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# Visualizing a Postapocalypse: *Ujirei* Aesthetics in New Ayoreo Cinema

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Many trees are capable of new growth even if they otherwise appear to be dead. This commonly takes the form of meristems that sprout from the edges of a severed stump. More remarkable still are species able to regenerate solely from cuttings or segments, such as a cut branch, chopped trunk, or even a partially burned log. In these cases, a piece of a tree can take root in a different location and resprout branches and leaves. Sometimes, if conditions are right, an entire distinct tree can arise from the violently damaged fragments of its previous iteration.

In the Ayoreo language—spoken by a small group of “recently contacted” Indigenous tribes closely attuned to the dwindling forests of their ancestral homelands in the Bolivian and Paraguayan Gran Chaco and long targeted by dehumanizing violence—this peculiar kind of regenerative growth is called *ujirei*.<sup>1</sup> The concept binds rupture to regeneration. It is also an orienting principle for social life in the wake of world-ending violence. This phrase offers one gloss on a wider Ayoreo life-project aimed at transforming the residues of apocalyptic endings into the inhabitable domains of moral life. This Indigenous concept and existential project may hold lessons for others now struggling to inhabit the aftermath of global pandemics, violent inequities, and self-devouring economies.

## The Ayoreo Video Project

*Ujirei* is also the title of a recent film made by Mateo Sobode Chiqueno as part of the Ayoreo Video Project. Developed in collaboration with Ayoreo leaders and the trailblazing Brazilian Indigenous media collective Video Nas Aldeias (VNA), the project hosted the first Ayoreo video workshop in a remote community in northern Paraguay. Held in August 2015, after months of discussions, the workshop brought together fourteen participants from five villages, three distinct Ayoreo tribal groups and both sides of the Bolivia–Paraguay border.<sup>2</sup> To help envision, coordinate, and document the workshop, project coordinator Lucas Bessire was aided by VNA associate, anthropologist, and filmmaker Ernesto de Carvalho, as well as Kamiká, a noted VNA-trained Indigenous filmmaker from the Kisêdjê tribe of Brazil’s Xingu Indigenous Reserve. Together, this team adapted the workshop form to Ayoreo realities. We donated generators and projectors to the host villages, gave small HD camera kits to each village team, taught Ayoreo participants the basics of shooting digital video, orchestrated group activities aimed at creating cinematic elements, screened and discussed the results with village audiences, and, through rotating site visits, assisted as participants shot footage in their home villages on themes of their choice (see Bessire 2017a).

Eight months later, the authors returned to the Chaco to assist the village teams as they edited their workshop footage into the first Ayoreo-made films. Inspired by the collaborative process developed by VNA, our aim was to develop a method that would allow a reflexive, collaborative, and “dialogic” editing process to emerge (see Feld 1987). At the outset, we did not know whether the process would be possible or if it would result in finished films. None of the participants had made a documentary film, and some of our village partners had not

even seen one prior to the video workshop. To some degree, most participants shared a common Ayoreo perspective that films made about them were intrinsically extractive and exploitative. Although we were aware of the political significance and profound decolonizing potentials of Indigenous community-based video elsewhere in Latin America, such projects were novel in the highly segregated Paraguayan Chaco. We were not aware of any Indigenous films created in the region prior to our attempt.

### Ujirei Aesthetics

This essay describes the process of editing *Ujirei* and the structure of its cinematic form to reflect on the stakes of one example of “postapocalyptic” Indigenous cinema today.<sup>3</sup> Specifically, we describe the Ayoreo concept of *Ujirei* to craft a wider argument about the ways such Indigenous analytics may help reorient broader anthropological and visual attunements to the defining crises of the contemporary.

We approach this project in part as a particular manifestation of an “embedded aesthetic” focused on inhabiting a world made over by apocalyptic violence (Ginsburg 1994). Like Indigenous filmmakers elsewhere, Sobode and other Ayoreo use video technology to re-objectify the postapocalyptic as an open-ended “place of beginnings, in which the apocalyptic informs the past and present yet does not foreclose future possibilities” (Lempert 2018). Though we take it for granted that Ayoreo cinema pushes against a common visual economy organized around imagery of impending planetary extinctions and the resulting search for redemptive alternatives to modernist failures—especially within the radical exteriority attributed to lowland South American Indigenous ontologies—we are not interested in continuing here a polemic against the well-documented blind spots of ontological essentialism (see Bessire and Bond 2014; Cepek 2016; Erazo and Jarrett 2018; Ramos 2012; Turner 2009).<sup>4</sup> Instead, we focus narrowly on how one Ayoreo filmmaker uses cinematic forms to visualize a widely relevant “art of living” in the aftermath of world-ending violence, in ways that directly speak back to prior anthropological representations of Ayoreo humanity and may shift the terms of debate around widespread planetary conundrums.<sup>5</sup> What is at stake, we suggest, is an important project of reemergence.

This example of lowland Indigenous cinema is poised against the binary oppositions of authenticity/inauthenticity or continuity/rupture that continue to constrain some anthropological analyses of other Native film projects. Such binaries, of course, reflect an impoverished understanding of Indigenous cinematic aesthetics as a coherent, stable assemblage of fixed practices, traits, and concepts predetermined by cosmological exteriority known in advance. The risks and limits of this (neo)structuralist approach to Indigenous aesthetics are revealed in recent efforts to parse “authentic” from “spurious” elements within village-based lowland video (see Shepard and Pace 2021). What makes such projects problematic is how their prescriptive approach to aesthetics can so readily reinscribe the rigged, colonial dichotomy of “authentic stability” versus “inauthentic change” that has long been used to dispossess Native peoples by reducing legitimacy to impossible criteria and external regimes of authorization. When such categorical imperatives or searches for unitary origins take precedence over questions of survival within splintered and plural presents, they may lend further momentum to dehumanizing violence. To be clear, many scholars have developed more productive and anti-essentializing approaches to Indigenous cinema in lowland South America. Ruben Caixeta de Queiroz (2008), for example, avoids the pitfalls of continuity-thinking by focusing on iterability in lowland Indigenous cinema. Marcos Aurélio Felipe (2019a) locates the decolonizing potentials of Mbya-Guaraní cinema within its irreverence toward colonial orthodoxies. Xavante filmmaker Divino Tserewahú explains that his work entails constantly and intentionally “dismantling” the patterns within his previous films (Tserewahú and Belisário 2018).

Building from such insights, we explore how *Ujirei* can be centered as an important analytic for understanding contemporary Ayoreo realities and anthropological analyses of them. To do so, we draw from scholarship that has detailed the political interventions, cultural importance, and conceptual significance of village-based Indigenous video production in Latin America and elsewhere (see especially Belisário 2016; Córdova 2011; Ginsburg 1991, 1994, 1995, 2002, 2016; Prins 2002; Salazar and Córdova 2008; Schiwy 2003; Smith 2012; Wilson and Stewart 2008; Wortham 2013). We are particularly inspired by accounts that demonstrate

how remote Indigenous video production may catalyze, affirm, and reassert Native humanity in the face of the social ruptures caused by colonial violence. For instance, Terence Turner (1992, 1995, 2002, 2009) describes how Kayapó use video technology as part of wider efforts to re-objectify the processes by which selves, groups, and prior experiences are objectified and thus reproduced; this meta-objectifying capacity, he argues, is central to Kayapó definitions of culture, ritual, and cinema alike. As other scholars have noted, the same meta-objectifying capacity of cinema may be used to assert mastery over contradictory modes of destruction or negation. As Laura Marks (1994) argues, disjuncture within “hybrid cinema” can offer a key technique for disrupting conceits of authenticity, orchestrating temporal contradictions, transgressing borders between inside/outside, and challenging the hegemonic rankings of perception itself. Likewise, Walter Benjamin (1968) and Michael Taussig (1993) find counterhegemonic potentials in the shocking juxtapositions of dialectical imagery. These cinematic breaks can open room for the emergence of what Gilles Deleuze calls “missing people,” or those who turn to film to “[re]invent themselves in shanty-towns or in camps or in ghettos, in new conditions of struggle to which a necessarily political art must contribute” (Deleuze 1989:217). We are interested in how village-based Indigenous cinema today can offer new “technologies of the self” or novel venues for becoming, a process that refers to “those individual and collective struggles to come to terms with events and intolerable conditions and to shake loose, to whatever degree possible, from determinants and definitions” (Biehl and Locke 2010:317).<sup>6</sup> One site where the process of creating Indigenous cinema intensifies political and subjective possibilities is through the collaborative editing process and the reflexive dialogues it always implies (Rouch 1974:41). Our initial understanding of Ujirei was informed by these scholarly insights that tie cinema production to rupture and regeneration.

At the same time, we argue that the resulting film may mark a new trend within the Indigenous cinema of lowland South America. Existing examples are exceptionally diverse. The variation between these projects is so great that every project can be considered a distinct cinematic mode, as Caixeta de Queiroz and Renata Otto Diniz (2018) argue. Even so, nearly all of these projects share some basic orientations toward visuality and difference. Most of these films engage cultural worlds as more or less coherent assemblages of practices, materialities, and concepts. Such films often share these cultural worlds with spectators as a way to assert and explain the validity of Indigenous lifeways, rituals, and ontological dispositions (see Brasil 2013, 2016, 2017; Caixeta de Queiroz 2008; Felipe 2018; Guimarães 2019; Tugny 2014). They may also convey the promise of privileged access to a cultural interiority even as external relationships remain an important condition of this possibility, as André Brasil and Bernard Belisário (2016) have described in relation to the award-winning films of Divino Tserewahú, Takumã Kuikuro, Israel Maxakali, and other filmmakers from lowland Brazil. Both despite and due to such premises, these filmic projects have been remarkably successful in achieving their aims within Amazonian communities and within broader televisual programming, school curricula, and so on.

What is new about Ujirei is how sharply it departs from these basic orientations. The film does not build a coherent image of an Ayoreo cultural world. It does not convey a set of elements or practices assembled according to consistent cultural logics. It does not promise access to a fragile, coherent interiority. In such ways, it refutes prior anthropological representations of Ayoreo humanity as either the misleading veneer that conceals a hidden core of stable cosmological alterity known in advance, or as the degraded residues that remain after a process of “ethnocide” or “metaphysical death” has run its course (cf. Escobar 1988; Fischermann 2001; Kohn 2015; Renshaw 2002; von Bremen 1987).<sup>7</sup> Rather than inviting outsiders into Ayoreo worlds, Ujirei creates a centrifugal force that constantly pushes out through splintered lines of flight, citational mediations, fragmented imagery, and onto-epistemic breaks. In other words, it uses an intimate, observational, and “imperfect” camera to invert realist forms and reflect on the actual aesthetics of Ayoreo existence (Salazar & Córdova 2008:42). If this may unsettle some of the conceits that make other examples of Amazonian Indigenous cinema appealing to broad audiences, it also asks spectators to question their desire to consume images of authenticity or purified incommensurability. What is novel about this singular cinematic form, and what may set it apart from most other lowland Indigenous films, is how it instantiates an aesthetics of rupture and then visually affirms its generative

potentials as a mode of reproducing moral humanity within the particular contexts of colonial violence in the Paraguayan Gran Chaco.

To approximate this mode of lowland Indigenous cinema may also mean pushing the bounds of ethnographic genres. In what follows, we try to convey our object of analysis by partly mimicking its form. This begins with referencing the particular editorial process through which this existential mode coalesced as a cinematic form. While editing is one of the most important aspects of filmmaking, descriptions of the process are often missing from accounts of lowland Indigenous films. By making explicit some key editorial parameters, we aim to suggest their mutual constitution with cinematic aesthetics and open their ethnographic potentials to further discussion. Informed by our dialogues with the filmmaker, we then attempt to describe in writing the primary energies of this project. Ultimately, Ujirei resurfaces as a kind of cinematic logic, a political aesthetic, an editorial heuristic, and a conceptual prompt, all at once. Taking this seriously means writing close to the interrupted images, editorial cuts, and the complex “linings of the visible” within and beyond the film (see Merleau-Ponty 1968).

### **The Bulldozer and the Trunk**

Mateo Sobode is a respected leader in his late sixties who lives in Campo Loro, a bleak settlement created in the 1970s by evangelical North American New Tribes Missionaries. We were fortunate that Sobode agreed to participate in the Ayoreo Video Project at all. Although a pioneer of Ayoreo cassette and radio media practices, he was twice the age of the other camera operators. There were also ethnic divisions to overcome. The workshop was hosted by contact survivors from the Totobiegosode-Ayoreo bands, whereas Sobode hails from an Ayoreo group that was their historic enemies. He was also a primary collaborator of a nongovernmental organization (NGO) that was considered a rival of the NGO then affiliated with the Totobiegosode-Ayoreo. To complicate matters further, Sobode had personally played a key role brokering the missionary-sponsored pursuit, capture, and conversion of many of these same Totobiegosode during the notorious “wild man hunts” of 1979, 1986, and 1998. In the aftermath of these conflicts, he became a new kind of cultural broker and eventually gained the respect of the Totobiegosode captives through kindness and patronage. He was also following cultural scripts of prestige and the example of his father, a famous war leader of the Ducodegosode, part of the larger Guidaigosode-Ayoreo confederacy. Sobode told us his father was the “trunk” of their band. It is a common Ayoreo expression that denotes an origin, source, or defining core.

The editing phase of our experiment began with a rented house in Loma Plata, a Mennonite colony within driving distance of four of the participating Ayoreo villages. Before we began, we decided on some basic parameters. One common method for editing village cinema involves crafting an initial “rough cut” of the film through an editing workshop, completing a “fine cut” by having a few participants work with technicians outside of the village, and then returning this nearly finished film to the village for public screening. Usually, this entails logging, translating, and transcribing the village footage before the fine editing gets underway. Due to our limited budget, time, and infrastructure, we could not replicate this method. Moreover, our commitment to letting filmmakers’ perspectives guide the editing meant we had to find a process that privileged Ayoreo norms around literacy, hospitality, communication, and creativity.

We decided to invite village teams to rotate through the house. During their first visits, we watched and discussed all their footage. During their second visits, each team stayed for several days and we created long rough cuts together. To privilege filmmakers’ input, we decided to edit in real time as we talked. To foreground the filmmakers’ senses of their material, we worked directly in the Ayoreo language without logging or transcribing the footage into textual forms. To de-emphasize the esoteric details of the nonlinear editing software, we projected only the “viewer window” of the Premiere interface (which displays the images but not the timeline or clips) onto a large sheet hung on one wall facing a couch and several seats. Lucas was tasked with coordinating the discussion with filmmakers and translating from Ayoreo as needed. Bernard, who had not participated in the workshop and was viewing the footage with fresh eyes, sat with a laptop off to the side. He was charged with coordinating the process by which the filmmakers’ comments became visible as cuts

and scenes, through discussion and viewing multiple versions.

During the final weeks of our stay, we decided to take the rough cuts to each village, workshop with others in that community, and let the filmmakers tell us how to incorporate this feedback into the film's final structure. Beyond these basic ground rules, we had no idea what to expect. As Jean Rouch notes, such collaborative editing is required to provoke and intensify the feedback loops necessary for the *regards comparés* of "shared anthropology," but "there is no recipe" for how to do it effectively (Rouch 1974:41; see also Miyaraka Media 2019 for more reflections). What elements could undercut our authority over the editorial process, we wondered, and allow Ayoreo figures of thought to emerge on screen? What kind of cinematic statement would result?

When Sobode arrived in Loma Plata to begin editing, our expectations were low. The footage he shot during the 2015 filming workshop was less than inspiring. Eight months later, however, he brought with him a stack of full SD memory cards, carefully wrapped in plastic and rags. They were filled with dozens of hours of footage he had shot on his own since the workshop ended. His new footage was a revelation. It contained striking imagery, ranging from surreal footage of machines to conversations with starving elders and critical shots of government officials. It also featured several hours that Sobode shot of himself, talking directly to the camera.



**Figure 1.** Speaking to the camera

These testimonies included the story of his 1963 "first contact." In the footage, Sobode recounts to the camera how his father decided to leave the forest and live with the *Cojñone* (non-Ayoreo) outsiders:

My father decided to go live with the Cojñone. They left the salt they had gathered under wooden shelters. They said they would come back for it later. But they never returned. This is what I can tell about our contacts with the Cojñone. We left the forest in 1961. We have lived with Cojñone for a long time. But nothing today is better than it was. The Cojñone promised many things. We thought that life with Cojñone would be easy but it is not. In the forest there was no sickness. If someone had a cough it only infected one person. It did not spread to everyone. There was no high blood pressure. No one needed pills. We had nothing in the forest but we were able to survive. Before, there were no missionaries. There were no anthropologists or ranchers. But we survived. There were no Cojñone selling food in a store. We lived on what our parents hunted in the forest. They brought food to us and we ate. They did not hunt for payment from someone else. If they brought a lot of food they shared it with their relatives. Our parents

never camped near the Cojñone. They hid their children in the middle of the forest. They camped far from the roads. They did not allow any Cojñone to frighten their children. When we went to live with Cojñone their sicknesses killed many. Many elders know that what I say is true. Before we came out the shamans already knew that my father would be the first to die from the sicknesses that come from Cojñone. Among the Cojñone many things make us sick. This is my advice for young men and young women: we must care for our parents. Our mothers worry about us because we are their children. Our fathers care for us because we depend on them.<sup>8</sup>

Sobode recounted how the entire band fell ill from new diseases for which they had no immunity almost immediately after arriving at the mission. They tried to return to the forest, but so many people died along the way that they stopped. Sobode's father, always the strongest, was among the first to perish.

Sobode also filmed a single sixteen-minute shot of a bulldozer driven by an employee of a Mennonite rancher. He showed the massive, caged machine knocking down a dense stand of old-growth brush and thick hardwoods with unsettling ease and then panned over the bare ground left in its wake. "My father was like that," Sobode said, as we watched the trees snapping and falling on our improvised screen. "He was the trunk. But how quickly he fell."

### Editing *Ujirei*

At the beginning of the editing process, it was difficult for Sobode to verbally articulate his entire film. Yet it was obvious from the start that Sobode's footage conveyed an important set of keen aesthetic decisions. This should have come as no surprise. We recalled that filmmakers working in the *vérité* tradition—a style of documentary that uses the camera to reveal, provoke, and convey deeper truths about the human condition—have long noted how direct cinema collapses the distinction between filming and editing. Rouch, for instance, famously invoked Dziga Vertov's insights to describe how the "participating camera" reflects and requires a series of revelatory choices: "I edit when I choose my subject . . . I edit when I observe" (quoted in Rouch 1974:43). Most of Sobode's editorial/shooting decisions challenged filmic conventions and the aesthetics commonly associated with lowland Indigenous cinema.

When filming stationary objects, Sobode's camera was in constant motion, as if searching or trying to uncover some hidden meaning. Off-screen bodies or voices moving in and out of the visual field almost always interrupted his framings. He started and stopped filming events at moments that did not match our expectations of beginnings or ends. And he turned the microphone up, rather than down, when recording the empty promises of Cojñoñe politicians amid a windstorm.

At first, we were unsure whether these were simply basic mistakes. But Sobode helped us understand. He described precisely and eloquently what he was trying to communicate with every filmic decision. Sobode explained that the objects contained hidden and often obtuse meanings beneath their surfaces. He told us that the interruptions were the point rather than the framing. He showed us how each given fragment of an event revealed its own process. And he said that the words of the Cojñone were empty anyways. When we asked him to explain further, he said that he imagined each scene or sequence as containing its own "sprout," which he likened to the specific kind of growth-after-rupture known as *ujirei*.

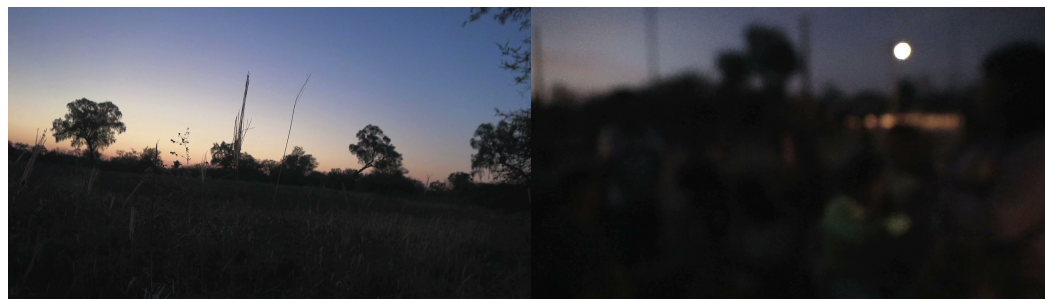
Our challenge was how to actualize this logic on the screen. Real-time editing in Ayoreo language without transcription allowed Sobode to drive the editing process, while projecting the footage on the wall minimized the otherwise distracting technological mysteries of non-linear editing. Guided by Sobode's insight, we rewatched each recorded scene as a discrete unit of meaning. Together, we discussed what Sobode perceived as its primary "sprouting," or the kernel of significance that had motivated his filming and which he identified in the image. In most cases this was explicit and clear. At others, we collectively determined the intentionality of the shot based on its *mise-en-scène*, where the intent of the shot was revealed by the technique Sobode had used to construct his distinct point of view (see Comolli 2015).

Next, we drew these “sprouts” or kernels as rough pictures on notecards. We asked Sobode to arrange the sprouts into clusters and then into an assembly of clusters, from beginning to end. We taped them on the wall. Bernard crafted rough edits to reflect the sketched arrangement. Then, we watched, discussed, and rearranged. As the clusters were placed into sequences, additional layers of meaning seemed to emanate from the explicit intentionality of the initial cuts. Eventually, the progression of the kernels created a dizzying set of recursive relations among them. Our initial discussions about this assemblage led to two main insights that guided the rest of the editorial process. First, we noted how the juxtapositions between the scenes seemed to create entirely new sprouts of their own that both consolidated and expanded Sobode’s original intentions. Second, we discovered that the capacity of montage to release a flash of dialectical meaning or to enable a novel kind of emergence precisely mirrored the concept of *ujirei* that Sobode sought to convey in each shot and in the film as a whole.

During one break, we sat passing around *tereré* and talking. Lucas asked Sobode what exactly the term *ujirei* meant. Sobode demurred. He said the word described the peculiar capacity of regrowth in plants. But, he added, it could be applied to many different things. It could be used to describe the camera, the film, and the social transformations that allowed Ayoreo people to survive in a context of crisis and change. It could even be applied to us, to himself or to our relations with one another. *Ujirei* was never intended to be simply a title. Instead, Sobode meant it as a metacommentary about colonial hierarchies, a political aesthetic and as an existential principle. As such, *ujirei* gestured to a nuanced conceptual logic at once experiential, ontological, and cinematic; one that aimed to reflect and amplify an underappreciated technology of the self in a postapocalyptic zone made over by world-ending violence, pandemics, and displacement.

### The Jaguar and the Armadillo

Cinema offered a fertile medium for this art of living to flourish. Translation of this “sprouting” into cinematic form, we discovered, uses jarring cuts to mimic and conjure the vitality of its theme. The result is an edited film that generates meaning through a series of images whose seeming oppositions unleash unexpected flashes of meaning for spectators like us, although we cannot say whether this surprised Sobode. The tensions between these images, in turn, defy the easy primitivist tropes of nostalgia, loss, or coherence that so often draw audiences and predetermine outside interpretations of South American Indigenous cinema. Sobode’s film crafts a self-interrupting collage that does not subvert Western genre conventions so much as transcend, ignore, and delimit an “otherwise” to them. *Ujirei* begins to emerge as an alternate figure of thought.



Figures 2 & 3. Opening images

*Ujirei* opens with a shot of daybreak over a grassy clearing. As the camera moves haltingly over the land, Sobode begins to play, off camera a cassette recording of a traditional song performed decades before by someone who has since died. This is a song that was once, but is no longer, sung at dawn. The triply mediated presence of this old song invokes both the ruptures that have cordoned off many past practices and the provocative possibility that they may be cited within present scenes.

Sharp cut to an empty chair as Sobode enters frame and speaks directly into the camera, which he balanced on a bucket with no one standing behind it. He tells a story about *Aruco*, the three-banded Little Armadillo. He tells the audience of this humble creature’s power.



Though Little Armadillo may seem weak, Aruco was formerly capable of curing illness and his flesh was tabooed for consumption by all except the sick or the elderly.

Our ancestors said Little Armadillo was taboo, puyaque. If a young person ate it their hair would turn gray. They say Armadillo is weak. But there are many old stories about Aruco. In the forest, Armadillo was like medicine. If someone had a stomachache they could eat its liver.

Sobode then recounts an abbreviated and abridged version of a traditional adode myth. As described elsewhere, these myths are rarely discussed due to widespread conversion to evangelical Christianity; few younger Ayoreo know them. Sobode said he learned this particular version of the myth not from an elder but from a missionary pamphlet he had helped to translate decades before. The story, which cites both the Christian pamphlet and part of the traditional myth, goes like this.

Once, in the Time-before-time, Aruco bested Jaguar, the strongest and vainest of all animals. Playing to Jaguar's arrogance and reputation as a healer, Aruco feigned a stomachache and knew Jaguar would want to demonstrate his skill. When Jaguar approached Aruco's stomach to begin the curing chant, Aruco snapped shut over Jaguar's mouth and nose. Jaguar could not breathe. After some time, he wilted to the ground and began to suffocate. Aruco agreed to release him on one condition: Jaguar had to treat Aruco and the other beings with greater respect and care.

The film then cuts from this parable of Aruco to a series of short scenes that feature Ayoreo interactions with various Cojñone characters. Each interaction is more incriminating than the last. We watch a parade of outsiders posture like well-fed predators, as they stalk, bully, and threaten to consume impoverished Ayoreo people. The first third of the film seems to elegantly establish and develop this myth of the Jaguar and the Little Armadillo as a metaphor for the colonial situation. If Sobode implies that Ayoreo are like Aruco, the filmmaker's trick is to ensnare the Cojñone in their own deceitful ploys.

The first Cojñone scene is a media event staged by the departmental government, in which the Mennonite governor of the Department of Boquerón in central Paraguay is donating tractors to local Indigenous communities. The governor exhorts the recipients to care for the donated machines, which, he proclaims, will be useful for a long time. Cut to the machines themselves—Sobode shows them to be battered and nearly junked. Then Sobode jumps to a damning meeting between Ayoreo leaders and a Paraguayan attorney who is representing powerful landowners in a dispute over land titles. Sobode sits among his people and films over their shoulders in a long unbroken shot as the attorney offers convoluted and corrupt doublespeak, all while chiding the silent Ayoreo for their supposed babbling and lack of comprehension of the power of words.

Sharp cuts transport the viewer between suffering elders, more direct address, a truck carrying illegally cut hardwoods, and then to Sobode's seat in an indoor hall where we watch the then head of Paraguay's National Indigenous Institute stalk among a large group of assembled Indigenous leaders in the Chaco, giving a public speech. He heads directly toward Sobode's camera. Towering above the seated filmmaker, he points into the lens and says that he knows he will be criticized for "walking among and listening" to Indigenous people for the first time. The film then cuts away from the bombastic speech to a quick shot of the Native audience. Now the meeting is over and the attendees jostle among themselves in a line to receive cash handouts from the government for participating in the event.

We jump from these payments to a scene in which personnel from another government agency are distributing "social care" aid for schoolchildren to Sobode's village. The camera focuses on a stack of money on a table. Soldiers armed with machine guns guard it, facing off against a crowd of Ayoreo women and children. In the background, we see Cojñone vendors selling secondhand clothes out of a van at inflated prices to the recipients of this meager aid. With a jolt, we realize Sobode is revealing how money passes from one set of Cojñone to another with scarcely a pause in Ayoreo hands.

## Rupture as Continuity

One of the most shocking things about *Ujirei* is how uncensored the vendors, officials, experts, and authorities before Sobode's camera. That is, the conditions of possibility for Sobode's revelations include systemic racism and disregard. His targets presumably cannot imagine that anyone would care about what an Ayoreo person films. One stocky, blond Mennonite woman even lets Sobode record as she throws handfuls of candy at a group of Ayoreo villagers, a venerable colonial ritual in the Chaco. It is not clear if she is a vendor, official, or aspirant. No matter. What we register is her laughter as she watches the Ayoreo villagers crawl and tussle for the pieces of candy thrown on the bare dirt. The movements disturbingly resemble those of Aruco, who then reappears, this time as an actual three-banded armadillo that Sobode caught and tried to film.

But it is hard to keep the hissing, chittering, zigzagging creature in frame. When the armadillo races from tall grass into the clearing near Sobode's hut, the allegorical scene suddenly inverts once again. The metaphor twists into an actual hunt. The armadillo is now prey for the inhabitants of Campo Loro. A pack of snarling dogs snap and trap it under some trash. Sobode's granddaughter picks it up and shows it to the camera. But tricky Little Armadillo is just playing dead. As it jerks into a ball, the girl drops it in fear and Aruco skitters quickly outside of the frame. What, precisely, is escaping?



Figures 4 & 5. The Little Armadillo

Toward the film's end, the armadillo returns in yet another iteration. This time it is lying upside down, still and stunned, beside Sobode's wife as she builds a fire. The small grandchildren squat nearby, watching and murmuring questions. It is clear they are going to eat aruco. With a shock, we realize this is not a linear metaphor for the past at all. Rather, this is an explicit break with the traditional food taboo that Sobode recounted earlier. Consuming the armadillo shatters the delicate allegory that the film seemed to be creating. One dialectical image destabilizes and inverts the other.

Instead, a more profound and pointed insight emerges. We realize that Sobode and his family are Ichadie, New People. They are not adherents to the stable ontological exteriority which, according to certain scholars and advocates, gives their lives value and meaning. Instead, they are people transformed by contact and conversion. According to common Ayoreo perspectives, this kind of transformation is required to survive in what they call *Cojñone-Gari*, the radically altered postcontact world where outsiders and their imported spirits now hold sway. In this space, rupture of form is necessary to allow for the continuity of moral humanity and its defining contents. For these New People, the armadillo is just a meal to be shared with relatives. This simple domestic act of nourishment, Sobode implies, supersedes reverence or mourning or nostalgia. Any such expectations are no solution, but part of the colonial problem. We watch as Sobode's aged mother-in-law chops the charred shell and hands the cooked liver of the little armadillo to her great-granddaughter. The small child eats the salty treat—which itself has become an unstable signifier—with exaggerated smacks and a giggle.

## Visual Ethics of Care

*Ujirei* critiques the inequities and colonial contradictions that bedevil Ayoreo people. It also implies that a remedy exists. This, according to the film, can be found in certain forms of intergenerational care. *Ujirei* returns time and again to the subtle relationships between Ayoreo

generations. The film includes interviews with several suffering elders, all of whom have since died. One of the film's most disturbing cuts juxtaposes the rich Paraguayan attorney berating Ayoreo leaders with a sharp cut to the dark interior of a hut in Campo Loro, where two of Sobode's elder relatives lay prone on the ground.

He crouches nearby and turns the camera on them. In response to his staccato questions, the woman tells him that they do not receive medical attention, and that they do not have any food or firewood. Halfway through the conversation, she reveals that she does not recognize her guest. When Sobode repeats his introduction, she brightens, and expresses her gratitude for his visit. Then, as a proper Ayoreo hostess should, she even offers him the last of their remaining food. It is not the fraught image of suffering that draws Sobode here. Instead, he shows an unsettling tension between the lack of appropriate care for elders and the woman's insistence on offering an appropriately caring response to her visitor, despite her difficult situation.



Figures 6 & 7. Elders

The scene finds a complementary image later in the film, when Sobode visits another elder several weeks later. He tries to begin with an off-camera interview. But the elder whispers inaudibly to herself and seems uncomfortable. Sobode then changes his approach. As if he has rethought his approach to display, he stops the interview and moves into the frame. He joins her in front of the camera. Sitting beside her, Sobode speaks to her and to the camera about his gratitude for the elders who cared for him when he was young. He tells the woman that they are equals. He says that he too will soon be old, that no one can live forever, and that she will be young again when she arrives in *Dupade Idai*, the Christian Heaven. If the first visit invoked the morality of care within the documentary *mise-en-scène* and the relation between who films and those filmed, the second related care to inclusion within the cinematic frame itself (see Comolli 2015).

Through these visits, Sobode portrays his position relative to those of his parents' generation. In the film's second half, he directs many of his spoken exhortations to an audience of younger Ayoreo. In these comments, he speaks to them about the past and the present. Switching from witness to elder authority, he reminds them of the importance of caring for elders and for each other. For Sobode, younger Ayoreo have a moral obligation to reciprocate the nurture their relatives gave them and to offer such care to future generations.

*Ujirei* indicts the postcontact world for failing to deliver on its promises of proper relations, reciprocal responsibility, and mutual obligation. Sobode tells how his father mistakenly believed the Cojñone would care for Ayoreo after contact. Instead, the strangers have displaced Ayoreo from their ancestral lands. Ayoreo placed themselves in a position of dependency, but the Cojñone have neglected to provide for Ayoreo well-being. The result, Sobode says, is that Ayoreo are now *yocuñama*, or treated like subhuman scraps of waste, broken apart and scattered over the fragments of their former lands. Moreover, he is concerned that this colonial disregard is contagious. He fears it is becoming internalized by younger Ayoreo and eroding Ayoreo ways of relating to one another. At times, he explicitly addresses an Ayoreo audience:

Today the Cojñone do not care for the Ayoreo. Their objective is to make the Ayoreo disappear. They want to be the only people that matter. But we must not give up our lives. We cannot let the Cojñone dominate us or our lands. We will always be Ayoreo. Being Ayoreo means our clans. I am Chiqueno. We must be strong. Some say our

clans do not matter but they are wrong. We must feel connected to ourselves and our clans. I will always be Chiqueno. I will always be Ayoreo. I am Ducodegose. My wife was born near Etetadie. Before we would have lived there. But my true country is Ducode. My ID states this is true. That is what I wish to tell you. I will tell more things tomorrow. I am not yet dead, neither is my mind. Now the Cojñone think we are like worthless debris. As if we did not have a big country before. Our ancestors thought the Cojñone would care for us. But now we know that Cojñone take from us instead. They gain power by dispossessing Ayoreo.

In making this point, Sobode does not protest the loss of precontact cultural forms or the nearly total abandonment by Ayoreo of the practices that outsiders often presume to constitute radical ontological alterity. He does precisely the opposite. In our interpretation, the film underscores how the continuity of moral humanity may require and emerge from the destruction of its earlier forms. It suggests that what emerges from the splintered remnants, in turn, are new social figures that affirm Ayoreo capacities to master and to re-objectify transformation, not least through the cinematic form itself. Only through formal rupture can these moral bases of collective self-production be assured. Yet this life-project of rupture also depends on the continuity of certain kinds of kinship, relations and care. The systemic denial of such care, Sobode suggests, is a form of dehumanizing violence.

It remains an open question as to how Sobode relates his explicit statements about inequity to his observational shots of material objects. One likely interpretation is that he intends these as implicit comments on power that both extend and complicate his verbal analysis of current politics. Most of these shots, which are interspersed throughout the film, focus on machines associated with the transformative physical power to rupture. He films tractors, bulldozers, a well-drilling rig, and a circular saw. Yet, in the second half of the film, Sobode also includes one long shot of a woven plant-fiber textile.

The filmmaker's shadow tracks across it, as he moves closer and closer to the knitted surface. Western viewers may not grasp the significance of this object. But it is instantly recognizable to Ayoreo contact survivors as a *docoidi*, a multipurpose traditional weaving that served as blanket, sleeping mat, and woman's skirt prior to contact. These were synonymous with hearth and home. Nearly all were destroyed shortly after contact, and they are no longer used in everyday life. To Ayoreo sensibilities, it is shocking that Sobode has one at all. The skirt belonged to a Totobiegosode woman captured by missionaries in 1986. She gave it to Sobode in the aftermath of contact. This means that for more than thirty years, he kept the docoidi carefully folded, wrapped in plastic, and stored in his house. During the editing process, we asked if he saw in the skirt image a contradiction between the material traces of social rupture and the continuity of care. But he said the opposite was true. The skirt is important because it figures how care and destruction may at times blur into one another in ways that remain inarticulate and unresolved.

By the end of the film, spectators likely realize that Sobode is conveying something fundamental about how colonial violence works. The contradictions between each scene are intentionally left unresolved. There is no synthesis possible within the dialectical imagery of Ujirei. The filmic montage does not attempt to restore a harmonious whole. Instead, it celebrates interruption, partiality, multiplicity. The cinematic translation of negative immanence is a radical gesture. Distinct from other Indigenous films in which the primary goal is to represent the object of an Indigenous social world, Ujirei seems to refuse the possibility of objectifying Ayoreo experience as any kind of coherent system or whole. Instead, it details a kind of sociality organized around lacunae, failed meanings, and fractured visual aesthetics. If many lowland Indigenous films invite non-Native audiences into a different world, Sobode conjures an inchoate set of future imaginaries. Such cinema insists on post-apocalyptic horizons and people that remain incomplete and open ended.

## A Cinema of Reemergence

In conclusion, we argue that Ujirei is more than a cinematic form. It also offers a central analytic and conceptual orientation for collaborative anthropology in contemporary contexts.<sup>9</sup> The significance of this analytic lies, at the most basic level, in the ways that Ujirei challenges the aesthetics of stable authenticity, degraded change, inevitable doom, or ultimate extinction by attending to the new forms that can emerge from previously damaged fragments. Rather than inviting audiences into a coherent world or offering a spectacle of absolute ends, Ujirei and other Ayoreo films offer a conceptual framework that plunges us into a zone where interruptions and juxtapositions may engender startling new beginnings. Although space precludes us from discussing the other Ayoreo films fully here, it is possible to identify related tendencies within *Ore Enominone/Their Visions* and *Yiquijmapiedie/Our Ways*, produced by collectives in the villages of Arocojnadi and Chaidi, respectively.<sup>10</sup> In these examples of Ayoreo cinematic concept work, trauma and contamination are remixed into novel horizons of past, present, and future social life. Rather than mourning the loss of radical exteriority or incommensurable ontologies, Ujirei as an analytic reenvisions what follows world-ending violence and upheaval. It portrays the capacity to objectify rupture, transformation, and regeneration as critically important arts of living on the margins of predatory economies, violent inequities, and degraded environments. These are also, of course, the same margins many of us now inhabit. And these may well be the same tasks we now must cultivate at a planetary scale. It remains to be seen if similar Ujirei can take root in other topographies of crisis and change, whether farther or closer to home.

To take these labors of Ujirei seriously requires moving beyond a structuralist or prescriptive approach to Indigenous cinematic aesthetics, which reduces their legitimacy to continuity with the artificially limited set of practices that count as authorized tradition or purified ontological exteriority. Cinema, as developed within the processes of shooting and editing a film such as Ujirei, does not merely document a set of stable aesthetic traits already known in advance. Rather, this filmic production actively participated in catalyzing or reconstituting the practices, people, and events it portrayed (see Brasil 2017:25). The experimental becomings of Ujirei are instantiated through fragmentary happenings that create and reflect a set of emergent existential forms. Moreover, the structure of the film is inseparable from the aesthetic configuration of the filmed fragments themselves: the sharp cuts, interrupted images, and mobile frames that characterize the shooting/editorial style are the aesthetic material that allow the film to conjure, convey, and unleash the defining energies of its object of contemplation (see MacDougall 2005). The gaps between the splintered images accumulate and build into a centrifugal force that simultaneously orchestrates the relationships between various modes of rupture. It is this higher plane of “structural-rupture,” and not any particular break, that creates a “rupturing-becoming,” which opens space for new events, perceptions, and persons to emerge. Accounting for this existential momentum within the cinematic instantiation of Ujirei, in turn, requires making explicit the basic parameters of the editing process. In attempting to write close to this peculiar form of emergence, our intention is to center Ujirei as a wider political aesthetics and anthropological analytic. Doing so underscores how such experimental cinematic forms transcend any purist or categorical definitions of “Indigenous video” and actualize fault lines of becoming that are often both individual and collective, familiar and strange, iterative and new, plastic and contingent, specifically Ayoreo and broadly intercultural—all at once. The challenge for scholars is how to more precisely attend to the radical decolonizing potentials that may coalesce through such modes of immanence and emergence.

The aesthetics of Ujirei, of course, are pointedly political. Yet of what, exactly, does this politics consist? If it is seemingly irreverent to the double-edged politics of authenticity, it also moves beyond the aims of preservation, the tactical constitution of a “middle ground” for intercultural negotiations, and the conventional axes of “visual sovereignty” noted in Indigenous cinema elsewhere (Dowell 2013; Graham 2016; Raheja 2007; Schiwy 2003). Nor can the film’s power be entirely embedded within a singular, preexisting mode of traditional cultural production. The key distinction, perhaps, lies in how Ujirei-aesthetics do not defend an already objectified difference or even seek to substitute a more realistic version of it. Instead, Ujirei-aesthetics make a more radical claim to redefine—through critically reobjecti-

fyng—the terms and processes of differentiation themselves; namely, rupture, transformation, and reemergence. This provides an important alternative to the existing image repertoires at the core of contradictory colonial schema of legitimate Ayoreo life imposed by evangelical missionaries, bulldozing ranchers, essentialist anthropologists, officials from different state agencies, and humanitarian or developmentalist advocacy NGOs. If these competing hegemonic formations each create and defend a distinct, purified version of the “hyper-real Indian,” as Alcida Rita Ramos (1998:276–77) so insightfully notes, the “sproutings” of Ujirei mock each hyperrealist mode by inverting their conceits of ultimate ends and then exposing their cumulative force to a critical and rejuvenating Ayoreo gaze. This is a substantive gesture toward decolonizing the genres of difference—one that subverts any tendency to approach Indigenous cinema as a repository for surrogate images of Indigenous alterity available for symbolic consumption or vicarious vivification within conjoined industrial fields of governance, activism, and extraction.<sup>11</sup> The very act of creating such a subversive cinematic gesture wildly exceeds colonial schema predicated on making invisible actual Ayoreo subjectivities and creative capacities.<sup>12</sup> What is at stake in the film is nothing less than a “redistribution of the sensible” through a political cinematic aesthetics that re-objectifies the disjunctures of colonial violence and opens novel fields for contesting the hegemonic patterns of sense, being, and marginality in the Paraguayan Chaco (Rancière 2013).

Although we note important resonances between the cinematographic signs instantiated in Ujirei and the cocreated figures of “negative immanence” that Bessire (2014a, 2017a, 2017b) previously used to describe wider Ayoreo responses to formations of colonial violence, we celebrate the fact that our interpretations cannot be mistaken as the final explanation of this project. We encourage other scholars to watch the film. Ujirei has screened at several film festivals and is available on the VNA Vimeo-On-Demand channel.<sup>13</sup> We hope others take this example of Ayoreo cinematic concept work as seriously as we have tried to do. For far too long, anthropologists and other outside experts have been able to make and defend claims about Ayoreo lives, norms, and philosophies without having to reveal the evidentiary bases for these claims or being held to account for their consequences. Now, Ujirei offers a broadly accessible and forceful Ayoreo-authored statement on these same matters that should be accounted for in future scholarly analyses of Ayoreo realities.

By directly rebutting the terms of many prior anthropological representations of Ayoreo humanity, Ujirei is a further illustration of how the collaborative production of Indigenous cinema remains an effective technique for enacting a decolonizing, anti-essentialist, and anti-extractive anthropological praxis. Such forms of collaborative cinematic concept work provide an important venue for future experiments in “shared anthropology” and critical ethnographic reflection about defining conundrums in ways that merit continued recognition and support (see Ginsburg 2018). Ujirei leaves us with a radical affirmation of humanity and the contemplation of vital possibilities yet to emerge from the damaged fragments of our social worlds.

### Tracks in the Road

During the final weeks of editing, it became clear Sobode did not have an ending in mind. We asked him to shoot several concluding images that he thought conveyed the essence of Ujirei.

A week later, Sobode had crafted four sets of images. He shot several examples of sprouts growing from severed trunks and burned cuttings in the forest. He filmed a loudspeaker through which a pastor recited Bible verses, as an older woman sat listening and weaving nearby.

After that, he shot a close-up of a small, half-Ayoreo girl. As a group of women played volleyball in the background and bachata music blared, he asked the child her name and tried to talk with her. She stared at him without saying a word.

Then, he filmed a group of white and yellow butterflies. The butterflies were licking the grains of salt that crystallized around the edges of disturbed earth. The tracks were left by the tires of a heavy cattle truck pressed into damp soil after a recent rain.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Ayoreo-speaking peoples are not a unified ethnic group and such gatherings of distinct Ayoreo-speaking peoples remain rare, even as individuals maintain a constant flow of information, messages, and conversations between villages and subgroups. Historically, Ayoreo peoples organized themselves into several autonomous and often mutually suspicious band confederacies inhabiting a vast expanse of northern Paraguay and southeastern Bolivia. Direct contacts with northern Direquednejnaigosode-Ayoreo and Jnupedogosome-Ayoreo groups began in 1947, with central Guidaigosode and Garaigosode bands through the 1960s, and with the southernmost Totobiegosome-Ayoreo bands in 1979, 1986, 1998, and 2004. Two small bands remain in nomadic concealment in the dwindling forests.

<sup>2</sup> Many scholars have documented the remarkable methods and decolonizing potentials within the body of work associated with Video Nas Aldeias, which includes more than seventy films (see Aufderheide 1995; Araujo et al. 2011; Carelli 2011; Córdova 2014; Correia et al. 2005; Caixeta de Queiroz 2008; Felipe 2019; Gallois and Carelli 1995; Lacerda 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Throughout this essay, we use the term Indigenous cinema to refer to the Ayoreo films, as well as the formal work made by South American Indigenous filmmakers more broadly. This follows common terminology in Portuguese and Spanish scholarship and does not promote the Eurocentric conceit of auteur film. Rather, it reflects our commitment to understanding the creative, artistic, intellectual and political interventions of films intentionally made by Indigenous filmmakers, which we believe merit the same level of analytic consideration that scholars apply to other bodies of cinematic work.

<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere, Bessire (2017b) described a novel conjuncture of visibility, alterity, and governance organized around four linked dynamics: (1) how widespread images of impending planetary crisis and inevitable ends mobilize a search for redemptive prototypes of futures beyond the anthropogenic turbulence of the present; (2) how this search manifests in part through the scholarly fetishization of lowland South American Indigenous ontologies, which are stripped of relational ties to reappear as radical exteriorities to the state, market, and history; (3) how the pursuit of this incommensurability coincides with a turn to experimental cinema as affording a new “ontological poetics” that offers important traction on the disordered montage of modern experience as well as our insufficiently acknowledged entanglements with nonhuman worlds and voices, even while overlooking the cinematic projects of Native people themselves; and (4) how these cumulative operations are politically double edged, at times promising new critical imaginaries while at others colluding with the logics of extraction and eradication. That is, both cinematic ontologies and so-called “primitive” ones are taken as prototypes for more substantive engagements with imminent crisis. Yet all too often, scholars equate the political potential of cinematic ontologies with cosmological incommensurability. The erasure of actual Indigenous cinema—in all its diverse, sophisticated, and besieged forms—from these scholarly projects is significant. For more on Anthropocene visual and the contours of this visual economy, see: Bonneil and Fressoz 2015; Carruth and Marzec 2014; Chakrabarty 2009; Emmelhainz 2015; Malm and Hornburg 2014; Masco 2016; Mirzoeff 2014; Pandian 2015; Stevenson and Kohn 2015.

<sup>5</sup> We are drawing here from Foucault’s treatment of “arts of living” (Rabinow 1984), as formulated in various ways throughout his work on what he called the “aesthetics of existence.” What we find useful in this term is how it draws attention to the complex relationships between an individual and his or her singular or collective self, while at the same time linking this reflexive conception of the self to interactions with historical technologies of individual

and collective domination. Foucault's formulation allows us to grasp how subjects use "technologies of the self" to transform the self into a work of art that is simultaneously creative, critical, and constrained by wider systems of power/knowledge (Foucault 1988). This approach to subjectivity, in turn, may help clarify how work such as *Ujirei* complements and responds to anthropological analyses of Indigenous apocalypticism in general (Bold 2019) and among Ayoreo-speaking peoples in particular (Bessire 2011a).

<sup>6</sup> Here, we are less interested in grand theories or philosophical debates around immanence and becoming, and more so in the ways anthropologists have used these concepts to draw closer ethnographic attention to certain relationships between people and worlds, emergence and contingency. As João Biehl and Peter Locke note, the concept "emphasizes the powers and potentials of desire (both creative and destructive), the ways in which social fields ceaselessly leak and transform (power and knowledge notwithstanding), and the in-between, plastic, and ever-unfinished nature of a life" (2010:318; see also Biehl and Locke 2017). At the same time, it should be noted that the kinds of becoming surveyed here do not entirely correspond to any purely affirmative Deleuzian vitalism or definitions of immanence. For an important critique of the applicability of becoming to Aboriginal lifeways, see Hinkson 2019.

<sup>7</sup> These are not the only anthropological representations of Ayoreo humanity; recent work by Alfonso Otaegui is a notable and important exception to this binary. It is also particularly difficult to sustain this dehumanizing dichotomy when the object of analysis is other reflexive Ayoreo media projects manifest through the intensive and well-documented creation of songs, cassettes, radio, curing chants, etc. (Otaegui 2018; see also Bessire 2011b, 2012b).

<sup>8</sup> Text translated from Ayoreo and Spanish by Mateo Sobode Chiqueno and Lucas Bessire.

<sup>9</sup> Here, we join many scholars who have worked to center Indigenous concept work within their scholarship and critical praxis, especially within certain strands of anthropology, media studies, and critical Native studies. For two particularly inspiring examples, see Miyarrka Media 2019 and Simpson 2011.

<sup>10</sup> In *Ore Enominone/Their Visions*, villagers stage an increasingly surreal ethnofictional performance about the creation and inhabitation of a dream world in the forest. Created by the survivors of a deadly 1986 first contact, the Totobiegosode protagonists play a fictional version of themselves and share their unique knowledge of traditional foods, practices, and beliefs. Blurring the lines between staged reenactments and serious engagements with present challenges, the film opens new spaces for its creators to reflect on the ruptures of the past and to envision a more inhabitable future. In *Yiquijmapiedie/Our Ways*, the leader of a band that made first contact in 2004 and two other contact survivors recreate material objects that were once crucial to survival in the precontact forest but that have few present uses and are thus being forgotten. Working together, the three protagonists work with younger people to show the process of digging up a water root, creating wooden storage containers for water, and making bark ropes for a swing game. Both collectively authored films offer related but distinct takes on the defining themes and problematics of *Ujirei*. A fourth Ayoreo film was finished but ultimately shelved due to political considerations in one village. In addition, we edited *Farewell to Savage*, a reflexive documentary that incorporates archival materials and footage from the workshop process and the making of the Ayoreo films.

<sup>11</sup> A related point is made by Marco Aurélio Felipe about the decolonizing potentials of Guaraní-Mbya films, which he notes use metalanguage to "shred the situation of coloniality . . . by taking over the mirrors that until then reflected and refracted them." This act constitutes a "cinema of reversal of postcolonial mirrors" (2019a:249–50).

<sup>12</sup> Here, we are drawing from several commentaries on the relationship between the visible and the invisible within cinema generally (Merleau Ponty 1968) and within ethnographic documentary film specifically (Suhr and Willerslev 2012). This work has yet to be explicitly connected to the political fields that simultaneously render certain Indigenous peoples invisible through the active scotomization of those who do not conform to the authorized scripts of authenticity, tradition, etc. (see Bessire 2014b).

<sup>13</sup> The completed film has been shown at a variety of Indigenous film festivals and recognized with a handful of jury prizes, including a special recognition in the 2018 Anaconda Prize Festival held in Asunción and a special recognition from the 2018 Ficwallmapu Festival.



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