intelligible such conceptual/perceptual distinctions between *yora* bodies and soul-like entities such as *yochí* and *yové*, and *mechmirí* and *mekirí vaká*. From their linguistic usage these terms have more relevance than Procrustean bodies versus souls (see Storrie *intra*).

The relations that human souls establish and enact in shamanic séances and through ritual language would be more akin to the bodily, synesthetic experience reached through sense manipulation, drugs, music, and movement—all elements that constitute *saiti*. Through the synesthetic experience, the shaman achieves alternating syntonic perceptions vis-à-vis cosmic entities, whose pertinence to the human realm is real and essential for the constitution of human bodies. Indeed, not only shamans, but also all active participants in festival performance take different corporeal perspectives, i.e., they transform their bodies by acting upon them and acting them out, incorporating affective dispositions rather than different souls.

Yet, to the Marubo, bodies versus souls as translations and transpositions of distinctions between nature and culture remain relevant to the extent that they reveal themselves to be paradoxical, that is, temporary and, qua performance, temporal. Instead of incorporating souls, shamans excorporate them through sound. The Marubo explain that, through musical callings, the *yovevo* (plural form of *yové*) receive invitations during séances to visit the shaman's body, the abode of shamanic souls, making it their own temporary dwelling (cf. Rosengren's Matsigenka *intra*). Yet, would that mean that during this spiritual exchange bodies might remain vacant? No, as neither shamans' souls nor *yové* spirits do quite "dwell" in bodies. Their movement in relation to the *yora* body is centrifugal rather than centripetal, since it is manifest in song. The conflation of souls into

bodies is latent as a left versus right, pragmatic tautology. In the actuality of music, bodies and souls conflate as humans and animals, and as spirits and doubles. The music shamans intone is spiritual. It is the actualization of a latent identity between right-hand soul, *mekirí vaká*, and the *yové* spirit. Such spiritual expression encompasses, in reiterative musical cells, the succession of verbal verses that narrate the original generation and degeneration that *yochí* (animal doubles) represent.

The extraordinary shamanic discourse, the “spiritual language” (*yové vana*) or music, is the consequence or cause of an exterior journey, or rather a projection of external voices that are at once carnal and animalic. Marubo bodies, or at least their singing throats *kene mōti* (with beautiful geometrical, although invisible designs) that sing *yové vana*, are a means as much as a substratum. Spiritual and animalic entities are not within *yora* bodies, but stand instead as potentialities behind and beyond the original conjunction of bodily souls. Marubo souls are always made “real” through bodily vocal chords, which vibrate with musical sympathy when under the stimulus of an exogenous, spiritual and animal, supernatural and natural *yové* voice. Thus, these qualifying categories of “spiritual” and “animal” are awkwardly antinomic, inasmuch as *yora* bodies, if split into animalic hemispheres, do not sound in opposition to their soul/anatomical constituents (*mekirí* and *mechmirí vaká*). The relevant native opposition lies between these souls themselves and in their relation with superhuman, extracorporeal cosmic entities (the *yochí* doubles and *yové* spirits)—or between humans and animals—even though such a relation rests upon a seemingly Aristotelian opposition. Latency and actuality should be read as temporality. From such a reading, it can be determined that the Marubo resist through the use of time. To the chagrin of proselytizing missionaries, their souls are as impervious to an opposition with their bodies, as shamans and shamanic practices are omnipresent and resistant among these *-nawa* peoples.

This is why indigenous Marubo knowledge pertains to, and indeed is, both *saiti* and other song forms, and why such knowledge is reducible to such musical ontology. It is, however, irreducible to distinctions in terms of bodily substances against animating forms that would allow for a self-sufficient encyclopedic compilation of “key concepts” in ethnography. Rather than being abstract designations of a more or less concrete semantic content, the *saiti* contain immanent meanings—as in the transcriptions above—that transcend the designative meaning of words. These transcriptions, which might be called “sonic structures,” are heuristic constructs meant to highlight the power of verbalization and “musicalization” of sound. To sing, among the Marubo, means both to incorporate difference and to “excorporate” sameness with and within the world—that is, with

animals, plants, or things, all ethnonymic constituents—within a temporal framework.

## ETHNONYMIC DUALISM

The dual animality, the soul duality of indigenous anatomy, and the consequent connection of humans with birds and animals—that in the everyday are either prey or predator to the Marubo—become actual in the performance of the linear stories of *saiti*, in particular in those that the Marubo call “emergence” (*wenia*). A *saiti* such as *Mokanawa Wenia*, the emergence of the “wild-bitter peoples” (i.e., peoples of the forest), projects the body-soul of the future, merging humanity into two animal forms, the *yové* spirit and the *yochí* double, as its story is told throughout its successive verbal verses within recurrent musical cells. In such *saiti* genesis, the creation of humans is coterminous with this pair of soul entities, which are heard less in words than in melodies. In the words of the myth-chants of *wenia*, humanity comes out of an indirect, successive identification with predatory animals and birds. Peoples emerge out of original substances on earth that are associated with animals of prey or predation, while each emerging *mokanawa* people thus acquires their names, and then their language, in association with a bird. The fact that *yové* and *yochí*—these animalic and anatomic self-constituents of humanity—identify in myth-chant to each prototypical animal is consistent with the connections that onomastics establish (in those same *saiti* as well as in the everyday) between the world of the Marubo and the words the Marubo intone. Ethnonymic animals are a primary prototype of human beings qua social selves: humanity with *-nawa* names.

Although well-known in the literature on Panoans, these *-nawa* names also call for explanation. In *saiti* myth-chants and in the everyday, Marubo persons and alternate-generation matrilateral kinship sections come into existence and receive names after animals, plants, and things at large, e.g., *Shanenawa*, *Inonawa*, *Varinawa*, et cetera. These peoples are “Blue-Green Birds” (*Shane*), “Jaguars” (*Ino*) and, among other plants and things, they are also “Suns” (*Vari*). These are *-nawa* peoples. They conceive of and maintain humanity as bifurcated kinship groups. The self is the prototype of the other, and vice versa. Animal others are human selves through an ethnomic equation. Human beings gain names after animals, while animals become paradigms of both alterity and identity due to the ambiguous status of *nawa* (which is a suffix as well as a single word). Rather than a monovalent category, “animal” is dual, because its

humanization in musical poetics (into *-nawa* ethnonyms) endows it with a dual latency (*yochī* and *yové*).<sup>11</sup>

Said another way, after the original *wenia*-creation of humans in some *saiti* myth-chants, such as *Mokanawa Wenia*, the animals of prey and predation and the birds that help the constitution of humanity, as well as plants and others things, together equate to the everyday human self through personal names and ethnonyms. That these predatory animals and birds are divisible into two categories (pertaining to *yové* birds and relating to *yochī* predators and preys) that exhaust neither the everyday variability of ethnonyms (including plants and other things) nor the subject-matter of human self-constitution (namely *nawa*-ness) suggest that predation and vocality are no more than (essential) attributes of humanity. Both predation and vocality are attributions that humans get from animals and birds in their *-nawa* constitutions. Predation and vocality are attributes because humans acquire animality as soul-potentialities. Humans are humans only due to a proper balance between two animal potentialities within their bodies. Thus, those animal categories, *yochī* and *yové*, are neither substantial nor adjectival to humanity, despite being essential (with their essentiality contained in their *nawa*-character). These categories are not mutually exclusion from the tight categories of nature or supernature. Due to the peculiar place occupied by animality in such ontology, the ethnonymic and anthropogenic statuses of animals place Marubo in a position of resistance against conceptual universals.

These statements are indications of that which only the *saiti* myth-chants of creation (through the enfolding of temporal structures) can unfold. That is, rather than material substance ("mere raw matter," as are the *chetsots* bodies of Santos-Granero's Yanesha), *yora* bodies, qua substrata, are the subjective actualization of souls made into potential objects, the actual subjectification of objective potentialities. The animal hypostasis within humans is the logical, transformational counterpart of the soul that materializes in the outside as exogenous, immoral *yochī* illness or exospheric, moral *yové* paradigm. Or additionally, the animal hypostasis is the soul counterpart of the animal ethnonym. Thus, Marubo souls are potential "double diseases" or spirit-helpers, and original *-nawa* names are potential objectifications of supra-*yora* subjectivities. The external animal is potentially the bodily equivalent to internal human souls. *Yora* bodies are potential *yochī* doubles and *yové* spirits, whereas their bodies constituent *vaká*-souls and are not an exclusive essence of humanity. On the contrary, souls of left and right—made manifest qua percepts in the eye (*vero yochī*) and excreta (*isō yochī*, *poī yochī*), in breath-thoughts (*chinā*) and shadows (*noke yochī*)—are also emblems of nonhumanity, if such a distinction from

the human realm is pertinent at all.

In fact, while the axionomy of *yochī* and *yové* entities maintain variable correspondence with other ontological dichotomies in Amazonia,<sup>12</sup> the point in question is that analyses and analogies departing from such categorial templates as bodies versus souls, qua analytical analogues to nature versus culture, are not at all pertinent in stasis: such “doubles” and “spirits” exist only as potential aspects within and in relation to *yora* bodies, i.e., humans. The peculiarity of such an opposition of values is that *yochī* doubles and *yové* spirits are beyond the human body, and at the same time constitute it as potentialities.<sup>13</sup>

Although this is a given in *saiti*, it is not lost in the mythical past. As for John Renshaw’s Ayoreo (*intra*), such a chronological notion of the mythical as remote would itself be a myth. Those foregoing distinctions—*yové* spirit and *yochī* double; bird and predatory animal; subjects and objects; and humans and things in the world—are themselves the recurrent grounding of indigenous humanity. These *-nawa* peoples are the object of cultural denominations, i.e., they are *yora* (proper humans) inasmuch as their subjectivity temporally equates to that of objective nature (animals, plants, and other things). The Marubo are peoples of the Blue-Green Bird (*Shanenawa*), of the Jaguar (*Inonawa*), and of the Sun (*Varinawa*). Human creation is cosmogenesis, that is, of plants, animals, and things in the world at large. The hypostasis of humanity, if anything, is a somatic state of symphonic synthesis.<sup>14</sup>

Ethnonymic animals, plants, and other things aside, the equation that conjoins animals and humans, selves, and others makes still more sense with reference to another category of animal that is neither bird nor predator. This is the white-lipped peccary (*yawa*) that comes to the fore ritually in mimicry, during festivals celebrating and propitiating the hunt. In those cynegetic, specific *saiti* festivals, the mock-figure of the peccary, which mock-hunters gather into a pack, is the prototypical prey. The reference to this animal alludes to myth again, in the *saiti* chant of *Yawa Tivo*. Among kinship sections, *yawa* is not an emblematic animal for humans. It is, however, a most emblematic animal for hunting, a preferential prey.<sup>15</sup>

Peccary hunting is a social event par excellence, for it gathers together large numbers of people from several neighboring longhouses, including men, women, and children. These hunting expeditions serve to create, consolidate, and display ties of solidarity in family life, especially among young couples, who are perceived to be on their way to a happy marriage when seen hunting together. To chase and kill the numerous and dangerous herds requires team strategy. The result provides enough food for a banquet, and promotes opportunities for festivals. As in some

*saiti* festivals, there is choreography and musical chanting associated with a symbolic pantomime, in which men, women, and children alternatively represent the actors in a ritual hunt. *Yawa* peccaries, their favorite prey, call for a different identification with humans than that which ontologically exists between humanity and namesake animality by means of ethnonyms, of soul-dualities—of the *saiti* myth-chants of *wenia* creation. Again, it is in listening to *Yawa Tivo*, the myth-music that sings both creation and transformation, that such a differential identity tends to make more sense.

If birds and predators relate to the human *-nawa* as indexes of nomination in myth and daily dealings, humans relate to peccaries in hunting and the *saiti* of *Yawa Tivo*. Between the human hunter and the prototypical peccary prey (that which the propitiatory *saiti* festival anticipates), their relationship becomes a reality during the actual hunt. It is one of common ancestry, as that *saiti* shows. This time, instead of describing humans emerging from animal substance—as with *wenia*-emergence—myth-music shows peccaries as transformations of humans. If the myth-chants of *wenia*-creation establish constitutive connections between birds and animals of predation on the one hand, and humans on the other, in this myth the ancestral humanity of peccaries connects prey to the human predator. Peccary preys are perverted, corrupted human selves, but the morality of such perversion seems less than relevant. The moral connection between humans and animals is seen more clearly in their original ties of kinship. *Yawa Tivo saiti* draws alternative kin connections to those that other myth-chants posit between humans and their sectional namesakes. If, in *wenia*-creation, humanity is *nawa*-prototypical, substantial transformation from ethnmonic animals such as the white-lipped peccary, the *yawa* of *saiti* is instead *tivo*, a means of indicating its special status with respect to human predation.

As with *nawa*, the word *tivo* also denotes by itself “prototypical” and “large.” But, it does not have the same “foreign” denotation, having instead a subtle connotation inflecting toward the interior, either consanguineous or affinal. The peccary-*tivo*, prototypical prey, does not share essence with humans in the same “family resemblance” fashion as their animal namesakes do (see Werlang 2001). If ethnmonic animals somehow generate humans, through common bonds of metonymical or metaphorical substance, then some humans, once in myth, generate peccaries.

*Tivo* could be the product of an etymological amalgamation of the nominal and plural suffixes *-ti* + *-vo* (“widely” or “largely”). This would be consistent with its meaning in several *saiti*. But in mythical-musical usage, *tivo* applies to animals only. The qualifying word has a central meaning—

at least in two of the five myth-chants above—in *Yawa Tivo* and in *Teté Teka*. In the latter, the main protagonist, the original predatory animal, the giant *teté* hawk has the nickname of *txai tivo*, the inimical affine of humanity, who is, at least, an affinal figure to those humans who, in their original, myth-music dimension, persist in their quest for a dwelling on earth. In this instance, *txai tivo* denotes many inflections that share some connotative common ground. The phrase literally means “big cross-cousin,” or “prototypical affine or brother-in-law.” It is a kin creature, but also an “enemy.” Its immediate denotation is that of the large bird of prey *teté*, the *saiti* protagonist. Furthermore, it can connote “living site,” or “prototypical dwelling.” In short, the *teté* hawk qua *txai tivo* is the “longhouse-cross-cousin.” When it dies—euphemistically shot (*teka*) by the original humanity—it inaugurates affinity out of a former claim of consanguinity, just as the transformation of peccaries, in *Yawa Tivo*, inaugurates human predation of animals. In other words, *tivo* means “largely other,” with reference both to *teté* hawk and *yawa* peccary. It resounds “constituent alterity.” But *tivo* signifies affinity out of consanguinity, just the status that predation must have, while *nawa* is the reverse, following the principle of sameness out of difference. For, *tivo* is animal, while *nawa* is human.

## ONTOLOGICAL DUALISM

The distinction between *nawa* and *tivo* is just another layer of meaning revolving around the notions of humanity and animality among the Marubo. In the spirit of avoiding facile categorizations and thereby avoiding essentialism, I will condense three issues that have direct bearing on the possibility of indigenous elaboration on our notions of body and soul.

The first issue is that the original, mythical state of a common humanity /animality—presumably a universal in Amazonia—is a state of transient mutability, one of temporal instability among the Marubo. If one is to follow the form of their expression and manifestation in *saiti* poetics, in music, and in movement, then human/animal commonalities exist in a transmutability that lies in between those ontological provinces that relate respectively to birds and to predators and prey, as well as to plants and to things “other.” The human condition is itself a liminal state, as seen in occasional references to initiation in *saiti* and as otherwise depicted in myth-chants. The human lot is a ritual re-enactment throughout life in hunting, illness, curing, and eventually at death and in post-mortem limbo, when souls linger either on earth or ascend to the sky in renewal.

Although some *saiti* are full of propitiatory references (possible remnants of increase rites), most festivals are generic and periodic. *Saiti* is a general human, social condition of growth, decay, and renewal. There is no scope for eternal ideas here, for indigenous dualism is not bidimensional.

The mutual and commutable transformability—between humans and birds, on the one hand, and “animal others” on the other—constitutes humanity both in the present everyday and through mythical-musical time. This differential chronology presents itself through sound, melding successive memories with a reiterative project for the future. The way *saiti* myth-chants phrase, the issue allows for an ontological hierarchy or chronological order. It is one between those temporal inflections of the human-becoming movement that such commonality of humanity with animal substance entails. If musically circular, it is linear within its overarching, verbal dimension.

In the *saiti* of *wenia*-emergence, humans first emerge as a synthesis of predatory animals, and then acquire language from birds. The thorough circular repetition of this movement during its performance, in turn, makes humans out of *yochī* and *yové*, making them *yochī* and *yové* (the possibilities of disease and health, potential destinies along life, and actual destinations at death). In performance, over time—including genesis, life, and death—living human souls, as constituents of *yora* bodies, are animal and then spiritual, pure potentialities to becoming successively in the afterlife the *yochī*-full path of eschatological transformations. *Vei vai* precedes the dwelling of *yové*-renovation *shoko nai shavaya*, the cosmic dwelling that hangs above this “land of ours,” this “dangerous land of transformations” (*nokī mai, vei mai shavaya*). Both in this world and the otherworld, *yové* spirits are the circular periodicity of flight, *yochī* doubles in their discrete linearity.

On earth, the eschatological journey occurs in the *saiti* of *Vei Vai Yoya*, the myth-chant that leads through the dangerous postmortem path, performing in mythical musical form, in a special choreography, such transmutations of living and deadly forms. Here the *yoya* song-leader leads both the *saiti* myth-chant and the accompanying singers, as he conducts the singing dancers in a meandering line instead of the usual circle. The *saiti* of *vei vai* is the *yoya*, the guide himself is the myth-chant itself—and, as for many *saiti* myth-chants, here is indigenous ontology in brief: if *vai* means “path,” *vei* means both the dangers of death and afterlife transformations.

A second argument particularizes Marubo idiosyncrasies against Amazonian essentialisms (it is one that follows the first about the original mythical state of human / animal transient mutability being of temporal

instability among the Marubo). The discussion above derives from a native commentary during one myth-music translation. In *Yawa Tivo*, the destinies of the transformative peccaries differ according to the sensory-predatory attitude of the original humans in relation to abnormal prey: the eggs of a *yové*-spiritual bird. The destiny of the original humans who undergo transformation depends on how they eat the eggs of *yawa chai*, the peccary bird, or whether they simply smell the eggshells (an emblem of filial bonds<sup>16</sup>). Some of the peccary-made, ex-*nawa* humans remain in earthly forests, the ancestors of those that humans prey upon today. Some peccaries stay on the banks of foreign rivers, in the domains of the *nawa*-foreign, and thus become domestic pigs. Westerners do not bear sectional ethnonyms, just as indigenous sectional names do not include the would-be *yawanawa* (“children-peoples of the peccary”). White people are semantically closer to peccaries than to the Sun and the Blue Bird, the Jaguar and other such beings, and other entities from the Marubo world. Finally, some of the human-generated peccaries ascend to the *yové*-skies of regeneration.

In *Shane Memi Yōsha*, a human almost transmutes into game animal, a *yočī* double par excellence. Before, however, as in much mythical music, human transmutation into another being follows the same heavenly destiny of the dead *yové*-like souls. In *Yawa Tivo*, some of the humans who transform into animals ascend to the spiritual abode of bodily renovation (*shoko nai shavaya*). They do so with their bodies and all, not with some sort of “spiritual peccary essence,” inasmuch as *yové* spirits are bodies. As contradictory as this might sound to Cartesians, spiritual identification is substantial. Ontological provinces melt when a shamanic soul partakes of *yové*-spiritual food, and thus gets lost. Likewise, the transformative peccaries are bound to feast on the savory plants of paradise, like the old woman and the tapir in the *saiti* above. As elsewhere in Amazonia, commensality is consubstantiality. All these animal-made humans, human-made human prey, at some point and in some way do transform themselves substantially into *yové* spirits, just as corporeal change in shamanic initiation means *yové*-becoming. In *Yawa Tivo*, those who die for tasting or smelling the peccary-bird egg-zygote end up congregating with spiritual creatures—sensual, fragrant, ornamental bodies.

Still in the same *saiti*, some other peccary-made humans remain in this original *nawa* domain, the *noa mato* large riverbanks of this earthly human dwelling (*mai shavaya*), and thus become domestic. This means an attribute more of exteriority than domestication: peccaries are always wild, foreign pigs are always domestic. In this case, the original Marubo, the -*nawa* peoples became true *nawa* foreigners, true others insofar

as being domestic. Just like ethnonyms—birds and predatory ones—peccaries fall into an ambivalent domain, one of alterity and equally of identity. Nevertheless, the relational realm of the *yawa* peccary, of the prototypical prey is posterior to that of *yové* spirits and animal-doubles, souls-cum-bodies, the sectional-ethnonyms bird and predator or prey. Peccaries are a generic *nawa*-category, rather than one particular, indigenous categorization of the *-nawa* peoples. They are *tivo*.

This is the third argument that particularizes Marubo idiosyncrasies against Amazonian essentialisms—one which implies another reference to history, mythical or otherwise. Along historical and mythical time, these peoples perform a gradual construction of the notion of *nawa*, through a migratory movement from large river valleys to tributary headwaters—a geographic movement that parallels their attitude to the outside, toward their settlement limits and the limits of their terrestrial world, their ethnic and cosmic boundaries. This historical construction of the *nawa*-foreigner is parallel to the mythical origin of human *tivo*-predation. Peccaries once were *-nawa* peoples, *Varñ*, *Shanñ*, *Inō*, *Kanā*, and *Chaiñ*—peoples of the Sun, of the Blue-Green Bird, the Jaguar, Yellow Macaw, Generic Bird—but then became either *yové*-peccaries (“spiritual” ones); or else peccaries of prey, of the everyday type, those that identify with the *yochi* animal-double; or still domestic peccaries, Western-generic *nawa*. The three categories of ex-*nawa* peccaries—spiritual peccaries, mere peccaries of prey or *nawa*-foreign peccaries—come into being in a mutual assignment of diacritical values of humanity, cosmically and ethnically. In the myth-chant, predatory alterity follows preliminary identity, similar to the actions taken in hunting rites, in opposition to the variability of the anthropogenic animal, plant, or thing that create the indigenous self. Just as, in *Yawa Tivo*, the original *-nawa* humans migrate to the foreign domain of *nawa*-ness, and thus inaugurate predation. In history humans were *-nawa* Indians, warlike others, and became Marubo—or “tamed” as they say, “domesticated”—as they encountered the White *nawa* (see Werlang 2001). These notions of humanity and animality are a function of history, in myth and in the everyday.<sup>17</sup>

## AGAINST IDEOLOGY

The issues of transformability of human souls into animal-like affective states, the substantial ambiguity of such bodily animic states vis-à-vis predation, and the parallel between predation and the ambiguous substance of *nawa*-ness have something in common. Beyond all these

three considerations, the underlying, undisguisable leading motive in question is the hypothesis of an Amazonian generality: virtual cultural attributes encompassing the natural domain at a supernatural level, where variable bodies fragment a unified constitution of souls into species-specific perspectives. This would ring explanatory in the Marubo case, if these peoples were not so resistant to a universal soul/body dichotomy as an atemporal and aspatial given, or as an invariant structure. The hypotheses of neo-animism, perspectivism, and its developments require so many practical adjustments in this and other cases, that one wonders if it is worth subscribing to the debate. Attention to indigenous ontology of necessity requires the nonengagement in any sort of modernistic “ism,” as my teacher Joanna Overing has taught me.

It might be safer to dwell on idiosyncrasies: in this indigenous world “nature” is an incomplete gloss for a myriad of events and relations that only make sense within a wider framework, which, however, is so immanent that one can hardly distinguish what is “above” “supernature.” What we do distinguish is temporality: historical chronology and mythical musicality—and vice versa. What we do have in terms of spatial organization among these peoples is set in temporal form and such form finds its voice in music. Such music in turn translates human genesis, while all ontogenesis stems from anthropogony. Finally, such human creation is an amalgamation of modalities of exteriority.

The *yochī* and *yové* entities, that populate the cosmos where human being and human becoming unfold, are themselves the operators of such native theories. These doubles and spirits organize the living world and that of the afterlife in accordance with *saiti*, those self-explanatory spatiotemporal forms. It is under such an intelligible framework, the founding distinction between *yochī* and *yové*, between the paradigmatic constituents of the human person and cosmos, that the dual perception of what we call “nature” obtains, in something that we might better call music. We could also pigeonhole it in a more-than-natural metaphysical domain. But still this would require that any tinge of post-Socratic metaphysics, be it in Platonic, Aristotelian or Judeo-Christian, be kept away from such musical expression. After all, “What is Amazonian *physis*?” The Muses may say “It is in music.”

In the foregoing analysis, it is in the human body that spiritual and animal-double dispositions synthesize into a universal “soul-structure.” If this somatic synthesis is analyzable in *saiti*, the disjunction and subsequent actualization of its terms come into effect in hunting, disease, and death. This seems to fit well with other regional contexts, where the human cultural primacy, or the cultural reality of humans—if you like—has to

undergo negotiation concurrently, a task that is either shamanic and/or predatory, taken up by different agents: shamans and hunters, spirits and animals. Predation objectifies actual prey in the predatory act, and actualises human subjects, while shamans subjectify predators and prey. But among the Marubo, *nawa*-humans, *yové* birds, and *yochí* doubles of predatory animality are the interlocutors of a musical dialogue. The common-ground of such concurrent parties, that which establishes humanity, is the point of convergence of the singing voice, between *yochí* and *yové* musical modes, cellular lines and circular verses. It is in the *saiti* myth-chants that the protagonists of the worldly and otherworldly, the predatory and the eschatological arena are made audible, then visible and known to us. The intersubjective mythical-musical discourse within longhouses establishes humanity. The human voice is both self-constitution and cosmic sharing, as the *saiti*-object represents it.

## AGAIN MYTH-MUSIC

I conclude this essay by returning to its opening theme: the reproduction of the formal musical dialectics of *saiti* myth-chants as verbal poetics. As noted earlier with reference to the myth-chant of *Shane Memi Yōsha*, a current idiomatic phrase in *saiti* is *a iki a nā*, or *a ikiao i* ("thus said ..."). As in a play on stage, speeches are the attribution of a "third person" with respect to the audience—the actual third person—an attribute of either a character or the narrator, in the course of the story. That mythical-musical phrase is but a ritual version of a typical phrasal formula in the everyday language of the Marubo, *yorā vana*. When one says *iki*, "they [he, she] said" following any statement, the agency of the utterance belongs to a third party, regardless of who delivers it. If the Araweté shaman is "like a radio" (Viveiros de Castro 1992:224), if the Juruna one is "nothing but a spokesman" (Stolze Lima 1999:119), the Marubo singer is said to be a recorder, whose song is a playback of an exogenous narrative. Instead of a universal statement of truth, the shaman provides statements of many voices, a diachronic verbal polyphony. The multiperceptive shaman is a mutant, a glyph—a hyperbolical *yora* body, as all such bodies divide into contradictory animic modalities. Shamans see multiple perspectives and experience multiple bodies to the sole extent that they can perform the multivocality implicit in humans, and this is an endowment from the *yové*-bird spirits. From the viewpoint of the cross-eyed shaman, the line is always out of focus—or rather ex-centric, twisted into a spiral—because the temporal lines that represent his ontology are aural before being

visual. Aurality is already a familiar epistemological trait in Amazonia (see Santos-Granero, *intra*). It might be worth hypothesising that its ontological grounds are musical (cf., Seeger 1987; Bastos 1999).

Marubo musical lines inflect time, and hence the terrestrial space of *yochī* doubles, into circular, celestial curves, the recurrent rhythmic, melodic cells and verses of *saiti*. Not accidentally, *saiti* chants present no such clear spatial, wider linear structure as the linguistic transcription of a mythical narrative might portray. The Marubo *saiti*, and perhaps much of Amazonian myth, so dearly apt for reduction to linguistic-structural discourses, is less reducible to “mythemes” than to “musical cells,” examples of which figure above. If any unitary discursive perspective is only perceivable at the verbal level of myth, musical unity in the *saiti* myth-chants is always reducible to no more than the equal, reiterative cell—or at best to verbally strophic or formulaic groups of cells, which emulate the single cell. The reiterative fragment, the sole circular limit is a unique musical-poetical boundary. That which is ineffable in ordinary language is bound in *saiti* words by the sound of mythical time—musical-poetical expression.

Mythical and musical utterances, those which fall under the same categorising umbrella of *saiti*, are messages whose first production and apprehension—the aural analogue of the visual allegories of Plato (Cornford 1983)—come from sound. They also always do so from the perspective of an out-centred ontology that encompasses any human made-up construction as external, cosmic agency, since *saiti* rejects solipsistic subjects. Marubo ontology is, instead, within the *yora* body—but not there only. The “animation” of such body is spiritual and animal at once, in dual ways that differ fundamentally from ours, inasmuch as, among these peoples—as among the Piaroa and other Amerindians (Overing 1996, 1997; Storrie, *intra*)—there is no such thing as a dead carnal matter whose life is soul-forms. For the Marubo, *nami* is the “meat” one may eat, occasionally our “flesh,” which hardly fits into a notion of “body” as against “souls.” The course of disease and the action of disease agents, for instance, is upon *nami* flesh, while that of the healer is upon the *yora* body. But, the actualization of cure occurs through the description, invocation, and articulation of *yochī*-like and *yové*-like entities in curing chants. Without regaining such proper balance, the *yora* body is bound to follow its postmortem fate, which one would best describe, invocate and articulate as animic dissolution, rather than empty carnality. Nothing is left to stand for a “body-in-itself” once each soul-like body component actualizes its divergent, disintegrative destiny—*mekirí vaká* and *chinā* to the supernal realm of rejuvenation as *yové* spirits, *mekirí vaká* and other *yochī*-forms to doubling, terrestrial wandering. Because death divests the

*yora* body of its suprapersonal subjectivity, a dead corpse amounts to an object of the dead, to his or her surroundings. Two or three generations ago, mourning relatives would burn and eat the corpse, and might even set fire to the whole longhouse with the belongings of the dead inside. For a dead body is “no-thing”: it is linear space that, by itself, cannot achieve the circular temporality of musical spirits.

The structure that informs such soul-body relations between entities such as *yora* and *nawa*, *yochí* and *yové*, *mechmirí* and *mekirí-vaká* is deep within and still far without humanity and the human body. Marubo culture is not opposed or post-positioned to nature, being instead an original state both behind and beyond it, supernatural and infra-natural. Marubo humanity is described and prescribed, originated and predicted within these two realms, which in the *saiti* myth-chants intertwine in one. Humanity is a “now” that is neither instantaneous, nor the “zero” of a linear timescale. Rather, it is a “corporeal” but still “spiritual” condition, a “musical” condition these peoples might say, if they had the need to put it in words. Rather, they intone their words.

True, this is a local worldview. But, whose worldview, is it if the “native viewpoint” is taken? As regard the Marubo, we cannot rely on visual perspectives, inasmuch as we cannot oppose the universal to the particular. For these peoples, culture is not an exclusive human attribute that humanity should be proud of—in the Faustian sense—either in absolute or relative terms. While we should be vigilant against Western-metaphysical vocabulary and the oppositions it entails, (e.g., the *a priori* dichotomizing of senses versus intellect, or nature versus “supernature”), one cannot do without an ethnographic dialogue with such dualities and with those who invoke them, even if—or only if—that stance might take us to paradoxical statements. If, among the Marubo, the human condition is a cultural attribute, it is one which obtains through temporal incorporation and “excorporation” of animal and spiritual affections, which widens the doors of perception to the world and voices that world. Their world is in continuous synesthetic translation as a musical performance.

## NOTES

1. For ethnographic background see Melatti 1977, 1981; Montagner Melatti 1985; and Werlang 2000, 2001.

2. According to Martin Heidegger: “... subsiste, todavia, a necessidade de, nas diferentes etapas do caminho, falar justamente na linguagem que convém” (1990 [1977]:73).

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3. Pedro Cesario is carrying out doctoral research on myth and poetics among the very same people discussed in this paper.

4. An exception to this is made for the soul's highest functions that need no affection, just as with the "immovable mover" on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, an early version of the Judeo-Christian God. See Aristotle 1986.

5. See Viveiros de Castro (1999), as well as his contribution in Bird David (1999).

6. Metonymically, "*shane*" means also a "blue-green" bird species (Cesario says *azulão*, giving a "bluish" inflection to indigenous perception).

7. Cesario dissects: *a iki aoi* = demonstrative + auxiliary intransitive "to say" + again? The locution could have an immediate, inconclusive inflection.

8. The New Tribes Mission has been present in the area since the early 1950s.

9. According to Freud: "It might be said that in the last analysis the 'spirit' of persons or things comes down to their capacity to be remembered and imagined after perception of them has ceased" (1950 [1913]:117).

10. See Århem (1993), Descola (1994), and Stolze Lima (1999) for representative explications for shamanic hunting in Amazonia; and Erikson (1996) for Panoans; and Viveiros de Castro (1998) for an ethnographic synthesis.

11. The *Vari* of the *Varinawavo* would be a residual category, but nonetheless a very conspicuous one in *saiti*. It is probably filled with exogenous meanings as well, since the association between the "Sun" and the "Inca" is a conspicuous mythological theme among Panoans, as among the Cashinahua (cf. Lagrou 1998).

12. As with the Piaroa's "life of thoughts" versus "life of the senses" (Overing 1988), and the Yanomami's *yechoyeshem* "shadow" versus *yecamquen* "vitality" (Santos-Granero *infra*).

13. Overing observes that, among the Piaroa: "... the uniqueness of terrestrial human beings is due to the particular *combination* of forces for life that they are today able to acquire" (1999:10).

14. Again, according to Overing: "Because the animals exist eternally in the 'before time'... they affect earthly human in a literal fashion" (1999:12).

15. Although *Yawanawa* is an actual ethnonym (of peoples who live in the neighboring Brazilian State of Acre, who are akin to the Marubo) it is composed of an unknown combinatory designation among their matrilateral sections. For historical connections between both peoples, see Coffaci de Lima 1994.

16. In ordinary language, *vatxi* means both "egg" and the typical tubular skirt women fold around their waist. The Marubo use *vatxi* in a curious expression to designate precisely one's natal provenience: "there where I left my eggshell." This expression suggests the idea that *vatxi* is like a genetic wrapper, and makes the association between "egg," "skirt," and, say, "female reproductive capabilities," or simply "womb" or "afterbirth," which leads to the human origins of peccaries.

17. Compare this with the sense of domestication for the Piaroa, that is also "externalist" according to Overing (1988, 1996).

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