



The children of the world are all united in their quest for peace.

## Trans-Species Pidgins

When *Thou* is spoken, the speaker has no thing for his object. For where there is a thing there is another thing. Every *It* is bounded by others; *It* exists only through being bounded by others. But when *Thou* is spoken, there is no thing, *Thou* has no bounds.

When *Thou* is spoken, the speaker has no *thing*, he has indeed nothing. But he takes his stand in relation.

—Martin Buber, *I and Thou*

The dogs should have known what was to befall them in the forest that day they were killed. In a conversation she had with Delia and Luisa, back at the house shortly after we buried the dogs' bodies, Amériga wondered aloud why her family's canine companions were unable to augur their own deaths and, by extension, why she, their master, was caught unaware of the fate that would befall them: "While I was by the fire, they didn't dream," she said. "They just slept, those dogs, and they're usually real dreamers. Normally while sleeping by the fire they'll bark, 'hua hua hua.'" Dogs, I learned, dream, and by observing them as they dream people can know what their dreams mean. If, as Amériga suggested, their dogs would have barked "hua hua" in their sleep, this would have been an indicator that they were dreaming of chasing animals, and they would therefore have done the same in the forest the following day, for this is how a dog barks when pursuing game. If, by contrast, they would have barked "wai" that night, this would be a sure signal that a jaguar would kill them the following day, for this is how dogs cry out when attacked by felines.<sup>1</sup>

That night, however, the dogs didn't bark at all, and therefore, much to the consternation of their masters, they failed to foretell their own deaths. As Delia proclaimed, "Therefore, they shouldn't have died." The realization that the system of dream interpretation that people use to understand their dogs

had failed provoked an epistemological crisis of sorts; the women began to question whether they could ever know anything. Amériga, visibly frustrated, asked, "So how can we ever know?" Everyone laughed somewhat uneasily as Luisa reflected, "How is it knowable? Now, even when people are gonna die, we won't be able to know." Amériga concluded simply, "It wasn't meant to be known."

The dreams and desires of dogs are, in principle, knowable, because all beings, and not just humans, engage with the world and with each other as selves, that is, as beings that have a point of view. To understand other kinds of selves, one simply needs to learn how to inhabit their variously embodied points of view. So the question of how dogs dream matters deeply. Not only because of the purported predictive power of dreams, but because imagining that the thoughts of dogs are not knowable would throw into question whether it is ever possible to know the intentions and goals of any kind of self.

Entertaining the viewpoints of other beings blurs the boundaries that separate kinds of selves. In their mutual attempts to live together and to make sense of one another, dogs and people, for example, increasingly come to partake in a sort of shared trans-species habitus that does not observe the distinctions we might otherwise make between nature and culture; specifically, the hierarchical relationship that unites the Runa and their dogs is based as much on the ways in which humans have been able to harness canine forms of social organization as it is on the legacies of a colonial history in the Upper Amazon that links people in Ávila to the white-mestizo world beyond their village.

Trans-species communication is dangerous business. It must be undertaken in ways that avoid, on the one hand, the complete transmutation of the human self—no one wants to permanently become a dog—and, on the other, the monadic isolation represented by what in the previous chapter I called soul blindness, which is the solipsistic flipside of this transmutation. To mitigate such dangers people in Ávila make strategic use of different trans-species communicative strategies. These strategies reveal something important about the need to venture beyond the human and the challenges of doing so in ways that don't dissolve the human. These strategies also reveal something important about the logic inherent to semiosis. Understanding these, in turn, is central to the anthropology beyond the human that I am developing. To tease out some of these properties, I've chosen, as a heuristic device to focus my inquiry, the following small but vexing ethnological conundrum: Why do people in Ávila interpret dog dreams literally (e.g., when a dog barks in its sleep this is

an omen that it will bark in identical fashion the following day in the forest), whereas for the most part they interpret their own dreams metaphorically (e.g., if a man dreams of killing a chicken he will kill a game bird in the forest the following day)?

#### ALL TOO HUMAN

The ecology of selves within which the Runa, their dogs, and the many beings of the forest live reaches well beyond the human, but it is also one that is “all too human.”<sup>2</sup> I use this term to refer to the ways in which our lives and those of others get caught up in the moral webs we humans spin. I wish to signal that an anthropology that seeks a more capacious understanding of the human by attending to our relations to those who stand beyond us must also understand such relations by virtue of the ways in which they can be affected by that which is distinctively human.

I argued in chapter 1 that symbolic reference is distinctively human. That is, the symbolic is something that is (on this planet) unique to humans. The moral is also distinctively human, because to think morally and to act ethically requires symbolic reference. It requires the ability to momentarily distance ourselves from the world and our actions in it to reflect on our possible modes of future conduct—conduct that we can deem potentially good for others that are not us. This distancing is achieved through symbolic reference.

My intention here is not to arrive at a universal understanding of what might be an appropriate moral system. Nor is it a claim that living well with others—what Haraway (2008: 288–89) calls “flourishing”—necessarily requires rational abstraction, or morality (even though thinking about the good does). But to imagine an anthropology beyond the human that does not simply project human qualities everywhere we must situate morality ontologically. That is, we must be precise about where and when morality comes to exist. To state it baldly, before humans walked this earth there was no morality and no ethics. Morality is not constitutive of the nonhuman beings with whom we share this planet. It is potentially appropriate to morally evaluate actions we humans initiate. This is not the case for nonhumans (see Deacon 1997: 219).

Value, by contrast, is intrinsic to the broader nonhuman living world because it is intrinsic to life. There are things that are good or bad for a living self and its potential for growth (see Deacon 2012: 25, 322), keeping in mind that by “growth” I mean the possibility to learn by experience (see chapter 2).

Because nonhuman living selves can grow it is appropriate to think about the moral implications our actions have on their potential to grow well—to flourish.<sup>3</sup>

As with the symbolic, to say that the moral is distinctive does not mean that it is cut off from that from which it emerges. Morality stands in a relation of emergent continuity to value, just as symbolic reference stands in a relation of emergent continuity to indexical reference. And value extends beyond the human. It is a constitutive feature of living selves. Our moral worlds can affect nonhuman beings precisely because there are things that are good or bad for them. And some of those things that are good or bad for them are also, we might learn if we could learn to listen to these beings with whom our lives are entangled, good or bad for us as well.

This is especially true when we begin to consider how this *us* that comprises us is an emergent self that can incorporate many kinds of beings in its coming configurations. We humans are the products of the multiple nonhuman beings that have come to make and continue to make us who we are. Our cells are, in a sense, themselves selves, and their organelles were once, in the distant past, free-living bacterial selves; our bodies are vast ecologies of selves (Margulis and Sagan 2002; McFall-Ngai et al. 2013). None of these selves in and of themselves are loci of moral action, even though larger selves with emergent properties (properties such as the capacity for moral thinking, in the case of humans) can subsume them.

The multispecies encounter is, as Haraway has intimated, a particularly important domain for cultivating an ethical practice. In it, we are most clearly confronted with what she calls “significant otherness” (Haraway 2003). In these encounters we are confronted by an otherness that is radically (significantly) other—without, I would add, that otherness being incommensurable or “incognizable” (see chapter 2). But in these encounters we can nonetheless find ways to enter intimate (significant) relations with these others who are radically not us. Many of these selves who are not ourselves are also not human. That is, they are not symbolic creatures (which means that they are also not loci of moral judgment). As such, they force us to find new ways to listen; they force us to think beyond our moral worlds in ways that can help us imagine and realize more just and better worlds.

A more capacious ethical practice, one that mindfully attends to finding ways of living in a world peopled by other selves, should come to be a feature of the possible worlds we imagine and seek to engender with other beings. Just

how to go about doing this, just how to decide on what kind of flourishing to encourage—and to make room for the many deaths on which all flourishing depends—is itself a moral problem (see Haraway 2008: 157, 288). Morality is a constitutive feature of our human lives; it is one of human life's many difficulties. It is also something we can better understand through an anthropology beyond the human; semiosis and morality must be thought together because the moral cannot emerge without the symbolic.

The qualifier "all too" (as opposed to "distinctive") is not value-neutral. It carries its own moral judgment. It implies that there is something potentially troubling at play here. This chapter and those that follow attend to this by opening themselves to the complicated ways in which the Runa are immersed in the many all-too-human legacies of a colonial history that affect so much of life in this part of the Amazon. These chapters, in short, begin to open themselves to problems that involve power.

#### DOG-HUMAN ENTANGLEMENTS

In many ways dogs and people in Ávila live in independent worlds. People often ignore their dogs, and once they mature into adults their masters don't even necessarily feed them. Dogs, for their part, seem to largely ignore people. Resting in the cool shade under the house, stealing off after the bitch next door, or, as Hilario's dogs did a few days before they were killed, hunting down a deer on their own—dogs largely live their own lives.<sup>4</sup> And yet their lives are also intimately entangled with those of their human masters. This entanglement does not just involve the circumscribed context of the home or village. It is also the product of the interactions that dogs and people have with the biotic world of the forest as well as with the sociopolitical world beyond Ávila through which both species are linked by the legacy of a colonial history. Dog-human relationships need to be understood in terms of both these poles. The hierarchical structure on which these relationships are based is simultaneously (but not equally) a biological and a colonial fact. Relationships of predation, for example, characterize how the Runa and their dogs relate to the forest as well as to the world of whites.

Through a process that Brian Hare and others (2002) call "phylogenetic enculturation" dogs have penetrated human social worlds to such an extent that they exceed even chimpanzees in understanding certain aspects of human communication (such as different forms of pointing to indicate the location of

food). Becoming human in the right ways is central to surviving as a dog in Ávila.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, people strive to guide their dogs along this path in much the same way that they help youngsters to mature into adulthood. Just as they advise a child on how to live correctly, people counsel their dogs. To do this, they make them ingest a mixture of plants and other substances, such as agouti bile, known collectively as *tsita*. Some of the ingredients are hallucinogenic and also quite toxic.<sup>6</sup> By giving them advice in this fashion, people in Ávila are trying to reinforce a human ethos of comportment that dogs should share.<sup>7</sup>

Like Runa adults, dogs should not be lazy. For dogs, this means that instead of chasing chickens and other domestic animals, they should pursue forest game. In addition, dogs, like people, should not be violent. This means that dogs shouldn't bite people or bark at them loudly. Finally, dogs, like their masters, should not expend all their energy on sex. I've observed people administer *tsita* to dogs on several occasions. What happened at Ventura's house is typical in many respects. According to Ventura, before his dog Puntero discovered females he was a good hunter, but once he began to be sexually active he lost the ability to be aware of animals in the forest. Because soul-substance is passed to a developing fetus through semen during sex, he, like the expectant fathers I discussed in chapter 3, became soul blind. So early one morning Ventura and his family captured Puntero, fastened his snout shut with a strip of vine, and hog-tied him. Ventura then poured *tsita* down Puntero's snout. While doing this he said the following:

chases little rodents  
it will not bite chickens  
chases swiftly  
it should say, "hua hua"  
it will not lie

The way Ventura spoke to his dog is extremely unusual. I'll return to it later. For now, I'll only give a general gloss. In the first phrase "little rodents" refers obliquely to the agoutis that dogs are supposed to chase. The second phrase is an admonition not to attack domestic animals but to hunt forest ones instead. The third phrase encourages the dog to chase animals but otherwise not to run ahead of the hunter. The fourth phrase reaffirms what a good dog should be doing: finding game and therefore barking "hua hua." The final phrase refers to the fact that some dogs "lie." That is, they bark "hua hua" even when there are no animals present.

As Ventura poured the liquid, Puntero attempted to bark. Because his snout was tied shut he was unable to do so. When he was finally released Puntero stumbled off and remained in a daze all day. Such a treatment carries real risks. Many dogs do not survive this ordeal, which highlights how dependent dogs are on exhibiting human qualities for their physical survival. There is no place in Runa society for dogs-as-animals.

Dogs, however, are not just animals-becoming-people. They can also acquire qualities of jaguars, the quintessential predators. Like jaguars, dogs are carnivorous. Their natural propensity (when they haven't succumbed to domestic laziness) is to hunt animals in the forest. Even when dogs are fed vegetal food, such as palm hearts, people in Ávila refer to it as meat in their presence.

People also see dogs as their potential predators. During the conquest the Spaniards used dogs to attack the forebears of the Ávila Runa.<sup>8</sup> Today this canine predatory nature is visible with regard to the special ritual meal that forms part of the feast known as the *aya pichca*, which I discussed in the previous chapter. This meal, which consists of cooked palm hearts, is eaten early in the morning after the ghost of the deceased is sent back to where he or she was born, to reunite with the afterbirth. The long tubular hearts, which are left intact for this meal, resemble human bones (by contrast, when palm hearts are prepared for everyday meals they are finely chopped).<sup>9</sup> Resembling bones, the palm hearts presented at this meal serve as a substitute for the corpse of the deceased in a sort of "mortuary endo-cannibalistic" feast, not unlike other feasts in other parts of Amazonia (and perhaps historically in the Ávila region as well; see Oberem 1980: 288) in which the bones of the dead are consumed by their living relatives (see Fausto 2007). Those present at the meal held after we sent off Jorge's ghost stressed that under no circumstances must dogs eat the palm hearts. Dogs, who see palm hearts as meat, are predators par excellence, for, like jaguars and cannibalistic humans they can come to treat people as prey.<sup>10</sup>

Dogs, then, can acquire jaguarlike attributes, but jaguars can also become canine. Despite their manifest role as predators, jaguars are also the subservient dogs of the spirit beings who are the masters of the animals in the forest. According to Ventura, "What we think of as a jaguar is actually a [spirit animal master's] dog."

It is important to note that in Ávila these spirit animal masters,<sup>11</sup> who keep jaguars as dogs, are often described as powerful white estate owners and priests. People liken the game animals these masters own and protect to the herds of cattle that whites keep on their ranches. In one sense, then, the Ávila



Runa are not so different from many other Amazonians who understand human and nonhuman sociality as one and the same thing. That is, for many Amazonians, the social principles found in human society are the same as those that structure animal and spirit societies of the forest. And this goes in both directions: nonhuman sociality informs understandings of human sociality just as much as human sociality informs that of nonhumans (see Descola 1994). Ávila, however, has always been part of larger political economies at the same time that it has been fully immersed in the forest's ecology of selves. This means that Runa "society" also includes a sense of the fraught relations the Runa have to others in a broader colonial, and now republican, arena. As a consequence, the sociality that extends to the nonhumans of the forest is also informed by those all-too-human histories in which the Runa, over the generations, have become entangled. This, then, in part, is why the animal masters that live deep in the forest are white (for a further discussion of what exactly being "white" here means, see chapters 5 and 6).

Were-jaguars—runa puma—are also dogs. As Ventura explained it to me, with reference to his recently deceased father, when a person "with jaguar" (*pumayu*) dies, his or her soul goes to the forest to "become a dog." Were-jaguars become the "dogs" of the spirit animal masters. That is, they become subservient to them in the same way that people from Ávila enter subservient relations when they go to work as field hands for estate owners and priests. A runa puma, then, is simultaneously Runa, a potent feline predator, and the obedient dog of a white animal master.

In addition to being emblematic of the Runa predicament of being simultaneously predator and prey, dominant and submissive, dogs are extensions of people's actions in the world beyond the village. Because they serve as scouts, often detecting prey well before their masters can, dogs extend Runa predatory endeavors in the forest. They are also, along with the humans, subject to the same threats of predation by jaguars.

In addition to the linkages they help people forge with the beings of the forest, dogs allow the Runa to reach out to that other world beyond the village—the realm of white-mestizo colonists who own ranches near Ávila territory. Ávila dogs are woefully underfed, and as a result they are often quite unhealthy. For this reason, they are rarely able to produce viable offspring, and people from Ávila must often turn to outsiders to obtain pups. A human-induced canine reproductive failure, then, makes people dependent on these outsiders for the procreation of their dogs. They also tend to adopt the dog names that colonists

use. In this regard, the names Pucaña and Huiqui are exceptions. More common are dog names such as Marquesa, Quiteña, or even Tiwintza (a toponym of Jivaroan origin, marking the site of Ecuador's 1995 territorial conflict with Peru). This practice of using the dog names preferred by colonists is another indicator of how dogs always link the Runa to a broader social world, even when they are also products of a domestic sociability.

As a link between forest and outside worlds, dogs in many ways resemble the Runa, who, as "Christian Indians," have historically served as mediators between the urban world of whites and the sylvan one of the Auca, or non-Christian "unconquered" indigenous peoples, especially the Huaorani (Hudson 1987; Taylor 1999: 195).<sup>12</sup> Until approximately the 1950s the Runa were actually enlisted by powerful estate owners—ironically, like the mastiffs of the Spanish conquest used to hunt down Runa forebears—to help them track down and attack Huaorani settlements.<sup>13</sup> And, as ranch hands, they continue to help colonists engage with the forest by, for example, hunting for them.

I should also note that the kinds of dogs that people in Ávila acquire from colonists do not for the most belong to any recognizable breed. Throughout much of Spanish-speaking Ecuador, such dogs are disparagingly described as "runa" (as in "*un perro runa*")—that is, as mutts. In Quichua, by contrast, *runa* means person. It is used as a sort of pronominal marker of the subject position—for all selves see themselves as persons—and it is only hypostasized as ethnonym in objectifying practices such as ethnography, racial discrimination, and identity politics (see chapter 6). This Quichua term for "person," however, has come to be used in Spanish to refer to mongrel dogs.<sup>14</sup> It would not be too far a stretch to suggest that *runa* for many Ecuadorians refers to those dogs that lack a kind of civilized status, those *sin cultura*, or without culture. Certain kinds of dogs and a certain group of indigenous people, the Quichua-speaking Runa, according to this colonial primitivist logic, have come to serve as markers along this imagined route from animality to humanity.

Trans-species relations often involve an important hierarchical component; humans and dogs are mutually constituted but in ways that are fundamentally unequal for the parties involved.<sup>15</sup> The domestication of dogs, beginning some fifteen thousand years ago (Savolainen et al. 2002), has been dependent, in part, on the fact that the progenitors of dogs were highly social animals that lived in well-established dominance hierarchies. Part of the process of domestication involved replacing the apex of this hierarchy in such a way that dogs would imprint on their human master as the new pack leader. Human-dog

relations are dependent on the ways in which canine and human socialities merge, and they are always predicated, in some measure, on the ongoing establishment of relations of dominance and submission (Ellen 1999: 62). In colonial and postcolonial situations, such as that in which people in Ávila are immersed, this merger acquires renewed meaning. Dogs are submissive to their human masters in the same way that the Runa, historically, have been forced to be submissive to white estate owners, government officials, and priests (see Muratorio 1987). This position is not fixed, however. The lowland Runa, as opposed to some of their highland indigenous Quichua-speaking counterparts, have always maintained a relatively higher degree of autonomy vis-à-vis state authorities. They, and their canine companions, then, are also like powerful predatory jaguars that, for their part, are not just the servile dogs of the animal masters.

Adopting the viewpoint of another kind of being to a certain extent means that we "become" another kind "with" that being (see Haraway 2008: 4, 16–17). And yet these sorts of entanglements are dangerous. People in Ávila seek to avoid the state of monadic isolation that I've been calling soul blindness, by which they lose the ability to be aware of the other selves that inhabit the cosmos.<sup>16</sup> And yet they want to do so without fully dissolving that sort of selfhood distinctive to their position in this cosmos as human beings. Soul blindness and becoming an-other-with-an-other are opposite extremes along a continuum that spans the range of ways of inhabiting an ecology of selves. There is a constant tension, then, between the blurring of interspecies boundaries and maintaining difference, and the challenge is to find the semiotic means to productively sustain this tension without being pulled to either extreme.<sup>17</sup>

#### DREAMING

Because dreaming is a privileged mode of communication through which, via souls, contact among radically different kinds of beings becomes possible, it is an important site for this negotiation. According to people in Ávila, dreams are the product of the ambulations of the soul. During sleep, the soul separates from the body, its "owner,"<sup>18</sup> and interacts with the souls of other beings. Dreams are not commentaries on the world; they take place in it (see also Tedlock 1992).

The vast majority of dreams that are discussed in Ávila are about hunting or other forest encounters. Most are interpreted metaphorically and establish a

correspondence between domestic and forest realms. For example, if a hunter dreams of killing a domestic pig he will kill a peccary in the forest the following day. The nocturnal encounter is one between two souls—that of the pig and that of the Runa hunter. Killing the pig's nocturnal domestic manifestation therefore renders soulless its forest manifestation to be encountered the following day. Now soul blind, this creature can be easily found in the forest and hunted because it is no longer cognizant of those other selves that might stand to it as predators.

Metaphoric dreams are ways of experiencing certain kinds of ecological connections among kinds of beings in such a manner that their differences are recognized and maintained without losing the possibility for communication. This is accomplished by virtue of the fact that metaphor is able to unite disparate but analogous, and therefore related, entities. It recognizes a gap as it points to a connection. Under normal waking circumstances, the Runa see peccaries in the forest as wild animals, even though they see them in their dreams as domestic pigs. But things get more complicated. The spirit animal masters who own and care for these animals (which appear as peccaries to the Runa in their waking lives) see them as their domestic pigs. So when people dream they come to see these animals from the spirit masters' point of view – as domestic pigs. Importantly, the spirit animal masters are considered dominant kinds of beings. From the perspective of these masters, the literal ground for the metaphoric relationship between peccary and domestic pig is the animal-as-domesticate. What is literal and what is metaphoric shifts. For the animal masters, what we would think of as "nature" (i.e., the "real" forest animals) is not the ground (cf. Strathern 1980: 189); peccaries are really domestic pigs. So one could say that from the perspective of an animal master, which is the dominant one and therefore the one that carries more weight, a hunter's dream of a pig is the literal ground for which his forest encounter with a peccary the following day will be a metaphor. In Ávila the literal refers to a customary interpretation of the world internal to a given domain. Metaphor, by contrast, is used to align the situated points of view of beings that inhabit different worlds. The distinction between figure and ground, then, can change according to context. What stays constant is that metaphor establishes a difference in perspective between kinds of beings inhabiting different domains. By linking the points of view of two beings at the same time that it recognizes the different worlds these beings inhabit, metaphor serves as a crucial brake that the Runa impose on the propensity toward blurring that is inherent to their way of interacting with other kinds of beings.

## CANINE IMPERATIVES

Dreams, recall from the previous chapter, confirmed the identity of the predator that killed the dogs. Hilario's dead father's puma was the culprit. But América's question remained unanswered. Why did the dogs fail to augur their own deaths? She felt that the dogs' dreams should have revealed the true nature of the forest encounter with the jaguar.

How could América presume to know how her dogs dreamed? In order to address this, it is important to first understand in more detail how people in Ávila talk with their dogs. Talking to dogs is necessary but also dangerous; the Runa do not want to become dogs in the process. Certain modes of communication are important in this delicate cross-species negotiation, and it is to an analysis of these that I now turn.

It is due to their privileged position relative to animals in the trans-species interpretive hierarchy that constitutes the forest ecology of selves that the Runa feel they can readily understand the meanings of canine vocalizations.<sup>19</sup> Dogs, however, cannot, under normal circumstances, understand the full range of human speech. As I indicated earlier, if people want dogs to understand them they must give the dogs hallucinogenic drugs. That is, they must make their dogs into shamans so that they can traverse the boundaries that separate them from humans. I want to revisit in more detail the scene in which Ventura advised his dog on how to behave. While pouring the hallucinogenic mixture down Puntero's snout, he turned to him and said:

1.1 *ucucha-ta tiu tiu*  
rodent-ACC chase<sup>20</sup>  
chases little rodents<sup>21</sup>

1.2 *atalpa ama cani-nga*  
chicken NEG IMP bite-3FUT  
it will not bite chickens

1.3 *sunchi tiu tiu*  
strong chase  
chases swiftly

1.4 *"hua hua" ni-n*  
*"hua hua" say-3*  
it should say "hua hua" (the bark made when dogs are chasing animals)

1.5 *ama llulla-nga*

NEG IMP lie-3FUT

it will not lie (i.e., the dog should not bark as if it were chasing animals when in reality it is not)

I am now in a position to explain why this is an extremely strange way of speaking.<sup>22</sup> When advising their dogs people in Ávila address them directly but in the third person. This appears to be similar to the Spanish *usted* system whereby third-person grammatical constructions are used in second-person pragmatic contexts to communicate status. Quichua, however, lacks such a deferential system. Notwithstanding, the Runa tweak Quichua to improvise one. That they are using grammatical constructions in new ways is most evident in line 1.2. In Quichua *ama* is typically used in second-person negative imperatives, as well as in negative subjunctives, but never in combination with the third-person future marker as it is being used here. I am dubbing this anomalous negative command a “canine imperative.”<sup>23</sup>

Here is the challenge: in order for people to communicate with dogs, dogs must be treated as conscious human subjects (i.e., as *You*s, even as *Thou*s); yet dogs must simultaneously be treated as objects (*Its*) lest they talk back. This, it appears, is why Ventura uses this canine imperative to address Puntero obliquely.<sup>24</sup> And this also seems to be part of the reason that Puntero’s snout was tied shut during this process. If dogs were to talk back, people would enter a canine subjectivity and therefore lose their privileged status as humans. By tying dogs down, in effect, denying them their animal bodies, they are permitting a human subjectivity to emerge. Canine imperatives, then, allow people to safely address this partially individuated emerging human self about the partially deindividuated and temporarily submerged canine one.<sup>25</sup>

The power-laden hierarchical relationship between dogs and humans that this attempt at communication reveals is analogous to that between humans and the spirit masters of animals. In the same way that people can understand their dogs, animal masters can readily understand the speech of humans; the Runa need only talk to them. Indeed, as I’ve observed on several occasions, in the forest people address these spirits directly. Under normal circumstances, however, humans cannot readily understand animal masters. Just as dogs require the hallucinogenic mixture *tsita* to understand the full range of human expression, people ingest hallucinogens, especially *aya huasca*, so that they can

converse normally with these spirits. They use this opportunity to cement bonds of obligation with the spirit masters so that these, in turn, will allow them to hunt their animals. One important way of establishing such bonds is through the spirit master's daughters. Under the influence of hallucinogens, hunters attempt to cultivate amorous relations with them so that they will help them gain access to game meat via their fathers.

The relationship between these spirit lovers and Runa men is very similar to that between the Runa and their dogs. People give advice to their dogs in the third person and, in addition, tie their snouts shut, making it impossible for their dogs to respond. For related reasons, a spirit lover never allows her Runa partner to address her by name. Her proper name should be voiced only by other beings from the spirit master realm, and never in the presence of her human lovers. As one man told me, "One does not ask their names." Instead, men are only allowed to address their spirit lovers with the title *señora*. In Ávila this Spanish term is used to refer to and address white women regardless of marital status. By prohibiting Runa men from addressing them directly, the animal master's daughters can protect their privileged perspective as spirits and, in a sense, also as whites. This is analogous to the ways in which people communicate with their dogs so as to protect their own special position as humans.<sup>26</sup> At all levels, then, the goal is to be able to communicate across the boundaries that separate kinds without destabilizing them.

#### INTERSPECIES SPEECH

People use oblique forms of communication, such as canine imperatives, to put brakes on processes that threaten to blur the distinctions among kinds of beings. Yet the language that they use when talking to their dogs is simultaneously an instantiation of this same process of blurring. Accordingly, I have begun to think of it as a "trans-species pidgin." Like a pidgin it is characterized by reduced grammatical structure. It is not fully inflected, and it exhibits minimal clause embedding and simplified person marking. Furthermore, pidgins often emerge in colonial situations of contact. Given how in Ávila dog-human relations are entangled with Runa-white ones, this colonial valence seems particularly appropriate.

Indicative of its status as a trans-species pidgin, Runa dog talk—in a manner that is similar to the way Juanicu's were-jaguar *compadre* both spoke and

panted (see chapter 3)—incorporates elements of communicative modalities from both human and animal realms. Using Quichua grammar, syntax, and lexicon, this “pidgin” exhibits elements of a human language. However, it also adopts elements of a preexisting trans-specific dog-human idiom. For example, *tiu tiu* (line 1.1) is used exclusively to spur dogs to chase game and is never used in human-human speech (except in quotation). In keeping with its paralinguistic identity, *tiu tiu* is not inflected here (see chapter 1). This interspecies pidgin also incorporates elements of dog talk. *Hua hua* (line 1.4) is an item from the canine lexicon. The Runa incorporate it into their utterances only through quotation. That is, they themselves would never bark. *Hua hua* is never inflected and is thus not fully integrated into human grammar. Both *tiu tiu* and *hua hua* involve reduplication, the iconic iteration of sound. This too is an important semiotic technique by which the Runa attempt to enter nonhuman, nonsymbolic referential modes.<sup>27</sup>

The Runa-dog trans-species pidgin is also like “motherese”—the purportedly distinctive form of language that adult caregivers use when speaking to babies—in that it exhibits grammatical simplification and is addressed to a subject that does not have full linguistic capabilities. This is an additional way in which it manifests a colonial valence. As we know, in many colonial and postcolonial contexts such as the Ávila one, natives come to be treated as standing to colonists as children stand to adults. Here is one example of how this plays out in Ávila. An engineer from the Ministry of Agriculture (Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería), visited Ávila, along with his wife and children, in order to confer on it the legal status of “personhood” (*personería jurídica*) as a state-recognized indigenous community (*comuna*). A number of people told me that he had come to give them “advice,” for which they used the verb *camachina*—a term that is also used to describe how adults “counsel” children and dogs. In his conversations with me, the engineer, in turn, referred to the inhabitants of Ávila, regardless of age, as “*los jóvenes*” (youths, children). He and his wife—who, fittingly, is a schoolteacher—considered it their civic duty to mold the Ávila Runa into proper (i.e., mature, adult) Ecuadorian citizens. In fact, they insisted on beginning the annual communal meeting with the national anthem, and they spent much of the long meeting reading and explaining portions of the Ecuadorian constitution and carefully guiding the villagers through the government-mandated guidelines for democratically electing the *comuna* leaders. With titles such as president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary, these leaders would, ideally, simultaneously reproduce



the bureaucratic apparatus of the state in the microcosm of the community and serve as the link between the village and the state. As I explore in the final chapter of this book, the contours of the self in Ávila are as much the product of the relations people have with nonhumans as they are the product of these sorts of intimate (and often paternalistic) encounters through which a larger nation-state comes to be manifested in their lives.

#### THE CONSTRAINTS OF FORM

The human-canine trans-species pidgin, like motherese, is oriented toward beings whose linguistic capabilities are in question. Although people in Ávila go to great lengths to make their dogs understand human speech, how they communicate with their dogs must also conform to the exigencies of those species that cannot normally understand human speech, with its heavily symbolic mode of reference. My cousin Vanessa who accompanied me on the unpleasant bus trip over the Andes into the Oriente (see chapter 1), finally got to visit Ávila with me. Not long after arriving at Hilario's house, however, she had the misfortune of being bitten on the calf by a young dog. The next afternoon, this dog, herself a fresh arrival (having been recently brought by one of Hilario's sons from across the Suno River where this son works as a field hand for colonists), bit her again. Hilario's family was quite disturbed by this behavior—the dog's "humanity" was at stake and, by extension, that of her masters—and Hilario and his other son Lucio therefore gave the dog the hallucinogenic *tsita* mixture and proceeded to "give her advice" in much the same way that Ventura had counseled Puntero. On this occasion, however, they took the drugged dog, with her mouth securely tied, and placed her snout against the same spot where she had bitten Vanessa the day before. While they were doing this Hilario said:

5.1 *amu amu mana canina*

{She, Vanessa, is a} master, a master and is not to be bitten

5.2 *amu amu amu imapata caparin*

{She is a} master, a master, a master, and there is no reason to bark

5.3 *amuta amu caninga*

It will not bite the master

Here, as visible in line 5.3, Hilario employs the same negative "canine imperative" construction that Ventura used. On this occasion, however, this phrase

and the series of utterances in which it is embedded are entangled with an earnest nonlinguistic and nonsymbolic effort at communication with the dog. Whereas the negative canine imperative—"it will not bite"—responds to the challenge of speaking to the dog in such a way that, under the influence of hallucinogens, she can understand but not respond, the reenactment of the act of biting Vanessa serves as another form of negative canine imperative, here, however, not in a symbolic register but in an indexical one. As such, it responds to a different but equally important challenge: how to say "don't" without language.

Regarding this challenge of how to say "don't" without language, Bateson noted an interesting feature of communication visible among many mammals, including dogs. Their "play" employs a kind of paradox. When, for example, dogs play together they act as if they are fighting. They bite each other but in ways that are not painful. "The playful nip," observed Bateson (2000e: 180), "denotes the bite, but it does not denote what would be denoted by the bite." There is a curious logic at work here. It is as if, he continues, these animals were saying, "These actions in which we now engage do not denote what those actions for which they stand would denote" (180). Thinking of this semiotically, and here I follow Deacon (1997: 403–5), whereas negation is relatively simple to communicate in a symbolic register, it is quite difficult to do so in the indexical communicative modalities typical of nonhuman communication. How do you tell a dog not to bite when the only secure modes of communication available are via likeness and contiguity? How do you negate a resemblance or a relation of contiguity without stepping outside of strictly iconic and indexical forms of reference? Saying "don't" symbolically is simple. Because the symbolic realm has a level of detachment from indexical and iconic chains of semiotic associations it easily lends itself to meta-statements of this sort. That is, via symbolic modalities it is relatively easy to negate a statement at a "higher" interpretive level. But how do you say "don't" indexically? The only way to do so is to re-create the "indexical" sign but this time without its indexical effect. The only way to indexically convey the pragmatic negative canine imperative, "Don't bite" (or, in its Runa trans-species pidgin deferential form, "It will not bite"), is to reproduce the act of biting but in a way that is detached from its usual indexical associations. The playful dog nips. This "bite" is an index of a real bite, but it is so in a paradoxical way. Although it is an index of a real bite and all its real effects, it also forces a break in an otherwise transitive indexical chain. Because of the absence of a bite, a new relational space emerges, which

we can call “play.” The nip is an index of a bite but not an index of what that bite is itself an index. By re-creating the attack on my cousin, Hilario and Lucio attempted to enter into this canine play logic, constrained as it is, by the formal properties characteristic of indexical reference. They forced the dog to bite Vanessa again but this time with her snout tied shut. Theirs was an attempt to rupture the indexical link between the bite and its implications, and in this way to tell their dog “don’t” through the idiom of a trans-species pidgin that, for the moment, has gone well beyond language.

It is never entirely clear whether and to what extent animals can understand human speech. If dogs could readily understand humans there would be no need to give them hallucinogens. The point I wish to make is that trans-species pidgins really are middle grounds (sensu White 1991; see also Conklin and Graham 1995). It is not enough to imagine how animals speak, or to attribute human speech to them. We are also confronted by, and forced to respond to, the constraints imposed by the particular characteristics of the semiotic modalities animals use to communicate among themselves. Regardless of its success, this attempt reveals a sensitivity on the part of people in Ávila to the formal constraints (see Deacon 2003) of a nonsymbolic semiotic modality.

#### THE CONUNDRUM

I want to return for a moment to the discussion, from this book’s introduction, taken up again in the previous chapter, of the admonition to never look away from a jaguar encountered in the forest. Returning the jaguar’s gaze encourages this creature to treat you as an equal predator—a *You*, a *Thou*. If you look away, it may well treat you as prey, soon-to-be dead meat, an *It*. Here too, in this nonlinguistic exchange, status is conveyed across species lines through the use of either direct or oblique modes of nonlinguistic communication. This too is a parameter of the zone in which canine imperatives operate. Jaguars and humans, then, enjoy a sort of parity according to people in Ávila. They can potentially entertain each other’s gaze in a trans-species but nevertheless, to some extent at least, intersubjective space. For this reason some people maintain that if they eat lots of hot peppers they can repulse the jaguars they might encounter in the forest because eye contact will burn the jaguar’s eyes. By contrast, eye contact with beings of higher levels is prohibitively dangerous. One should, for example, avoid such contact with the demons (*supaiguna*) that

wander the forest. Looking at them causes death; by entertaining their gaze one enters their realm—that of the nonliving.<sup>28</sup>

In Ávila this sort of hierarchy of perspective is reflected in modes of communication. Literal communication takes place when one being can entertain the subjective viewpoint of the other. “Higher” beings can readily do this vis-à-vis lower ones, as is evident by the fact that people can understand dog “talk” or that spirits can hear the supplications of people. “Lower” ones, however, can only see the world from the perspective of higher beings via privileged vehicles of communication, such as hallucinogens, which can permit contact among souls of beings inhabiting different realms. Without special vehicles of communication, such as hallucinogens, lower beings understand higher ones only through metaphor, that is, through an idiom that establishes connections at the same time that it differentiates.

We can now address the conundrum with which I began this chapter: if metaphor is so important in Runa dreams and in other situations in which the differences between kinds of beings are recognized, why do the Runa interpret the dreams of their dogs literally?

In a metaphoric human dream people recognize a gap between their mode of perception and that of the animal masters. Through dreaming, they are able to see how the forest really is—as the domestic gardens and fallows of the dominant animal masters. This, however, is always juxtaposed to how they see the forest in their waking life—as wild. People in Ávila interpret dog dreams literally because they are able to see directly the manifestations of how their dogs’ souls experience events thanks to the privileged status that they enjoy vis-à-vis dogs. By contrast, regarding the oneiric ambulations of their own souls, which involve interactions with dominant beings and the animals under their control, humans do not usually enjoy this privileged perspective. And this is why their dreams exhibit a metaphoric gap.

#### TRANS-SPECIES PIDGINS

In dog dream interpretation the gaps that separate kinds of beings, gaps that are often assiduously respected, collapse, at least for a moment, as dogs and people come together as part of a single affective field that transcends their boundaries as species—as they come together, in effect, as an emergent and highly ephemeral self distributed over two bodies.<sup>29</sup> Amériga’s epistemic crisis reveals the tenuous nature but also the stakes of such a project. Dog dreams do

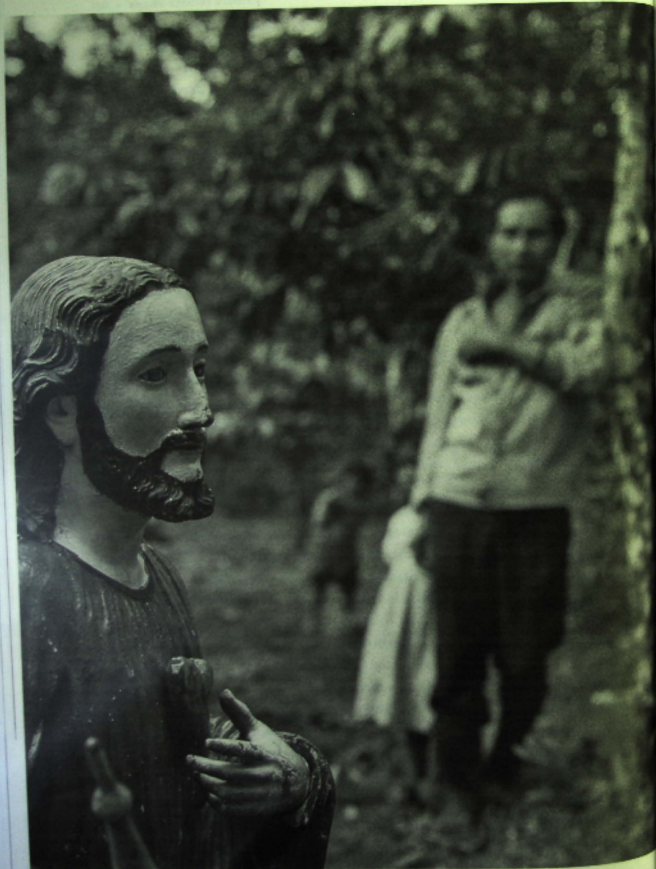
not belong only to dogs. They are also part of the goals, fears, and aspirations of the Runa—the dogs' masters and occasional 'cosmonautical' companions—as they reach out, through the souls of their dogs, to engage with the beings that inhabit the world of the forest and beyond.

The sorts of entanglements I have discussed in this chapter are more than cultural, and yet they are not exactly noncultural either. They are everywhere biological, but they are not just about bodies. Dogs really become human (biologically and in historically specific ways) and the Runa really become puma; the need to survive encounters with feline semiotic selves requires it. These processes of "becoming with" others change what it means to be alive; and they change what it means to be human just as much as they change what it means to be a dog or even a predator.

We must be attendant to the danger-fraught, provisional, and highly tenuous attempts at communication—in short, the politics—involved in the interactions among different kinds of selves that inhabit very different, and often unequal, positions. Such attempts are inextricably tied up with questions of power. It is because *Thou* can be spoken when addressing dogs that dogs must, at times, be tied up: "Every *It* is bounded by others." Negotiating this tension between *It* and *Thou* that is inherent to living with others is a constant problem as people in Ávila struggle to take a stand "in relation" to the many kinds of other beings that inhabit their cosmos.

Runa-dog trans-species pidgins do more than iconically incorporate dog barks, and they do more than invent new human grammars adequate to this risky task of speaking in a way that can be heard across species lines without invoking a response. They also conform to something more abstract about the referential possibilities available to any kind of self, regardless of its status as human, organic, or even terrestrial,<sup>30</sup> and this involves the constraints of certain kinds of semiotic forms. When Hilario attempted to say "don't" without language he could only do so in one way. He and his dog fell into a form—one that is instantiated in but also sustains and exceeds not only the human but also the animal. It is toward an analysis of these sorts of forms, how they permeate life, how, given the appropriate constraints, they so effortlessly propagate across radically different kinds of domains, and how they come to acquire a peculiar social efficacy that I turn in the next chapter.





## Form's Effortless Efficacy

It is the people who are outside of the monastery who feel its atmosphere. Those who are practicing actually do not feel anything.

—Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*

One night, while staying at Ventura's house, I dreamed I stood outside of a pen on a large cattle ranch like the one that belongs to a burly colonist, located just beyond Ávila territory on the way to Loreto. Inside, a collared peccary was running around. Suddenly, it stopped right in front of me. We both just stood there, looking at each other. Our intimacy overwhelmed me with a strange and novel feeling, an unexpected sense of resonance with this distant creature. I had an epiphany. I grasped something. I discovered, I think, a kind of love for that pig. But I also wanted to kill it. After some fumbling with a broken gun I had borrowed from one of the villagers I finally managed to shoot it point-blank. I cradled its limp body in my arms and went back to Ventura's house, proud that I would now have plenty of meat to share with his family.

What I dreamed that night is entwined with something that had happened the day before as Ventura and I were returning from a walk in the forest. Ventura sensed something and motioned for me to wait quietly while he ran up ahead to investigate, cocked gun at the ready. As I waited a collared peccary approached me. We both froze, our eyes fixed on each other, before it ran off.

This experience and its oneiric reverberation captured something about a moment of personal intimacy with a forest being and some of the contradictions that hunting such beings implies. People in Ávila, like many others who live in close contact with nonhuman beings, recognize many animals as potential persons with whom, on occasion, they have "personal" interactions (see Smuts 2001). My forest encounter with the peccary that afternoon, however fleeting, was an intimation of the possibility for this kind of trans-species



intimacy. It served as a reminder that animals, like us, are selves; they represent the world in certain ways and act on the basis of those representations (see chapter 2). Yet hunting requires both recognizing this and treating these singular selves as generic objects; its goal, after all, is to transform them into pieces of meat for consumption and exchange (see chapter 3).

Ventura's take on my dream, however, didn't emphasize the tension I felt between recognizing animals as selves and the subsequent desubjectivization that killing them requires. As an experienced hunter Ventura was already adept at negotiating this. Instead, he was interested in what this dream had to say about my relationship to the animal's master—the spirit who owns the pig. Such masters of the beings of the forest are often thought of as European priests or powerful white estate owners, like that colonist, with his defiant swagger, pickup truck, and pigpen, who lives along the way to Loreto.

These spirit masters are a part of everyday life in Ávila. Ventura himself entered their realm when as a child he got lost in the forest. Accompanied by his dog, he was out hunting with his father. As the day wore on Ventura lagged farther and farther behind until boy and dog lost their way. He eventually met a girl he thought was his sister and followed her down a road that seemed to be taking them home but instead led them through a waterfall to the abode of the masters. After a few days, Ávila shamans, who were able to enter the spirit realm with the help of the hallucinogen *aya huasca*, managed to negotiate Ventura's release. By this time, however, he and his dog had become feral or wild (*quita* in Quichua). They lost the ability to recognize Ávila villagers as people. The dog failed to bark when called to, and Ventura didn't recognize, and was even frightened of, his own mother, Rosa.

Decades later, during the time of my stay in Ávila, Ventura's mother, now quite elderly and easily confused, also wound up in the realm of the spirit masters. One day, while caring for some of her grandchildren, Rosa simply wandered off into the forest. A full five weeks after her disappearance a young woman, fishing with her little brother in the forest, stumbled on her by a stream after first noting that the fish had been scared off by some presence. Rosa survived—emaciated, her scalp and toes worm-infested—long enough to report how a boy she took to be one of her teenage grandsons led her to the underground city of the masters that she called "Quito." This subterranean city, she said, was beautiful and opulent, "just like the living Quito," Ecuador's Andean capital.

I never expected to experience this master realm personally. But, according to Ventura, this is exactly what had happened. That I had dreamed of the

peccary inside a pen, he explained, indicated that it was the spirit master of the animals that had allowed me to share in that intimate moment of mutual trans-species recognition the day before. The pig belonged to the spirit master of the forest, and the pen in which I saw it was on that master's ranch.

In juxtaposing a certain kind of human sociality with a wild one, my dream was a lot like one Juanico's son Adelmo had. Early one morning Adelmo bolted out of bed and announced loudly, "I've dreamed!" before grabbing his shotgun and rushing out of the house. He returned a few hours later carrying a peccary over his shoulders. When I asked him what had prompted him to run out like that he replied that he had dreamed of buying a pair of shoes. The shoe stores in Loreto, filled with shelves of shoes and piles of rubber boots, provide an apt image for the profusion of tracks left by a herd of peccaries at a mud wallow. Furthermore, those smelly omnivorous pigs are social beings but not exactly in ways that the Runa would deem appropriate. In this regard, they are like one of those Lycra-clad colonist shopkeepers (revealing parts of their bodies in ways that no one in Ávila would). They are also like the "naked" I Iuaorani, the longtime "wild" enemies of the "civilized" (and clothed) Runa.<sup>1</sup>

My dream also shared something in common with one Fabian, a young father of two, had while we were out at his hunting camp. His was of a well-stocked general store filled with things like sacks of rice and cans of sardines and tended by a young priest. He later explained that this dream augured killing woolly monkeys. These monkeys travel in troops deep in the mountains, far from Runa settlements. Once spotted, they are relatively easy to hunt—usually several can be taken—and they are coveted for their thick layers of fat. Like the deep forests that these monkeys frequent the well-stocked general stores are at some distance from Runa settlements. And, like the monkey troops, the stores offer a cornucopia of food. Both the store and the monkey troops are controlled by powerful whites. Given the proper means, the Runa can have access to some of the wealth of both.

Dreams reflect a widespread Amazonian way of seeing human and nonhuman sociality as continuous with each other in a manner that also posits a rigorous parallel between human domestic realms and nonhuman sylvan ones (see Descola 1994). The game birds that the Runa encounter in the forest are really the chickens of the spirit forest masters, just as jaguars are the master's hunting and guard dogs.

What we humans see as wild, then, is, from the dominant perspective of the masters, domestic (see chapter 4). In contrast to our Euro-American

multiculturalism, which assumes a uniform nature and multiple and variable culturally situated representations of it, this Amazonian understanding of the forest and its beings is something more akin to what Viveiros de Castro (1998) calls a multinatural one (see chapter 2). There exist many different natures, the products of the bodily dispositions of the different kinds of beings that inhabit the universe. But there is only one culture—an *I* perspective that all selves, human and nonhuman alike, inhabit. Culture in this sense is an *I* perspective. That is, from their *I* perspectives all beings see the different natures they inhabit as cultural: a jaguar—as an *I*—sees peccary blood as the manioc beer that is the customary staple of the Runa diet, and spirits, according to this same logic, see the forest as an orchard.

Why this echoing between cultural and natural, domestic and wild? And why should I be privy to it? This is not something multinaturalism can address; an anthropology beyond the human can. One might think that the ways in which this special kind of doubling logic infected my dreams is the by-product of sustained ethnographic fieldwork, a sort of enculturation to which eager anthropologists might feel susceptible. Except, as I've already hinted, culture may not be the best marker of difference in these parts of the world. In fact, as I hope the following discussion will illuminate, and following the argumentation of chapter 2, difference may not be the right starting point for understanding the broader problem of relating to which my dream gestures.

Moreover, I wasn't the only outsider to have experienced these resonances. I've since discovered that several missionaries and explorers passing through the region have also, apparently spontaneously, become attuned to these same sorts of parallels between human and forest realms. For instance, the nineteenth-century British explorer Alfred Simson, who stayed briefly in a Runa village, described Britain to a man named Marcelino in a way that unwittingly re-created the realm of the spirit masters of the forest. He matched up, through a series of isomorphic relations, the urban, opulent, domestic, and white realm of Britain, on the one hand, with the sylvan, impoverished, wild, and Indian one of the Amazon, on the other. Instead of villages scattered through the forest, there are large cities, he explained, and in place of scarcity, "knives, axes, beads . . . and all such things were to be had there in the greatest profusion." In his country, he continued, instead of wild beasts there are only useful and edible ones (Simson 1880: 392–93).<sup>2</sup>

The conversation between Simson and Marcelino also hinted at shamanistic attempts to commensurate these realms. When the Runa die they go to live

forever in the realm of the spirit masters, and so it is fitting that Simson refers to Britain as a "paradise." Access to this realm required an arduous journey that, according to Simson, might last some "ten moons"—a journey that, we later learn, Marcelino understood as being of the shamanistic sort. As they spoke Simson offered one of his pipes of "strong tobacco," and Marcelino proceeded to swallow "all the smoke he could draw in huge volumes" (1880: 393).

Tobacco, along with the hallucinogen aya huasca, is one of the vehicles that help people enter the point of view of the masters. In fact, people in Ávila refer to shamans as those "with tobacco" (*tabacuyu*). And thanks to the privileged access to other points of view that dreaming provides, I too, like Marcelino and the aya huasca-drinking Ávila shamans that rescued Ventura and his dog, was able to see the forest as it really is. I came to see it as a domestic space—a ranch—because this is how it appears from the dominant *I* perspective of the spirit master of the forest who owned the pig.

Why should such a parallel between sylvan and domestic—ecology and economy—appear in so many places, including my dreams? And why would a place like Quito come to be located deep in the forest? The claim I wish to make in this chapter is that addressing these seemingly disparate questions requires understanding something that might not, on the surface, seem relevant: it requires understanding the peculiar characteristics of regularities, habits, or patterns. In more abstract terms, I am arguing that getting at these questions requires an understanding of how certain configurations of constraint on possibility emerge and of the particular manner in which such configurations propagate in the world in ways that result in a sort of pattern. That is, addressing these questions requires understanding something about what I call "form."

The point I will be fleshing out is this: what encourages Amazonian forest ecologies and human economies to be aligned in my dreams and in those of the Runa is the pattern or form that such systems share. And this form, I wish to stress, is the result of something other than the imposition of human cognitive schema or cultural categories onto these systems.

It is hard to broach the topic of form beyond the human, as I do here, without being accused of making a Platonic argument for the separate existence of a transcendent realm of, say, ideal triangles or squares. By contrast, it is less controversial to consider the role form plays within the realm of the human.

The human mind, we can all agree, traffics in generalities, abstractions, and categories. Another way to say this is that form is central to human thought. Let me rephrase this statement in terms of the definition of *form* I

have proposed: constraints on possibility emerge with our distinctively human ways of thinking, which result in a pattern that I here call form. For example, the associational logic of symbolic reference (treated in chapter 1 and revisited later in this chapter), which is so central to human thought and language, results in the creation of general concepts, such as, say, the word *bird*.

Such a general concept is more constrained than the various actual utterances of the word *bird* through which it is instantiated. Utterances, then, are more variable, less constrained, and "messier" than the concept they express. That is, there will be great variation in how any particular utterance of a word such as *bird* actually sounds. And yet the general concept, to which all of these particular utterances refer, allows these many variable utterances to be interpreted as meaningful instantiations of the concept "bird." This general concept (sometimes termed a "type") is more regular, more redundant, simpler, more abstract, and, ultimately, more patterned than the utterances (referred to as "tokens" in their relation to such types) that instantiate it. Thinking of such concepts in terms of form gets at this characteristic generality that a type exhibits.

Because language, with its symbolic properties, is distinctively human, it is all too easy to relegate such formal phenomena to human minds. And this encourages us to take a nominalist position. It encourages us to think of form solely as something humans impose on a world otherwise devoid of pattern, category, or generality. (And if we are anthropologists it encourages us to search for the origins of such categories in the distinctively human historically contingent, changing social and cultural contexts in which we are immersed; see chapter 1.) But taking such a position would be tantamount to allowing human language to colonize our thinking (see introduction and chapters 1 and 2). Given that, as I argued in previous chapters, human language is nested within a broader representational field made up of semiotic processes that emerge in and circulate in the nonhuman living world, projecting language onto this nonhuman world blinds us to these other representational modalities and their characteristics.

The human, then, is only one source of form. It is important to note, for the argument at hand, that an important characteristic that these semiotic modalities that exist beyond the human exhibit is that they too possess formal properties. That is, as with symbolic representation, these semiotic modalities (those made up of icons and indices) also exhibit constraints on possibility that result in a certain pattern.

I alluded to this at the end of the previous chapter in my discussion of the limited ways in which one can attempt to “say” “don’t” in a nonsymbolic, non-linguistic, register and how the logic of this formal constraint on possibility is also manifested in a pattern of nonhuman animal communication—a form—that is visible in animal “play.” That this pattern recurs time and again in many different species, and even in attempts at communication that cross species lines, is an example of the emergence and circulation of form in the world beyond the human.

As I mentioned in chapter 1, that semiosis exists beyond human minds and the contexts they create is one indicator that “generals,” that is, habits, or regularities, or, in Peircean terms, “thirds,” are “real.” (By “real” here, I mean that such generals can come to manifest themselves in ways that are independent of humans, and they can come to have eventual effects in the world.) However—and this is key—whereas semiosis is in and of the living world beyond the human, form emerges from and is part and parcel of the nonliving one as well.

That is, form is a sort of general real despite the fact that it is neither alive nor a kind of thought. This can be hard to appreciate given the ways in which life and thought harness form and are everywhere made over by its logics and properties. So in this chapter I am taking anthropology a step further beyond the human to explore the way in which a particular manifestation of a general exists in the world beyond life.

Throughout this book, especially in chapter 1, I have been discussing a number of generals. Emergent phenomena are generals. Habits or regularities are generals. All of these, in some way or another, are the result of constraints on possibility (see Deacon 2012). I am using the term *form* to refer to the particular manifestations of the generals I treat here. I do so to emphasize some of the geometrical patternings involved in the ways generals become expressed in the Amazon. Many of these could be classed as self-organizing emergent phenomena, or in Deacon’s (2006, 2012) terms, “morphodynamic”—that is, characterized by dynamics that generate form (see chapter 1).

Examples of such nonliving emergent forms in the Amazon include, as I will discuss, the patterned distribution of rivers or the recurrent circular shapes of the whirlpools that sometimes form in them. Each of these nonliving forms is the product of constraints on possibility. Regarding rivers, water doesn’t just flow anywhere in the Amazon. Rather, the distribution of rivers is constrained by a variety of factors, which results in a pattern. Regarding whirlpools, under the right conditions swift currents moving around obstructions create

self-reinforcing circular patterns that are a subset of all the possible (messier, less constrained, more turbulent) ways in which water might otherwise flow.

In recognizing the emergence of form in the physical world, then, this chapter requires an excursion beyond the living. The goal, however, is to see what it is that the living "do" with form and the particular ways in which what they do with it is infected by form's strange logics and properties. As I will show, humans in the Amazon harness such forms, and so do other kinds of living beings.

Form, then, is crucial to lives, human and otherwise. Nevertheless, the workings of this vague entity remain largely undertheorized in anthropological analysis. This, in large part, is due to the fact that form lacks the tangibility of a standard ethnographic object. Nevertheless, form, like the basic intentionality of the pig and the palpable materiality of its meat, is something real. Indeed, its particular mode of efficacy will require us to think again what we mean by the "real." If, as anthropologists, we can find ways to attend ethnographically to those processes of form amplification and harnessing as they play out in the Amazon, we might be able to become better attuned to the strange ways in which form moves through us. This, in turn, can help us harness form's logics and properties as a conceptual tool that might even help us rethink our very idea of what it means to think.

#### RUBBER

To get a better handle on form, I'd like to turn to another forest/city juxtaposition, not unlike Rosa's Quito-in-the-forest or Marcelino's Britain. Manuela Carneiro da Cunha (1998) has described how a Jaminaua shamanic novice of the Jurú River system of Amazonian Brazil traveled vast distances downriver to apprentice in the port cities on the Amazon itself, in order to be recognized as a powerful shaman upon returning to his village. To understand why these port cities have come to be the conduits for indigenous shamanic empowerment, we need to understand something of a momentous period in Amazonian history: the rubber boom, which began in the late nineteenth century and reached into the second decade of the twentieth, and the particular kinds of isomorphic correspondences that made this boom possible in the first place.

In many respects the rubber boom that swept through the Amazon was the product of a variety of techno-scientific, "natural-cultural," and imperial conjunctures. That is, the discovery of vulcanization coupled with the invention and mass production of automobiles and other machines catapulted rubber

onto an international market. For the Upper Amazon this boom was a sort of second conquest, given that outsiders were dependent, for the most part, on exploiting local populations to extract this increasingly valuable commodity that was dispersed throughout the forest. The boom, however, ended abruptly after rubber seedlings, which had been removed from the Amazon basin by British naturalists, began to take hold in Southeast Asian plantations (see Brockway 1979; Hemming 1987; Dean 1987). This story, told in terms of such interactions among humans, and even among human and nonhuman beings, is well known. Here, I want to discuss something not often noticed: namely, the ways in which the peculiar properties of form mediated all these interactions and made this extractive economic system possible.

Let me explain what I mean. Rubber falls into a form. That is, there is a specific configuration of constraints on the possible distribution of rubber trees. The distribution of rubber trees throughout the Amazon forests—whether the preferred *Hevea brasiliensis* or a few other latex-producing taxa—conforms to a specific pattern: individual rubber trees are widely dispersed throughout the forest across vast stretches of the landscape. Plant species that are widely dispersed stand a better chance of surviving attacks from species-specific pathogens,<sup>3</sup> such as, in the case of *H. brasiliensis*, the fungal parasite *Microcyclus ulei*, which causes the disease known as South American leaf blight. Because this parasite is endemic throughout rubber's natural range, rubber could not be easily cultivated in high-density plantations there (Dean 1987: 53–86). An interaction with this parasite results in a particular pattern of rubber distribution. Individual rubber trees are, for the most part, widely and evenly distributed and not clumped in single-species stands. The result is that rubber “explores,” or comes to occupy, landscape in a way that manifests a specific pattern. Any attempt to exploit rubber in situ must recognize this.<sup>4</sup>

The distribution of water throughout the Amazonian landscape also conforms to a specific pattern or form. This has a variety of causes. Due to a number of global climatic, geographic, and biological factors, there is a lot of water in the Amazon basin. Furthermore, water only flows in one direction: downhill. Thus small creeks flow into larger streams, which in turn flow into small rivers that flow into larger ones, and this pattern repeats itself until the enormous Amazon discharges into the Atlantic Ocean (see figure 1, on page 4).

For largely unrelated reasons there exist, then, two patterns or forms: the distribution of rubber throughout the landscape and the distribution of



waterways. These regularities happen to explore landscape in the same way. Therefore, wherever there is a rubber tree it is likely that nearby there will be a stream that leads to a river.

Because these patterns happen to explore landscape in the same way, following one can lead to the other. The Amazon rubber economy exploited and relied on the similarities these patterns share. By navigating up the river network to find rubber and then floating the rubber downstream, it linked these patterns such that these physical and biological domains became united in an economic system that exploited them thanks to the formal similarities they share.

Humans are not the only ones who link floristic and riverine distribution patterns. The fish known in Ávila as *quiruyu*,<sup>5</sup> for example, eats fruits of the aptly named tree *quiruyu huapa*<sup>6</sup> when these fall into rivers. This fish, in effect, uses rivers to get at this resource. In doing so it also potentially propagates the patterned similarities—the form—that floristic and riverine distributions share. If in eating these fruits the fish were to disperse its seeds along the course of the river, then the pattern of this plant's distribution would come to match that of the rivers even more closely.

The Amazon riverine network exhibits an additional regularity crucial to the way rubber was harnessed via form: self-similarity across scale. That is, the branching of creeks is like the branching of streams, which is like the branching of rivers. As such, it resembles the compound ferns that people in Ávila call *chichinda*, which also exhibit self-similarity across scale. *Chinda* refers to a haphazard pile, especially to a tangled mass of driftwood such as the kind that might snag around the base of a riverbank tree after a flood. By reduplicating a part of this word—*chi-chinda*—this plant name captures how in a compound fern the pattern of divisions of the frond at one level is the same as that of the next higher-order level of divisions. *Chichinda*, which alludes to a tangled mass nested within another tangled mass, captures this fern's self-similarity across scale; a pattern at one level is nested within the same pattern at a higher more inclusive one.

The river network's self-similarity is also unidirectional. Smaller rivers flow into larger ones, and water becomes increasingly concentrated across an ever smaller expanse of landscape as one moves down the hydrographic network. Da Cunha (1998: 10–11) has highlighted a curious phenomenon in the Jurúá River basin during the rubber boom period. A vast network of creditor-debt relations emerged, which assumed a nested self-similar repeating pattern across scale that was isomorphic with the river network. A rubber merchant located at one confluence of rivers extended credit upriver and was in turn in

debt to the more powerful merchant located downriver at the next confluence. This nested pattern linked indigenous communities in the deepest forests to rubber barons at the mouth of the Amazon and even in Europe.

Humans, however, are not the only ones who harness the unidirectionally nested riverine pattern. Amazon river dolphins, like traders, also congregate at the confluences of rivers (Emmons 1990; McGuire and Winemiller 1998). They feed on the fish that accumulate there due to this nested characteristic of the river network.

Being inside form is effortless. Its causal logic is in this sense quite different from the push-and-pull logic we usually associate with the physical effort needed to do something. Rubber floated downstream will eventually get to the port. And yet a great amount of work was required to get rubber into this form. It took great skill and effort to find the trees, extract and then prepare the latex into bundles, and then carry these to the nearest stream.<sup>7</sup> More to the point, it took great coercive force to get others to do these things. During the rubber boom, Ávila, like many other Upper Amazonian villages, was raided by rubber bosses looking for slave labor (Oberem 1980: 117; Reeve 1988).

It is not surprising that villages such as Ávila should attract the attention of rubber bosses, for their inhabitants were already adept at harnessing forest forms to get at resources. Just as rubber tapping involves harnessing the riverine form to get at trees, hunting involves harnessing form. Because of the high species diversity and local rarity of species and the lack of any one fruiting season, the fruits that animals eat are highly dispersed in both space and time (Schaik, Terborgh, and Wright 1993). This means that at any given time there will exist a different geometrical constellation of fruiting resources that attracts animals. Fruit-eating animals amplify this constellation's pattern. For they are not only attracted to fruiting trees but often also to the increased safety provided by foraging in a multispecies association. Each member "contributes" its species-specific abilities to detect predators—resulting in a greater overall group awareness of potential danger (Terborgh 1990; Heymann and Buchanan-Smith 2000: esp. 181). That predators, in turn, are attracted to this concentration of animals further amplifies the pattern of distribution of life across the forest landscape. This results in a particular pattern of potential game meat: a clustered, shifting, highly ephemeral and localized concentration of animals interspersed by vast areas of relative emptiness. Ávila hunters, then, don't hunt animals directly. Rather, they seek to discover and harness the ephemeral form created by the particular spatial distribution or configuration



FIGURE 7 Rubber boom-era hunters of hunters. Courtesy of the Whiffen Collection, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge University.

of those tree species that are fruiting at any given point in time because this is what attracts animals.<sup>7</sup>

Hunters, those already adept at harnessing forest forms, make ideal rubber tappers. But to get them to do this often meant hunting these hunters like animals. Rubber bosses often enlisted members of hostile indigenous groups to do it. In an image reproduced by Michael Taussig (1987: 48) of such hunters-of-hunters in the Purumayo region of the Colombian Amazon it is no coincidence that the man in the foreground is wearing jaguar canines and white clothing (see figure 7).

By adopting the bodily habitus of a predatory jaguar and a dominant white (a classic multinatural perspectival shamanistic strategy; see chapter 2), he can come to see the Indians he hunts as both prey and underlings. Those hunters-of-hunters that Taussig writes about were referred to as "muchachos" —boys— a reminder of the fact that they too were subservient to someone else: the white bosses. The rubber economy amplified an existing hierarchical trophic pattern of predation [with carnivores, such as jaguars, "above" the herbivores, such as deer, that they prey on], and in the process this economy combined this pattern with a paternalistic colonial one.

Ávila, as I mentioned, was by no means safe from slave raiding. In fact, one of the first stories América told me on my initial trip to Ávila in 1992 was of how, as a child, her own grandmother was spared from slavery by being unceremoniously pushed out through the back bamboo wall of her house just as the raiders arrived at the front door. Ávila, in the foothills of the Andes, is far away from the navigable rivers and high-quality sources of rubber. *Hevea brasiliensis*, which produces the best rubber, doesn't grow near Ávila. Nevertheless, through great coercive effort many Ávila inhabitants were pushed into the rubber economy's form. They were forcibly relocated far downriver on the Napo in what is now Peru, and even beyond, where navigable rivers and rubber trees were abundant. Almost none returned.<sup>9</sup>

The rubber boom economy was able to exist and grow because it united a series of partially overlapping forms, such as predatory chains, plant and animal spatial configurations, and hydrographic networks, by linking the similarities these share. The result was that all these more basic regularities came to be part of an overarching form—an exploitative political-economic structure whose grasp was very difficult to escape.

In fact, this form created the conditions of possibility for the political relations that emerged. Shamans, those experts at stepping into dominant points of view within a multinatural perspectival system of cosmic predation, harnessed it to gain power. By apprenticing downriver the Jaminaua shaman was able to adopt a perspective that encompassed and exceeded the viewpoints of the social actors upstream (da Cunha 1998: 12). Being downriver means inhabiting a more inclusive level of the river pattern's nested self-similarity—a form that had now become socially important thanks to a colonial economy that linked it to the forest and to its indigenous inhabitants.<sup>10</sup> What is more, Amazonian shamanism cannot be understood outside of the colonial hierarchy that in part created it and to which it responds (see Gow 1996; Taussig 1987). However, shamanism is not just a product of colonialism. Shamanism and colonial extraction are equally caught up, constrained by, and forced to harness a shared form that partially exceeds them.

#### EMERGENT FORMS

Forms, such as the pattern that brings rubber trees, rivers, and economies into relation with one another, are emergent. By "emergent," I don't just mean new or indeterminate or complex. Rather, with reference to my discussion in

chapter 1, I mean the appearance of unprecedented relational properties, which are not reducible to any of the more basic component parts that give rise to them.

Form, as an emergent property, makes itself manifest in the physical landscape of the Amazon. Take, for example, whirlpools, such as those that sometimes arise in Amazonian rivers, which I discussed earlier in this book and in the introduction to this chapter. Such whirlpools possess novel properties with respect to the rivers in which they appear; namely, they come to exhibit a coordinated circular pattern of moving water. This circular pattern in which the water in a whirlpool flows is more constrained and thus simpler than the otherwise freer, more turbulent, and hence less patterned flow of water in the rest of the river.

The whirlpool's circular form emerges from the river's water, and this is a phenomenon that cannot be reduced to the contingent histories that give that water its specific characteristics. Let me explain. Any given unit of water flowing through the Amazonian watershed certainly has a particular history associated with it. That is, it is, in a sense, affected by its past. It flowed through a particular landscape and it acquired different attributes as a result. Such histories—where the water came from, what happened to it there—certainly give different Amazonian rivers their specific characteristics. If, for example, the water flowing into a particular river passed through nutrient-poor white-sand soils, that river's water would become tannin-rich (see chapter 2), and hence dark, translucent, and acidic. However, and crucially for the argument at hand, such histories do not explain or predict the form the whirlpool will take in such rivers. Under the right conditions a circular shape will emerge regardless of the particular histories of where the water in the rivers came from.

Importantly, however, the conditions that result in the emergence of a whirlpool include the continuous flow of water. So the novel form a whirlpool takes is never fully separable from the water from which it emerges: block the river's flow, and the form will disappear.

And yet the whirlpool is something other than the continuous flow, which it requires. That something other is also something less. And this "something less" is why it makes sense to think of emergent entities such as a whirlpool in terms of form. As I mentioned, water flowing through a whirlpool does so in a way that is less free when compared to all the various less coordinated ways in which water otherwise moves through a river. This redundancy—this

something less—is what results in the circular pattern of flow we associate with whirlpools. It is what accounts for its form.

In being both different from and continuous with that from which they come, and on which they depend, whirlpools are like other emergent phenomena, such as, for example, symbolic reference. Symbolic reference, recall from chapter 1, emerges out of those other more basic semiotic modalities within which it is nested. Like a whirlpool and its relationship to the water flowing in the river, symbolic reference exhibits new emergent properties with respect to the icons and indices on which it depends and from which it comes.

This characteristic of disjuncture-despite-continuity that appears with whirlpools also applies to the emergent pattern visible in the rubber economy. The disparate causes responsible for rubber and river distributions become irrelevant once an economic system unites them by virtue of the regularities that rubber and rivers share. And yet such an economy is everywhere, obviously, dependent on rubber. And it is also dependent on the rivers used to access that rubber.

Emergent phenomena, then, are nested. They enjoy a level of detachment from the lower order processes out of which they arise. And yet their existence is dependent on lower-order conditions. This goes in one direction: whirlpools disappear when riverbed conditions change, but riverbeds do not depend on whirlpools for their persistence. Similarly, the Amazon rubber economy was wholly dependent for its existence on the ways in which parasites such as the South American leaf blight constrained rubber's distribution. Once rubber plantations in Southeast Asia—far removed from these parasites—began to produce latex, this crucial constraint responsible for the patterned distribution of rubber trees disappeared. An entirely different economic arrangement became possible, and, like a fleeting whirlpool, the emergent form, the political-economic system that united rubber, rivers, natives, and bosses, vanished.

The biosocial efficacy of form lies in part in the way it both exceeds and is continuous with its component parts. It is continuous in the sense that emergent patterns are always connected to lower-level energetics and materialities. And the materialities—say, fish, meat, fruits, or rubber—are what living selves, be they dolphins, hunters, fruit-eating fish, or rubber bosses, are trying to access when they harness form. Form also exceeds these in the sense that as these patterns become linked their similarities propagate across very different

kinds of domains: the regularities through which rubber is harnessed cross from the physical to the biological to the human.

In this process by which forms come to be combined at higher levels, however, the higher-order emergent pattern also acquires properties specific to antecedent ones. The rubber boom economy was nested like the rivers and predatory like portions of the tropical food chain. It captured something of these other-than-human forms. But it also integrated them into an emergent form that is, in addition, all too human (see chapter 4). Let me explain. The nonhuman forms I've been discussing here—those, for example, that involve nesting and predation—are hierarchical without being moral. It makes no sense to downplay the importance of hierarchical forms in the nonhuman world. This is not the way to ground our moral thinking, because such forms are not in any way moral. Hierarchy takes on a moral aspect in all-too-human worlds only because morality is an emergent property of the symbolic semiosis distinctive to humans (see chapter 4). Although themselves beyond the moral and hence amoral (i.e., nonmoral), such hierarchical patterns nonetheless get caught up in systems with all-too-human emergent properties—systems such as the highly exploitative economy based on rubber extraction, whose moral valence is not reducible to the more basic formal alignments of hierarchical patterns on which it depended.

#### THE MASTERS OF THE FOREST

But why, returning to Ávila and my dream, is it that the realm of the spirit masters unites hunting in the forest with the larger political economy and colonial history in which the Runa are also immersed? What, in short, does it mean to say that these spirit masters of the forest are also "white"?

Whiteness is just one element in a series of partially overlapping hierarchical correspondences that are superimposed in the spirit realm of the masters of the forest. For instance, each mountain around Ávila is owned and controlled by a different spirit master. The most powerful of these lives in an underground "Quito" located inside Sumaco Volcano, the region's highest peak. This volcano also lends its name to the early-sixteenth-century jurisdiction, the *provincia de Sumaco*, in recognition of the paramount chief to whom all regional subchiefs owed allegiance before this area succumbed to colonial rule and came to be known by the Spanish name Ávila.<sup>11</sup> Lesser forest masters live in cities and villages that are likened to the smaller towns and cities that make up

the parish and provincial seats of Ecuador's Amazonian provinces. These correspond to the region's smaller mountains. The masters living in these stand in the same relation to the master living in the underground Quito as the pre-Hispanic and early colonial subchiefs stood to the paramount chief associated with Sumaco Volcano.

This mapping of pre-Hispanic and contemporary administrative hierarchies onto a topographic one partially overlaps with the network of estates or haciendas that dominated the local extractive resource economy until recent times and articulated that economy to Quito. The realm of the spirit masters is also a bustling productive estate, like the great rubber-boom-era haciendas along the Napo River.<sup>12</sup> And the masters travel to and from their pastures and fallows, shutting game animals in their pickup trucks and airplanes. Hilario, who many years ago climbed to the top of Sumaco Volcano with a crew of army engineers intent on erecting a relay antenna there, reported that the gullies he saw emanating radially from its sugar cone summit are the highways of the masters. In the same way that roads originate in Quito and from there extend throughout Ecuador, all the major rivers of the greater Ávila region originate from this mountaintop.

It is my contention that the realm of the spirit masters superimposes ethnic, pre-Hispanic, colonial, and postcolonial hierarchies on the landscape because all of these various sociopolitical arrangements are subject to similar constraints regarding how certain biotic resources can be mobilized across space. That is, if Amazonian household economies and broader national and even global ones attempt to capture bits of the living wealth that the forest houses—whether in the form of game, rubber, or other floristic products—they can only do so by accessing the conjunction of physical and biotic patterns in which this wealth is caught up.<sup>13</sup> As I've mentioned, hunters, for the most part, don't hunt animals directly; they harness the forms that attract animals. In a similar fashion, estate owners, through debt peonage, and during certain periods even outright enslavement, collected forest products via the Runa. This extractive pattern creates a clustered distribution. Like the pattern of fruiting trees that attracts animals, haciendas came to be nodes where forest resources and the city ones with which they were commensurated became concentrated. It is the hacienda that harbored the "greatest profusion" of "knives, axes, and beads" (Simson 1880: 392–93), and it is the hacienda that accumulated the forest products that the Runa, in turn, exchanged for these. Cities, like Quito, also exhibit this clumped pattern of wealth accumulation,



insofar as these are both the sources of trade goods and the end points for forest products.

The lowland Runa had an intimate and yet fraught relationship to Quito and its wealth. They were sometimes charged with the task of carrying whites on their backs to this city (Muratorio 1987). And in the days when Ávila was considerably more isolated from markets its inhabitants would go directly to Quito, making the eight-day trek, along with their forest products, in the hope of exchanging their goods for some of the wealth that the city harbored.

In the higher-order emergent realm of the spirit masters of the forest, hunting, estates, and cities align with each other by virtue of the similarities they share regarding their relations to the patterns of resource distribution that exist around them. Hierarchy is crucial to form propagation across these different domains. Spirit realms unite these various overlapping forms at a "higher" emergent level in the same way that the rubber economy is at a "higher" level than the patterns of rubber trees and rivers it unites. How form is amplified in human domains clearly is the contingent product of all-too-human histories. And yet hierarchy itself is also a kind of form, which has unique properties that exceed the contingencies of earthly bodies and histories, even if it is only instantiated in these.<sup>14</sup>

#### SEMIOTIC HIERARCHY

This interplay between the logical formal properties of hierarchy and the contingent ways in which it comes to acquire a moral valence is visible in those trans-species pidgins, discussed in the previous chapter, through which the Runa attempt to understand and communicate with other beings. The hierarchy involved in trans-species communication clearly has a colonial inflection; that's why I call them pidgins. As discussed in chapter 4, dogs, for example, often occupy the same structural position vis-à-vis the Runa as the Runa do vis-à-vis whites. Recall that although some Runa turn into powerful jaguars when they die, as jaguars they also become the dogs of the white spirit masters. These sorts of colonial hierarchies, however, are the morally loaded emergent amplifications of more fundamental nonhuman ones that are devoid of any moral valence.

Many of these more fundamental hierarchies involve the nested and unidirectional properties inherent to semiosis. To recapitulate from chapter 1, and to further develop something I alluded to above, symbolic reference, that distinctively human semiotic modality, which is based on conventional signs, has

emergent semiotic properties with respect to the more basic iconic and indexical referential strategies (i.e., those that involve signs of likeness and contiguity, respectively) that we humans share with all other life-forms. These three representational modalities are hierarchically nested and connected. Indices, which form the basis for communication in the biological world, are the product of higher-order relations among icons, and as such they have novel, emergent referential properties with respect to icons. Similarly, symbols are the product of higher-order relations among indices, also with novel emergent properties with respect to indices. This only goes in one direction. Symbolic reference requires indices, but indexical reference does not need symbols.

These emergent hierarchical properties that make human language (based as it is on symbolic reference) a distinctive semiotic modality also structure the ways in which people in Ávila differentiate between animal and human realms. Let me illustrate this with an exchange that took place between Luisa, Delia, Amériga, and a squirrel cuckoo. This exchange took place not long after the family's dog Huiqui had returned from the forest badly wounded by a jaguar. This example shows the role that hierarchy plays, particularly as it structures the perceived distinction between levels of meanings in different semiotic registers. Animal vocalizations, taken at face value as "utterances," are at one level of significance, whereas the more general "human" messages that these vocalizations might also contain can emerge at another, higher level.

When the exchange in question took place the women had just returned from collecting fish poison in their transitional orchards and fallows. They were at home, sipping beer, peeling manioc, and still uncertain about the fate of the other two dogs. We had not yet gone out to search for them and did not yet know that they had been killed by a jaguar, although at this point this is what the women thought had happened, and that scenario provided the interpretive frame for the conversation they were having.

As the women talked they were abruptly interrupted by a squirrel cuckoo calling "*shicud*," as it flew over the house. Immediately afterward, Luisa and Amériga simultaneously interjected the following:

Luisa:	Amériga:
<i>shicud</i>	" <i>Shicúhua</i> ," it says

The squirrel cuckoo, known in Ávila as *shicúhua*, has a variable call. If you hear it calling "*ti' ti' ti*," as people in Ávila imitate one of its vocalizations, it is said to be "speaking well" and what you are at the moment desiring will come

to pass. However, if you should hear it making the call we heard that day as the bird flew overhead, a vocalization that people in Avila imitate as "shicud," that which you think will happen will not come to be and the bird is therefore said to be "lying." Other animals, I should note, call in similar ways. The pygmy anteater, known by the related name *shicúhua indillama*, makes an ominous hiss that portends that a relative will die.

Importantly, however, neither this hiss nor the squirrel cuckoo's call *shicud'* in and of itself is a prophetic sign. Rather, although these vocalizations can certainly be treated on their own as signs, they only acquire their particular significance as a sort of omen when they are interpreted to be manifestations of the Quichua word *Shicúhua*. The word *Shicúhua*, pronounced with attention to the tendency in Quichua toward penultimate stress, not the cuckoo's squawk *shicud'* or the pygmy anteater's hiss, is what causes these otherwise meaningful vocalizations to be treated, in addition, as portents.

This difference between the squirrel cuckoo's squawk *shicud'* and *Shicúhua*, which is what this bird is said to be "saying" in making this vocalization, is important. As the squirrel cuckoo flew overhead Luisa imitated its call as she heard it: "shicud." Amériga, by contrast, quoted it: "*Shicúhua*," it says." In the process, Amériga also pronounced the call in a way that was less faithful to the sound the bird actually made and more in keeping with the stress patterns in Quichua.<sup>15</sup>

Whereas Luisa imitated what she heard, and thus constrained herself to the utterance as instance, Amériga tried to get at what the bird was "saying" more generally. She was in effect interpreting the message within "human language," which, I should note, is the literal meaning of *runa shimi*, the Quichua name for what the Runa speak. As such, she treated it as standing to the "token" animal utterance as a "type." Let me illustrate by virtue of an English example. In English any particular utterance of, say, "bird" is taken as an instantiation—or token—of the word *Bird*, which stands to it as a general concept—or type. My point is that something similar is going on here. Amériga treated the squirrel cuckoo's squawk as an instantiation of a sort of species-specific token of the "human" word *Shicúhua*, which stands to this squawk as a type. And just as we can interpret any utterance of "bird" by virtue of its relation to the word *Bird* in English, so too Amériga interpreted this animal vocalization as being an instance of a more general "human" word, *Shicúhua*. As such this vocalization is now understood to carry a particular message. Species-specific vocalizations (whether the squirrel cuckoo's squawk or the pygmy anteater's hiss) can act as individual

tokens of more general terms in the "human" language Quichua, which serve as their types.

I want to emphasize that it is not that the squawk in and of itself is necessarily meaningless; it can still be interpreted by humans (and others) as an indexical sign. But it acquires its additional meaning as a particular kind of omen in a specific divinatory system when it is seen as being an instance of something more general.

To treat this squawk as meaningful at this level—to treat it as an omen—América brought the squirrel cuckoo's call into language. The squawk *shicud'* became legible as an instantiation of *Shicúhua*. Understood as a manifestation of "human language" this call (which might otherwise be indexically meaningful) now carried with it an additional prophetic message in a symbolic register.

And the women acted on this. The operative assumption that until now had been guiding the conversation—that the dogs had been killed—was now, it seemed, wrong. América, accordingly, reinterpreted the dogs' plight within the new framework of assumptions suggested by the call. Heeding the cuckoo's message, she now imagined an alternative scenario that would explain why the dogs hadn't come home yet: "Having eaten a coati," she conjectured, "they're out there wandering around with their bellies full."<sup>16</sup> Delia wondered how then to account for the puncture wound on the head of the dog that straggled home. "So what happened?" she asked.<sup>17</sup> After a short pause América suggested that on being attacked perhaps the coati bit the dog. Thanks to the kind of call the squirrel cuckoo made, and the system through which the women interpreted it, América, Luisa, and Delia began to hope that the dogs had not encountered a feline but had instead simply scrapped with a coati and were still alive.

One might rightly say that this particular system of omens that I have been describing is specific to humans, or that it is specific even to a particular culture. And yet distinguishing between animal tokens and their human types as the women were doing is something more than a human (or cultural) imposition onto "nature." This is because the distinctions they make draw on the formal hierarchical properties that distinguish symbols from indices. These formal semiotic properties, which are neither innate nor conventional nor necessarily human, confer on human symbolic reference some of its unique representational characteristics when compared to the semiosis that is more generally distributed throughout the biological world. While indices point to instances, symbols have a more general application since their indexical power is distributed throughout the symbolic system in which they are

immersed. Yet symbols represent in a manner that draws on indices in special ways (see Peirce CP 2.249). This is visible in the distinction people in Ávila make between *shicúa'* and *Shicúhua*. *Shicúa'*, a token animal vocalization, which can otherwise be simply interpreted indexically (signifying the presence of a bird, of danger, etc.), can be understood to carry an additional message when it is interpreted as an instantiation of the more general human word *Shicúhua* that stands to it as a type. That type gains traction in the world by virtue of its token manifestations.

In short, the difference between how Luisa and América treated the squirrel cuckoo's call reveals a hierarchical (i.e., unidirectional, nested) distinction between the not-necessarily-human semiosis of life and a human form of semiosis that takes up this nonhuman semiosis in special ways. This distinction between these two kinds of semiosis is neither biological nor cultural nor human: it is formal.

#### THE PLAY OF FORM

In locating manifestations of type/token distinctions in Runa attempts to make sense of the forest's semiosis, I've been discussing hierarchy-as-form. But I want to pause for a moment to reflect on the possibilities inherent to another kind of form propagation, also manifest in these trans-species pidgins, which is less hierarchical and more lateral or "rhizomatic." Later that afternoon, long after América's interpretation of the squirrel cuckoo's call changed the conversation's direction—long after we discovered that, this shift in direction notwithstanding, the dogs had indeed been killed by a jaguar—América and Luisa recalled how as they collected fish poison out in the brush they each heard the spot winged antbird call. The spot winged antbird calls "*chiriqui*," as people in Ávila imitate it, when jaguars startle them. This call is therefore a well-known indicator of the presence of jaguars, and it is also the onomatopoeic source for *chiriquihua*, which is the name for this bird in Ávila.

Back at the house, América and Luisa simultaneously reflected on how from their respective positions in the brush they heard this antbird call at the moment of the attack:

América:

*shina manchararinga*  
that's how it gets scared

Luisa:

*paririhua paririhua*  
from heliconia to heliconia

*runata rícosa*  
even seeing a person

*manchana*  
it gets scared

"*Chiriquithua Chiriquithua*," *nin*  
saying, "*Chiriquithua Chiriquithua*"  
"-*quithua*"

*imachari*  
what might it mean?

*shuma' shuma'*  
from one to another

*chiriqui' chiriqui'*

*chi uyararca*  
that's what could be heard

In their parallel recollections of this event *América* pronounced the bird's name and sought its meaning. The bird was "saying, '*Chiriquithua*'" (and not simply calling *chiriqui'*). And because its utterance now conformed to the systemic norms of a general and pan-cosmic *runa shimi*, what it said now surely had some sort of ominous meaning, even though what exactly this implied *América* wasn't at the time quite sure.

*Luisa*, by contrast, simply imitated what "could be heard" and allowed this to resonate with other sonic images:

*paririhua paririhua*  
*shuma' shuma'*  
*chiriqui' chiriqui'*

Hers was an image of the antbird startled by a jaguar, flitting nervously throughout the underbrush from one heliconia leaf to another. Translating liberally, one gets an image of this bird going from

leaf to leaf  
jumping jumping  
*chiriqui' chiriqui'*

Freed from the interpretive drive to stabilize the call's meaning, *Luisa* was able to trace the bird's ecological embedding through a kind of play that is open to the possibilities inherent to the iconic propagation of sonic form. Ignoring for a moment the ways in which "*chiriqui'*" might refer "up" to *Chiriquithua*—a word that "means" something in a broader, relatively more

fixed symbolic system—allowing it simply to resonate with other images and tracing out these relations, has, then, its own “significant” possibilities.

I want to emphasize the point that eschewing a certain kind of stabilized meaning does not make Luisa’s exploration nonsemiotic. “*Chiriqui*” is meaningful without necessarily meaning something. It has a different truck with significance—one that, relatively speaking, is more iconic in logic. *Amériga*, by contrast, was attempting to extract information from the antbird’s call. Surely semiosis serves to convey what Bateson termed “the difference which makes a difference” (see chapter 2), but, as Luisa’s reaction to the antbird indicates, focusing only on how representational systems convey difference misses something fundamental about the ways in which semiosis also depends on the effortless propagation of form. Iconicity is central to this.

In this regard, I want to return to my discussion in chapter 1 of those cryptically camouflaged Amazonian insects known in English as walking sticks and referred to by entomologists as phasmids. I want to think about these insects here in terms of form. Their iconicity, as I mentioned, is not based on someone out there noticing that they look like twigs. Rather, the walking stick’s likeness is the product of the fact that the ancestors of its potential predators did not notice the differences between their ancestors and actual twigs. Over evolutionary time those walking stick lineages that were least noticed survived. In this way a certain form—the “fit” between twig and insect—came to propagate effortlessly into the future.

Form, then, is not imposed from above; it falls out. This, of course, is an outcome of a kind of interpretive effort that is more intuitively familiar to us; it results from the ways in which predators “work” to notice the differences between certain insects and their environments. These are the insects that, not being twiglike enough, are eaten. The relation that iconicity has to confusion or indifference (see chapter 2), as the proliferation of “twiginess” reveals, gets at some of the strange logic of form and its effortless propagation.

As Luisa’s verbal play illustrates, iconicity has a certain freedom from our limiting intentions. It can leap out of the symbolic—but not out of semiosis or significance. Given the right conditions it can effortlessly explore the world in ways that can create unexpected associations.

This kind of exploratory freedom is I think what Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966: 219) was getting at when he wrote of savage thought (not to be confused with the thought of “savages”) as “mind in its untamed state as distinct from

mind cultivated or domesticated for the purpose of yielding a return." It is also something, I believe, that Sigmund Freud grasped in his recognition of how the unconscious partakes of the kind of self-organizing logic to which Lévi-Strauss is alluding. Such a logic is well exemplified in Freud's (1999) writing on dreams. It is also visible in his treatment of slips of the tongue, malapropisms, and forgotten names. These emerge in the course of everyday conversation when for some reason the intended word is repressed (Freud 1965) and they sometimes, as Freud noted with wonder, circulate contagiously from one person to another (85). English translations of his work call these "mistaken" utterances *parapraxes*, from *parapraxis*, the defective performance of certain purposive acts. That is, when thought's "purpose of yielding a return" is removed what is left is that which is ancillary to or beyond what is practical: the fragile but effortless iconic propagation of self-organizing thought, which resonates with and thereby explores its environment. In the case of *parapraxis* this can take the form of the spontaneous production of alliterative chains that link a forgotten word to a repressed thought (Freud 1965: 85). Freud's insight, gesturing quite literally to an "ecology of mind," was to develop ways to become aware of these iconic associative chains of thought (and even to find ways to encourage them to proliferate) and then, by observing them, to learn something about the inner forests these thoughts explore as they resonate through the psyche.

Freud, of course, wanted to tame this kind of thinking. For him, such thoughts were means toward an end. The end was to elicit the repressed latent thoughts to which they were ultimately connected and, in this way, to cure his patients. The associations themselves, as Kaja Silverman (2009: 44) notes, were for him ultimately irrelevant. But, following Silverman (2009: 65), there is another way to think about such chains of associations.<sup>18</sup> Rather than arbitrary, and pointing only inward toward the psyche, we might see these associations as thoughts in the world—exemplars of a kind of worldly thinking, undomesticated, for the moment, by a particular human mind and her particular ends.

This is what Luisa's thinking offers. It is a kind of creativity that comes in the form of listening (Silverman 2009: 62), and its logic is central to how an anthropology beyond the human can better attend to the world around us. If América was forcing thought to yield its return, Luisa allowed the thoughts of the forest to resonate somewhat more freely as they moved through her. By keeping her imitation of the antbird's call below the symbolic level, holding its



potential stabilized "meaning" in abeyance, Luisa allowed the sonic form of this vocalization to propagate. Via a chain of partial sonic isomorphisms, "*chtriqui*" drew in its wake a series of ecological relations with the effect that the traces of the feline were carried across space and species lines through the dense thickets to that place where Luisa was harvesting fish poison the moment her dogs were attacked.

#### UPFRAMING

The possibilities inherent to this kind of play notwithstanding, access up to a type-level perspective—being able to recognize the cuckoo's call *shicua'* or the anteater's hiss as instances of the omen *Shicúhua*—is empowering. And this formal hierarchical logic is what informed the Jaminaua shaman's quest for apprenticeship downriver. By going downriver, he was able to see the particular river from which he hailed as just one instance of a broader, more general pattern. Through this process of "upframing," he was now privy to the view from a higher-order emergent level (a sort of "type") that encompassed the individual rivers and their villages, which can here be understood as the lower-order component parts (the "tokens") of this system. These properties of a logical hierarchy, instantiated in an ecosystem, are what allowed this shaman to reposition himself within a sociopolitical hierarchy.

Nor surprisingly, then, relations between humans and spirits, like those between humans and animals, are structured by the hierarchical properties inherent to semiosis. Here too there is a nested, increased ability to interpret as one moves up the hierarchy. Recall, from the previous chapter, that although the Runa can readily understand the meanings of dog vocalizations, dogs can understand human speech only if they are given hallucinogens. Similarly, although we humans need hallucinogens to understand the forest masters, these spirits can readily understand human speech; the Runa need only talk to them, as, in fact, they sometimes do in the forest. Just as animal utterances can be seen as tokens that require a further interpretive step to be seen as conforming to a type, the limited perceptions that humans have of the spirit realm also need to be appropriately translated into a more general idiom to be understood in their true light. The Runa in their everyday life see the game animals that they hunt in the forest as wild animals. But they know that this is not their true manifestation. Seen from the higher perspective of the spirit masters who own and protect these creatures, these animals are really domesticates. What the

Runa see as a gray-winged trumpeter, chachalaca, guan, or tinamou is really the spirit master's chicken. Here too there is a hierarchy that assumes certain logical semiotic properties. All these wild birds, as the Runa experience them in the forest, are token instantiations of a more general type—the Chicken—as interpreted at a higher level. And this something more—this higher emergent level—is also something less. All those forest birds share something in general in common with a chicken, but treating them solely as the chickens that in some real sense they also are erases their particular species-specific singularities.

One could also say that the spirit master's perception of the bird requires less interpretive effort. Following Peirce's (CP 2.278) insistence that the chain of semiotic interpretance always ends in iconism because it is only with iconism, as Deacon (1997: 76, 77) underscores, that the differences that would require further interpretation are no longer noticed (it is with iconism, that is, where mental effort ends), we could say that there is less interpretive effort required by the masters who see the forest birds just as they really are—as domestic chickens. We humans, by contrast, would have to smoke lots of "strong" tobacco, take hallucinogens, or dream particularly "well," as people in Ávila would say, to have the privilege of seeing the different kinds of wild game birds encountered in the forest as the chickens they really are.

#### INSIDE

Spirit masters need not exert the interpretive effort we humans require because, like rubber floating down the river, or the congeries of animals attracted to a fruiting tree, or a port city teeming with the upriver riches that collect there, they are already inside this emergent form. In fact, people in Ávila often refer to the reality of the spirit master realm as *ucuta* (inside), as opposed to the everyday human realm, which is *jahuaman* (on the surface). Because the spirit master realm is, by definition, always inside form, the animals are always abundant there, even though we humans aren't always able to see them. The woolly monkey troop we encountered while hunting one day that I, with my binoculars, diligently estimated as consisting of most of thirty individuals, Asencio, a veteran hunter and careful observer of the beings of the forest, described as numbering in the hundreds. And those animals that are not ever seen in the forests around Ávila, like squirrel monkeys, which are abundant at lower, warmer elevations, or white-lipped peccaries, which are no

longer found locally, are nevertheless said to be present "inside" the domain of the masters of the forest. It's not that the animals aren't there; it's just that the masters don't allow us to see them. They don't allow us inside the form that holds them.

Animal abundance is not the only thing that is unchanging in the spirit world. The realm of the masters is also a kind of afterlife, Marcelino's paradise. And the Runa who go there never age and never die. Not long after the young woman out fishing found her in the forest, Rosa returned to the realm of the masters—this time forever. Ventura later told me that when his mother died they "just buried her skin" (see chapter 3). That is, they buried her weather-worn, time-ravaged, maggot-eaten habitus—a sort of clothing that, in the manner of jaguar canines and white clothing, conferred on her, her particular earthly elderly affects. In the realm of the masters, Ventura explained, Rosa will always be a nubile girl, like her granddaughters, her body now immune to the effects of history (figure 8).

That Rosa will never age in the realm of the masters is also the result of the peculiar properties of form. History as we commonly imagine it—as the effects of past events on the present—ceases to be the most relevant causal modality inside form.<sup>19</sup> Just as the causes responsible for riverine and floristic spatial patterns are in a sense irrelevant to the ways in which these can be linked by a highly patterned emergent socioeconomic system, and just as the words in a language can relate to each other in a way that is largely decoupled from the individual histories of their origins, so too in the realm of the masters the linearity of history is disrupted by form. Pre-Hispanic chiefdom hierarchies, cities, bustling market towns, and early-twentieth-century estates, of course, have their own unique temporal contexts. But they now are all caught up in the same form, and, as such, the particular histories of how and when they came to be become, in a certain sense, irrelevant. Form then, for a moment, and in a sense, "freezes" time.<sup>20</sup> All these differently situated historically contingent configurations now participate "ahistorically" in a self-reinforcing pattern that people in Ávila attempt to harness to get game meat.

As a regularity that can potentially exceed ontological domains and temporal instances this kind of form, then, creates an emergent "always already" realm. What I mean by this is that one outcome of certain kinds of systems that capture and maintain regularity—whether a socioeconomic one that harnesses physical and biological regularities, an expanding language that incorporates terms from other vernaculars, or even the historically layered realm of



FIGURE 8. "Granddaughters" preparing peach palm beer (*chunda asua*). Photo by author.

the spirit masters of the forest—is that they create a domain of circular causality in which the things that have already happened have never not happened. Take the English language, for example. We know that any given sentence might include words of, say, Greek, or Latin, or French, or German origin, but these histories are irrelevant to the “timeless” way such words come to give each other meaning by virtue of the circular closure of the linguistic system of

which they now form part. My point is that, like language, these other, not necessarily human and not necessarily symbolic systems that I have been discussing also create an emergent realm partially decoupled from the histories—the past's effects on the present—that gave rise to them.

The always already realm of the forest masters captures something of the quality of being inside form. According to people in Ávila, "the dead," when they go *ucuta*, or inside, the spirit realm of the masters, become "free." "*Huanu-gunaca lubuar*," they say: "The dead are free." *Lubuar*, which I'm glossing as "freedom," is derived from the Spanish *lugar*, whose primary meaning is "place." But *lugar* also has a temporal referent. The phrase *tener lugar*, although today infrequently used in Ecuadorian Spanish, means to have the time or opportunity to do something. In Quichua *lubuar* refers to a domain where worldly spatiotemporal constraints are relaxed. It is a sort of realm where cause-and-effect no longer directly applies. To become *lubuar*, as people in Ávila explain, is to become free from earthly "toil" and "suffering,"<sup>21</sup> free from God's judgment and punishment,<sup>22</sup> and free from the effects of time. Inside this perpetual always already realm of the masters in the forest, the dead just carry on—free.

Humans do not just impose form on the tropical forest; the forest proliferates it. One can think of coevolution as a reciprocal proliferation of regularities or habits among interacting species (see chapter 1).<sup>23</sup> The tropical forest amplifies form in myriad directions thanks to the ways in which its many kinds of selves interrelate. Over evolutionary time organisms come to represent with increasing specificity environments made ever more complex through the ways in which other organisms come to more exhaustively represent their surroundings. In neotropical forests this proliferation of habits has occurred to a degree unmatched by any other nonhuman system on this planet (see chapter 2). Any attempt at harnessing the living beings of the forest is wholly dependent on the ways in which such beings are embedded in these regularities.

As I said, this ubiquity of form does something to time. It freezes it. There is something, then, to Lévi-Strauss's much-maligned characterization of Amazonian societies as "cold"—that is, as resistant to historical change—in juxtaposition to those "hot" Western societies that supposedly embrace change (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 234).<sup>24</sup> Except what is "cold" here is not exactly a bounded society. For the forms that confer on Amazonian society this "cold" characteristic cross the many boundaries that exist both internal to and beyond human realms. The early-twentieth-century international rubber economy was just as constrained by the forest's forms as is Ávila hunting. Like kinds

(see chapter 2), form need not stem from the structures we humans impose on the world. Such patterns can emerge in the world beyond the human. They are emergent with respect to the lower-order historical processes, those that involve the past's effects on the present, that give rise to them, and that also make them useful.

#### THE DETRITUS OF HISTORY

That the emergent forms of the forest are partially decoupled from the histories that gave rise to them does not banish history from the realm of the spirit masters of the forest. Bits of history, the detritus of prior formal alignments, get frozen inside the forest form and leave their residues there.<sup>25</sup> For example, *Tetrathylacium macrophyllum* (Flacourtiaceae) is a tree with a cascading panicle of translucent dark red fruits whose Quichua name, *hualca muyu*, means, appropriately, "necklace beads." However, rather than resemble the popular opaque glass necklace beads of Bohemian origin that have been a mainstay of Amazonian trade for the past century, these fruits bear a striking resemblance to an earlier dark red translucent Venetian trade bead that was in wide circulation throughout the colonial and neocolonial world. It passed through Ecuador around the time of the presidency of Ignacio de Veintemilla (1878–82) and is, accordingly, still referred to by some Ecuadorians as *veintemilla*. That the Ávila plant *hualca muyu* is linked to this nineteenth-century bead is the product of the peculiar time-freezing properties of form. The historical trace of a good that was traded and, like Simson's beads, commensurated with forest products remains caught in the always already form of the forest master's realm, even after people have long forgotten it. Another example: some kinds of demonic spirits, *supai*, that wander the forest are described as wearing priestly habits, even though today's local priests have long since abandoned wearing the black robe.

It is not, then, that history simply permeates the Amazonian landscape, as critical cultural geographers and historical ecologists contend as a counter to the romantic myth of a pristine wild Amazonian "nature."<sup>26</sup> Instead, the history that gets caught in the forest is mediated and mutated by a form that is not exactly reducible to human events or landscape.

The challenge for the Runa is how to access the forms of the forest that concentrate wealth. For in this always already realm animals exist in unchanging abundance. As with the Jurúa-area shaman, the way they do this

involves a process of upframing to see animals from the privileged (and objectifying) perspective of the masters—namely, not as singular selves, each with its own point of view, but as resources, and not as ephemeral subjects but as stabilized objects, owned and controlled by the master, a more powerful, emergent self. The Runa attempt to access the riches of the forest masters by mobilizing the disparate historical traces of strategies for negotiating with people more powerful than themselves that have gotten caught up—frozen, like Venetian trade beads and priestly habits—inside the master's form.

For example, it's been over a century and a half since the Runa had to pay regular tribute to government officials and clergy (Oberem 1980: 112), yet tribute still exists in the realm of the masters. When people kill a tapir they are required to offer trade beads as tribute to the spirit masters that own this animal, so that these masters will continue to provide meat. Out on a hunting trip, Juanicu attempted to capitalize on the reciprocal obligations that this colonial arrangement entails. He offered the master tribute in the form of a few grains of corn tucked in the crevices of a tree base. When the master failed to provide us with game meat, as was his obligation, given that Juanicu had dutifully kept up his side of the bargain, Juanicu unashamedly reprimanded him—yelling, in the middle of the forest, "You're stingy!"—in exactly the same way I once heard him rebuke a politician visiting Ávila during election season who failed to give out cigarettes and drink.

On other occasions the Runa attempt to communicate with the masters through rhetorical formulas identical to those their sixteenth-century forebears used in negotiating peace contracts with the Spaniards. These include invoking a numerically parallel structure that attempts to make more balanced what, in another context, Lisa Rofel (1999) has called "uneven dialogues":<sup>27</sup> in the colonial case this involved making five demands in exchange for five concessions to the Spanish authorities, as is visible in one such late-sixteenth-century contract between the local indigenous chiefs and Spaniards (Ordóñez de Cevallos 1989 [1614]: 426). In the contemporary one, it is evident in the use of certain hunting and fishing charms that require a special ten-day fast—"five days for the master and five for the Runa," as people in Ávila put it.<sup>28</sup>

And the Quito-in-the-forest to which Rosa traveled is a reflection of more than four centuries of earnest attempts by Ávila-area people to negotiate with the powerful beings that live there for access to some of their wealth. Indeed, part of those sixteenth-century negotiations involved an attempt, unsuccessful alas, to convince the Spaniards to build a Quito in the Amazon—a request to

which colonial documents (Ramírez Dávalos 1989 [1559]: 50, see also 39) and contemporary myths attest, and whose deferral continues to motivate desires to harness the riches that are harbored inside the forest.<sup>29</sup>

Each strategy for accessing the accumulated riches of the powerful has an independent causal history. But this no longer matters. They are all now part of something general, the forest master's form. And they can each serve as points of access to some of its riches.

It is not, however, just abundant game meat that such strategies promise. For they also hold out the possibility of some sort of access to the long and layered history of deferred desires that the quest for this meat has come to represent.

#### FORM'S EFFORTLESS EFFICACY

I hope here to have illustrated some of the peculiar properties of form, and I hope to have given some sense of why anthropology should pay form more attention. That it hasn't is, indeed, also an effect of form's peculiar properties. As anthropologists we are well equipped to analyze that which is different. However, as Annelise Riles (2000) has noted in her study of the circulation of bureaucratic forms associated with Fijian participants in a UN conference, we are less ready to study that which is invisible because we are "inside" it. Form largely lacks the palpable otherness—the secondness (see chapter 1)—of a traditional ethnographic object because it is only manifest qua form in the propagation of its self-similarity: "It is the people who are outside of the monastery who feel its atmosphere," writes the Zen master. "Those who are practicing actually do not feel anything" (Suzuki 2001: 78).

For these reasons it is much easier to understand the semiotic importance of indexicality—the noticing of difference—than it is to understand iconicity, which involves the propagation of regularities, through a specially constrained sort of indifference (see chapter 2). Perhaps this is why the propagation of similarity through indistinction is sometimes erroneously considered something other than representation. However, walking stick "twigginess" and a contagious yawn that propagates across bodies and even possibly across species lines (to give just two examples where iconicity is predominant) are semiotic phenomena, even though they largely lack an indexical component that can be interpreted as pointing to anything other than another instance of the patterns they instantiate. One could say that our habits become noticeable to



us only when they are disrupted, when we fall outside of them (see chapter 1). And yet understanding the workings of that which is not noticed is crucial for an anthropology beyond the human. Form is precisely this sort of invisible phenomenon.

Form requires us to rethink what we mean by the "real." Generals—that is, habits, regularities, potential recurrences, and patterns—are real (see chapter 1). But it would be wrong to attribute to generals the kinds of qualities that we associate with the reality of existent objects. When I say that game birds are, from the perspective of the masters, really chickens, I am referring precisely to this way in which generals are real. The reality of the master's chicken is that of a general. And yet it has a possible eventual efficacy: it is able, as a sort of type, to index specific encounters with different kinds of birds, be they guans, chachalacas, or curassows. In this respect these encounters are not unlike the one I had with the peccary on that rainy day in the forest.

Without the day-to-day interactions that the Runa have with game birds, there would be no chickens in the realm of the masters. And yet the master realm enjoys a level of stability, which is partially decoupled from these day-to-day moments of forest interaction. This is why in the realm of the masters white-lipped peccaries can abound even though they haven't been found in the forests surrounding Ávila for many years now.

Although stable, form is fragile. It can emerge only under specific circumstances. I was reminded of this when I took a break from writing this chapter to prepare a pot of cream of wheat for my sons. Before my very eyes, the tell-tale self-organizing hexagonal structures known as Bénard cells, which form as liquid is heated from the bottom and cooled from the top under just the right conditions, spontaneously emerged across the surface of the simmering cereal. That these hexagonal structures promptly collapsed back into the sticky gruel is testament to form's fragility. Life is particularly adept at creating and sustaining those conditions that will encourage such fragile self-organizing processes to predictably take place (see Camazine 2001). This, in part, is why I have focused here on the ways in which complex multispecies associations cultivate form in ways that also think their ways through us when we become immersed in their "fleshiness."<sup>30</sup>

Form cannot be understood without paying attention to the kinds of continuities and connections that generals have with regard to existents. Accordingly, my concern here has been not just with form and those properties that make it unique—its invisibility, its effortless propagation, a kind of causality associated

with it that appears to freeze history—but also with the ways in which form emerges from and relates to other phenomena in a manner that makes its unique properties come to matter in the worlds of living beings. I am not just interested in that which is “inside,” but in how such an inside came to be, and also how it dissolves when the material conditions—be they riverbeds, parasites, or UN paychecks—necessary for its propagation cease to exist. And I am not just interested in form per se, but in how we “do things with” it. And yet doing things with form requires becoming infected with its causal logic, a logic that is quite different from that which is associated with the pushes and pulls of efficient causality, different, that is, from the ways in which the past affects the present. Doing things with form requires succumbing to its effortless efficacy.

None of this is to lose sight of the unique properties of form, and the possibility, as Riles notes, that anthropology might emerge from its crisis of representation by experimenting with ways of making the invisible “inside” more apparent. Building on Strathern (1995, 2004 [1991]), Riles’s solution is to turn form “inside out.” That is, she attempts to render form visible through an ethnographic methodology that amplifies it. Rather than try to make form apparent from an external perspective by indicating our discontinuities with it, she allows the patternings inherent to the proliferation of bureaucratic documents and the ones we academics might produce about them to multiply until their similarities become manifest.

I offer here no such aesthetic solution to the problem of elucidating form. I only wish to give a sense of some of the ways in which form moved through me. When I dreamed that night at Ventura’s house of a peccary in a pen perhaps I too for a moment got caught up “inside” the forest master’s form. What I would like to suggest is that the semiotics of dreaming, understood in terms of the peculiar properties of form I have explored here, involves the spontaneous, self-organizing apperception and propagation of iconic associations in ways that can dissolve some of the boundaries we usually recognize between insides and outsides.<sup>31</sup> That is, when the conscious, purposive daytime work of discerning difference is relaxed, when we no longer ask thought for a “return,” we are left with self-similar iterations—the effortless manner in which likeness propagates through us. This is akin to Luisa’s sonic web that linked the antbird to heliconias and to the jaguar that killed the dogs and all these to the humans in the forest whose dog that was—a web that emerged in the space of possibility that opened because she did not attempt to specify the meaning of the bird’s call that she imitated. (Luisa was, in a sense, free.)

Considering it alongside this and the other various form propagations I've discussed here, I've come to wonder how much my dream was ever really my own; for a moment, perhaps, my thinking became one with how the forest thinks. Perhaps, like Lévi-Strauss's myths, there is indeed something about such dreams, which "think in men, unbeknownst to them."<sup>12</sup> Dreaming may well be, then, a sort of thought run wild—a human form of thinking that goes well beyond the human and therefore one that is central to an anthropology beyond the human. Dreaming is a sort of "*pensée sauvage*": a form of thinking unfettered from its own intentions and therefore susceptible to the play of forms in which it has become immersed—which, in my case, and that of the Ávila Runa, is one that gets caught up and amplified in the multispecies, memory-laden wilderness of an Amazon forest.





## The Living Future (and the Imponderable Weight of the Dead)

fire escapes old as you

- Tho you're not old now, that's left here with me

Allen Ginsberg, *Kaddish for Naomi Ginsberg*

A tuft of fur snagged on a spine was the final clue that led us to the body of the peccary that Oswaldo shot several hours before. We were on Basaqui Urcu, a steep foothill of Sumaco Volcano northwest of Ávila. Swarting at the swarm of blood-sucking flies<sup>1</sup> inherited from our quarry we sat down to rest. As we caught our breath Oswaldo began to tell me what he had dreamed the night before. "I was visiting my compadre in Loreto," he said, referring to the market town and center of colonist expansion half a day's walk from Ávila, "when suddenly a menacing policeman appeared. His shirt was covered with clippings from a haircut." Frightened, Oswaldo awoke and whispered to his wife, "I've dreamed badly."

Fortunately he was wrong. As the events of the day would prove Oswaldo had in fact dreamed well. The hair on the policeman's shirt turned out to have augured killing the peccary whose body now lay beside us (after hauling a peccary carcass, bristles will cling to a hunter's shirt just like hair clippings). Nonetheless, Oswaldo's interpretive dilemma points to a profound ambivalence that permeates Runa life: men can see themselves as potent predators akin to powerful "whites" such as the policeman, yet also feel like the helpless prey of these same rapacious figures.

Was Oswaldo the policeman, or had he become prey? What happened that day on Basaqui Urcu speaks to the complexity of Oswaldo's position. Who is that frightening figure that is also so familiar? How can a policeman, a being so threatening and foreign, also be oneself? This uncanny juxtaposition reveals something important about Oswaldo's ongoing struggle to be and become, in

relation to the many kinds of others he encounters in the forests around Ávila that make him who he is.<sup>2</sup>

These many kinds of others that “people” the forests around Ávila include the living ones that the Runa hunt and who on occasion hunt them. But their ranks are also filled by specters of a long pre-Hispanic, colonial, and republican history. These specters include the dead, certain demonic spirits (who might also prey on the Runa), and the masters of the animals—all of these continue in a different but nonetheless real way to walk those forests that Oswaldo traverses.

Who Oswaldo is cannot be disentangled from how he relates to these many kinds of beings. The shifting ecology of selves (see chapter 2) that he must constantly negotiate in his hunts in the forest, as well as on his visits to Loreto, is also inside him: it makes up his “ecology” of self.

More to the point, Oswaldo’s dilemma speaks to the question of how to survive as a self and what such continuity might mean. How should Oswaldo avoid becoming prey, an it, dead meat, when the position of hunter—the *I* in this venatic relation—has now come to be occupied by outsiders more powerful than himself?

The Runa have long lived in a world where whites—Europeans and later Ecuadorian as well as Colombian and Peruvian nationals—have stood in a position of manifest dominance over them and where whites qua whites have been intent on imposing a worldview that justifies this position. Here is how a rubber-boom-era estate boss, living on the confluence of the Villano and Curaray Rivers, writes about another boss’s attempts to make his Runa peons see things this way:

In order to convince them of the superiority of the white man over the Indians by reason of our customs and knowledge, and to rid them of their hatred of the Spanish language, a neighbor of mine on this river, a rubber man, employer of many laborers, called together all the Indians one day and showed them a figure of Christ. “This is God,” he said to them. Then he added: “Is it not true that he is a *viracocha* [white man] with a beautiful beard?” All the Indians admitted that he was a *viracocha*, adding that he was the *amo* [master] of everything. (Quoted in Porras 1979: 43)

The estate owner’s take on Runa-white relations encapsulates a certain history of conquest and domination in the Upper Amazon that simply cannot be ignored. It is a historical fact that whites have come to be *los amos*—the masters—of “everything.” In facing this colonial situation of domination as history, we might expect two responses. The Runa could simply acquiesce, accepting a

subservient position. Or they could resist. However, as Oswald's dream already indicates, there is another way to live with this situation. And this other way challenges us to question our understanding of how the past shapes the present at the same time that it suggests a way of inhabiting a future.

Runa politics are not straightforward. Although domination is a historical fact, it is a fact caught up in a form (see chapter 5). As I explore in this chapter, it is caught up in a form that takes shape in the realm of the spirit masters of the forest—a realm whose particular configuration is sustained by the ways in which people like Oswald continue to engage the forest's ecology of selves in their own search for sustenance.

This realm of the spirit masters of the forest also sustains Oswald in a psychic sense. And there is no vantage from which he can escape or resist this condition. He is always already in some way or another "inside" its form. The political theorist Judith Butler alludes to such a dynamic in her observation that

[t]o be dominated by a power external to oneself is a familiar and agonizing form power takes. To find, however, that what "one" is, one's very formation as a subject, is in some sense dependent on that power is quite another. We are used to thinking of power as what presses on the subject from the outside. . . . But if . . . we understand power as *forming* the subject as well as providing the very condition of its existence . . . then power is not simply what we oppose, but also, in a strong sense, what we depend on for our existence and what we harbor and preserve in the beings that we are. (Butler 1997: 1–2)

Butler contrasts the brutal aspect of power in its cold externality to the subtle but no less real ways in which power pervades, creates, and sustains our very being. For power, as Butler intimates, is not reducible to the sum total of brutal acts. Power takes on a general form even if it is also instantiated—palpably, painfully—in the world and on our bodies.<sup>1</sup>

This final chapter of *How Forests Think* seeks to ask, with attention to Oswald's predicament, what, following Butler, it might mean to be and become in "formation." But it reconfigures this question by reflecting on how our understanding of the ways in which power works itself through form changes when we recognize form as a kind of reality beyond the human.

In this regard, I build on my discussion of form from the previous chapter. Form is, as I argued there, neither necessarily human nor necessarily alive, even though it is captured and cultivated by life and even though form also proliferates in those dense ecologies of selves such as the ones that exist in the forests around Ávila. In chapter 5 I discussed how harnessing form involves being



made over by form's strange mode of effortless efficacy—a kind of efficacy in which the past's effect on the present ceases to be the only causal modality at play. If we are made over in our harnessing of form's strange causal logic—the self that harnesses form does not just do so by pushing, pulling, or resisting—then what we mean by agency changes. And if agency becomes something different, then politics changes as well.

But to understand Oswald's predicament we need to think not just in terms of the logics of form that the forest amplifies but also in terms of form's relation to certain other logics intrinsic to life. For what ultimately is at stake for Oswald, as his dream makes manifest, is survival. And the problem of survival is one that concerns the living (for it is after all only the living who die). If form, as I discussed in the previous chapter, can sometimes have the effect of freezing time, in ways that change our understandings of causality and agency, life disrupts our commonplace understanding of the passage of time in a different way, and this too must be considered in trying to understand Oswald's predicament. For, in the realm of life, it is not just the past that affects the present, nor is time just frozen. Rather, life involves, in addition to these, the special ways in which the future comes to affect the present as well.

Let me illustrate this way in which the future affects the present in the realm of life with a simple example from the forest. In order for a jaguar to successfully pounce on an agouti she must be able to "re-present" where that agouti will be. This re-presentation amounts to an importation of the future—a "guess" at what the agouti's future position will be—into the present via the mediation of signs. Being semiotic creatures through and through (see chapter 2), "we" all always have one foot (or paw) in the future.

In this chapter I'm thinking about this intrinsic relationship that obtains between life and future by reference to what Peirce called a "living future" (CP 8.194). This living future, as I argue here, cannot be understood without further reflecting on the special links that life has to all the dead that make life possible. It is in this sense that the living forest is also one that is haunted. And this haunting gets, in part, at what I mean when I say that spirits are real.

Survival—how to go about inhabiting a future—this is Oswald's challenge. And the solutions he finds are inflected by the living-future logic that is amplified in the forests he traverses. But survival here for Oswald is also an all-too-human problem (see chapter 4), one in which questions of power cannot be avoided. And this makes the problem of survival also a political one; for it prompts us to think about how we can find other ways to harness the power

that will ultimately sustain our being in a manner that enables "us" to grow and even to flourish.

This chapter, then, focuses on the realm of the spirit masters of the forest. It does so with particular attention to how that realm makes apparent some aspect of the ways in which life (human and nonhuman) is connected to death, continuity to finitude, future to past, absence to presence, supernatural to natural, and ethereal generality to palpable singularity. All of these, ultimately, say something about the formative connection a self has to its many others. My interest here is to see how these articulations, as they become expressed in the realm of the masters, amplify and render conceptually available to us some of the living-future logic of a thinking forest—a logic that can help us take anthropology beyond the human.

That Oswaldo at a certain moment in the forest can—perhaps must—be a white policeman, involves the particular and sometimes disjointed and even painful ways in which some aspect of his future self reaches back to affect him from this realm of the forest masters. In the process it exposes the logic of some of these articulations that I mentioned. This spirit realm that emerges from the life of the forest, as a product of a whole host of relations that cross species lines and temporal epochs, is, then, a zone of continuity and possibility: Oswaldo's survival depends on his ability to access it. And yet Oswaldo's survival also depends on the many kinds of dead and the many kinds of deaths that this spirit realm holds in its configuration and that make a living future possible. Who one might be is intimately related to all those who one is not; we are forever giving ourselves over and indebted to these many others who make us who "we" are (see Mauss 1990 [1950]).<sup>4</sup>

Although it emerges out of Runa histories of engaging with the many kinds of selves that people their world, the realm of the spirit masters is also something other than the product of these histories of engagement. This realm is a sort of afterlife, which is closely related to but not reducible to the life that has come before it. It is, in this sense, its own kind of emergent real—one that is neither natural nor exactly cultural.

I explore this emergent ethereal realm with specific attention to the ethnographic manifestation of some of its special properties as well as to the hopeful politics that it might harbor. My goal is to reflect more generally about what this realm beyond the living—one that emerges from the rich ecologies of selves that the forest houses—can tell us about the living logics that such a thinking forest reveals.

Venturing beyond the living, as I do here, is important for the anthropology beyond the human that I have been trying to develop, for it is with attention to this realm of the spirit masters of the forest that we can better understand what continuity might mean and how best to face that which threatens it. In short, attending to what those spirits of the forest can teach us about continuity, growth, and even "flourishing" can allow us to cultivate other ways of thinking about how "we" might find better ways to live in the living future.

#### ALWAYS ALREADY RUNA

A curious mural that adorned the walls of the multipurpose hall of the headquarters of FOIN, the federation that represents the Runa communities of Napo Province (figure 9), seems to describe a progression from Amazonian savagery to European civilization. At the far left of a lineup of five men stands a long-haired "savage" Indian holding a blowgun and what appears to be a shell horn of the sort used to call and mobilize kith and kin.<sup>5</sup> He is what we would consider "naked," though he wears a penis string, face paint, necklace, and arm, wrist, and head bands. The next man wears a loincloth, and the horn lies behind him on the ground; otherwise he looks nearly identical. Then stands a man who, in keeping with Runa fashion of the late nineteenth century, wears shorts and a small tunic or poncho. He has just a dab of face paint and tries to hide his blowgun behind his back. The next man in the progression is fully clothed. He wears shoes, long pants, and a crisp white short-sleeved shirt. He is handsome, and whereas the previous figures have tiny heads, no necks, and huge arms, this man's body is well proportioned. The blowgun that caused the previous man such shame now simply lies abandoned behind him. He is also the only one who offers any hint of a smile. This figure is the epitome of a contemporary Runa man in the imaginary of the labor-union-influenced FOIN leadership of the 1970s and 1980s, a leadership that came of age before the influx of the international NGOs, and one that had yet to become culturally or environmentally "conscious." He is a Runa campesino, neither ethnic nor elite, neither sylvan nor urban. The final figure emerging from this backdrop now littered with the discarded trappings of a timeless savagery wears glasses, a suit, and a tie. His hair is neatly parted down the middle, and he sports a pencil moustache—a carefully nurtured wisp of the facial hair that whites seem to have no problem producing in revolting but also awesome



FIGURE 9. "To make brutes into men, and men into Christians" (Figueroa 1986 [1661]: 249): This mural, which existed in the headquarters of the indigenous federation FOIN during the late 1980s, ambiguously illustrates the legacies of this colonial endeavor. Photo by author.

abundance. He has the slight build of someone who has spent too much time indoors. He stands at grim attention. He seems nervous. In his right hand he clutches a briefcase. Strapped on his left arm, a wristwatch inexorably marks off the minutes of a day that is inside a linear temporality of which this man is now very much a part.

In the late 1980s I did some volunteer work for the federation that for a time had me living in its headquarters. This mural covered one of the walls. One evening, to celebrate the end of a workshop, the participants, primarily Runa men and women from Tena and Archidona and the villages that surround these towns, which are much more urban and less oriented toward the forest than Ávila, held a party at the headquarters. The mural was the source of a running joke throughout the evening. Every so often someone, invariably male, would point to one of the "savage" Indians standing to the left of the handsome Runa man in the lineup to indicate the stage of drunkenness to which he had descended.

The mural speaks to the primitivist narrative that has guided both missionaries and colonists in this region: before the arrival of Europeans naked "wild savages" were the Amazon's only inhabitants; through a process of "taming" that spanned the colonial and early republican periods and continues to this day some of these wild savages became civilized, clothed, monogamous, salt-eating, and unthreatening Runa; they became, according to the colonial terminology, *indios mansos*, or tame Indians (Taylor 1999). Survivals of what, according to this logic, would be the primordial wild substrate can still be found in certain isolated regions. Some members of the Huaorani ethnic group (sometimes still pejoratively referred to in Quichua as Auca), who are considered homicidal, polygamous, and naked, serve as the present-day models for the depiction of savagery to the far left of the mural.<sup>6</sup> The seventeenth-century Jesuit priest Francisco de Figueroa succinctly described this colonial project of attempting to fashion a certain kind of person. The missionary goal, he wrote, is "to make" Amazonian "brutes into men, and men into Christians" (Figueroa 1986 [1661]: 249).<sup>7</sup> The revelers that night were playing with the inherited legacies of this attempt (see also Rogers 1995).

Many people in Ávila would not disagree with such distinctions between savage and civilized. They emphatically concur that being human in the right ways involves eating salt, wearing clothing, and refraining from homicide and polygamy (see also Muratorio 1987: 55). But they differ as to how—or even whether—to locate these traits in time. The missionaries saw the adoption of these traits as the result of a gradual process of "taming" a brutish Amazonian substrate. In Ávila, however, "civilized" attributes such as monogamy and eating salt are primordial aspects of Runa humanity. The Runa have always already been civilized.

An Ávila diluvial myth illustrates this. When the great flood swept over the land many Runa managed to save themselves by climbing to the top of Yahuar Urcu, one of the highest peaks in the area. Other Runa attempted to escape by boarding canoes. The women on board twined their long hair in an attempt to moor themselves to the treetops still above water. When these lashings became undone the canoes floated downriver and came to rest in what is today Huaorani territory. There the clothing of those Runa eventually wore away, and they also ran out of salt. They began killing people and thus became the present-day Auca. The Auca, then, are not the primordial savages from which the Christianized Runa evolved. Rather, they are fallen Runa. They too were once salt-eating, clothed, and peaceful Christians. Although the Quichua

term *Auca* is generally translated as “savage” or “infidel,” it may be more accurate to think of *Aucas* as apostates. They are those who have abandoned their former Runa way of life.<sup>6</sup> The Runa have always already been Runa. “Savages,” by contrast, became so as their canoes swept them down the flooded rivers, carrying them far away from their unchanging Runa homeland; they are the ones who fell out of form and into time.

The “Runa” man of the primitivist mural—made by his past, vanishing in the future—is not, then, exactly congruent with this other kind of being, this “always already” Runa of Ávila. What I am suggesting is that for the Ávila Runa the mural would not depict a progression leading elsewhere but an ongoing fugue around a central figure—a Runa self—who always already is what he will become even in his ongoing and open-ended becoming. This constantly changing self, who is also continuous with his past and potential future instantiations, points to something important about life, and flourishing, in an ecology of selves.

#### NAMES

We tend to think of a term like *the Runa* as an ethnonym, a proper noun used to name another. And this is how I’ve been using it throughout this book. For such a term to be deemed appropriate, standard anthropological practice dictates that it be the name the people in question use for themselves. This is why we do not refer to the Huaorani by their pejorative Quichua name “*Auca*.” And “Runa,” at least when modified by a place name, is certainly used as an ethnonym in Ávila to refer to Quichua-speaking inhabitants of Amazonian Ecuador. So, for example, “the San José Runa” refers to the people from San José de Payamino. And those from San José de Payamino call their Ávila neighbors “the Ávila Runa.” Naming others is unavoidable.

And yet people in Ávila do not name themselves. They don’t call themselves the Runa (or the Ávila Runa for that matter). Nor do they use the term *Kichwa*, the ethnonym currently employed in the contemporary regional and especially national indigenous political movement. If we treat “Runa” as a label—asking only whether it is the right label—something important is obscured; the Runa don’t use labels for themselves. In a certain straightforward sense, Runa, in Quichua, simply means “person.” But it does not merely function as a substantive to be co-opted as an ethnonym, a label.

Going back to the mural, the man beaming and wearing a crisp white shirt, standing between the “savages” and the “white man,” is, by any account, “Runa.”

From the primitivist point of view "Runa" here would be an ethnonym, a label for a waypoint in a historical process of transformation in which one kind of being is made into another, on the way to becoming still another. The Ávila take on this, however, would be different. The man in the crisp white shirt would still be "Runa," but the label would refer to something else, something less visible, less easily nameable than a cultural group from which one came. This man never became Runa; he has always already been Runa.

What I wish to suggest, and this is something I hope will become more evident as the chapter progresses, is that "Runa" more accurately marks a relational subject position in a cosmic ecology of selves in which all beings see themselves as persons. "Runa" here is the *self*, in continuity of form. All beings are, from their points of view, in a sense "Runa," because this is how they would experience themselves when "saying" *I*.

If we treat "Runa" as a substantive we miss the way it actually functions more like a personal pronoun. We usually think of pronouns as words that stand in the place of nouns. But Peirce suggests that we flip this relation. Pronouns are not substitutes for nouns; rather, "they indicate things in the directest possible way," by pointing to them. Nouns are indirectly related to their referents, and thus they ultimately rely on these sorts of pointing relations for their meaning. This leads Peirce to conclude that "a noun is an imperfect substitute for a pronoun," and not the other way around (1998b: 15). I want to suggest here that the Runa man who is the subject of the mural is—on the Ávila take—functioning as a special kind of first-person pronoun: an *I*, or perhaps more accurately an *us*, in all its coming possibility.

As a noun "Runa" is an "imperfect substitute for a pronoun." In its imperfection it carries the traces of all the others with whom it has become an *us* in relation. What it is, and what it might become, is shaped by virtue of all the predicates—eating salt, monogamy, and so on—it has acquired, even though it is also something other than the sum total of these.

An *I* is always in some sense invisible. By contrast, it is the other—the *he*, the *she*, the *it* objectified—that can be seen and named. I should note that the third person—the other—corresponds to Peirce's secondness. It is what is palpable, visible, and actual because it stands outside us (see chapter 1). This in part explains why self-naming is so rare in Amazonian ecologies of selves. As Viveiros de Castro has observed, naming is really reserved for others: "ethnonyms are names for third parties; they belong to the category of 'they' not the category of 'we'" (1998: 476). It is not a question, then, of which ethnonym to

use but a question of whether any ethnonym can capture a self's point of view. Naming objectifies, and that is what one does to others—to its.<sup>9</sup> The Runa—I'm slipping back into using the objectifying label—are not the *its* of history. They are *Is*, part of an ongoing *us*, alive, in life, surviving—flourishing.

Runa-as-*I*, as-*us*, is not a thing, to be affected by the past in the cause-and-effect ways in which things are. The Runa are not the objects of history. They are not its products. They were not made by history in this cause-and-effect sense. And yet who they are is an outcome of a certain intimate relation to the past.

This relation involves another kind of absence as well. It involves a relation to the absent dead. In this regard, the Runa are like the cryptic Amazonian insect known as the walking stick, which comes to be increasingly invisible in its growing confusion with twigs by virtue of all those other beings that it is not. Those other, somewhat less "twiggy" walking sticks, are the ones who become visible and in their visibility become the tangible, actual objects—the others, the *its*—of predation in such a way that the potential future lineages of those who remain invisible can continue on, hidden and yet haunted (by virtue of this constitutive absence) by these others that are not them.

#### AMO

Oswaldo's continuity as an *I*, as Runa, requires that he be a puma—a predator. He must be the hunter and not the hunted peccary he feared he would become when he encountered that policeman covered in hair clippings standing at his friend's door. Puma, recall, is often hypostasized as jaguar—its primary exemplar—although it more accurately marks a relational position of a self, an *I* continuing as *I* and alive, thanks to an objectifying relationship to other selves that this self creates through predation. As such, like "Runa," it too functions as an "imperfect substitute for a pronoun." Oswaldo is—must be—runa puma, a human-jaguar, to persist.

In Ávila, *runa puma* is synonymous with a kind of maturity of self. Many men, and many women too, cultivate a sort of becoming-puma, so that, after death, after their human skins are buried, they enter a jaguar body, to continue on, as a self, and an *I*—an *I* that is invisible to themselves, yet able to see others as prey, while being seen by these others as predator. One cultivates this puma nature not only with regard to one's postmortem future but, perhaps more important, so that this future puma will also inform one's present



ability to continue living as a self; becoming-puma is a form of worldly empowerment.

And yet predation is a fraught form of relating, not without its own anxieties. A few months after killing the pig, Oswaldo dreamed of another such encounter. In this encounter he didn't have his gun. All he had was an empty refillable shotgun cartridge. Somehow he managed to shoot his quarry by blowing through the little hole at the cartridge's base as if it were a blowgun.<sup>10</sup> To his dismay, he suddenly realized that the "prey" he had shot in this fashion was not a pig but a friend from Loreto. Wounded in the neck, this friend ran to the safety of his house, only to emerge shortly after, now armed, and in pursuit of Oswaldo. There is something unmanageable, chaotic, and amoral about predation. It is a kind of power that can come back to haunt you.

In the 1920s Runa from the Napo River told the explorer and ethnographer Marquis Robert de Wavrin of how, many generations ago, some shamans escaped Spanish domination by putting on jaguar skins—"black ones, spotted ones, yellow ones"—and in this way becoming puma. Having become predators and living deep in the forest, they managed to evade the Spaniards, but they also began to turn on their fellow Runa—first by hunting the unfortunate hunters who ventured out in the forest and then by attacking their own Runa villages (Wavrin 1927: 328–29).

It is not entirely clear why predation has come to be such an important means of relating in Amazonia. Certainly there are many other forms of trans-species relating; it was, for example, through a parasitic—not a predatory—relationship that Oswaldo's and my blood became commingled with each other's and with that of the peccary in the forest that day as the swarm of blood-sucking flies that had been living off of Oswaldo's prey sought out a new host. But predation obviously resonates with hunting as much as it does with a colonial past and the social hierarchies that are its product. Being a predator, having to be so, is a frightening prospect, not free of its own ambivalences.

If Oswaldo is to be a successful hunter, if he is to continue, it is not enough for him to be a predator; he must also be "white." That is, if whites are hunters, which is manifestly true, given their history of preying on the Runa—it is the whites who hunted down their forebears with dogs and enslaved them during the rubber boom—then Oswaldo must also occupy this position when he sees himself as an *I*. The only other choice would be to become an object. The Runa must always already be Runa, puma, as well as "white."

More than white, they must, to be more accurate, always already be masters, *amos*. *Amo* means “master,” “lord,” or “boss” in Spanish and has served traditionally as a term of address for estate owners and government officials. The power this title indexes is indelibly linked to whiteness. In the mid-nineteenth century, for example, a man of African descent named Goyo was appointed governor of the Amazonian administrative region (known at the time as Oriente Province). Because this new governor was black, the Runa refused to treat him as a master. He was therefore forced to ask the previous governor, Manuel Lazerda, to continue as acting governor. As Lazerda recounts:

The Indians believe that blacks are damned, charred in the infernal fires. They'll never obey Goyo. I'm his friend and I'll do his bidding. The earnings [primarily from forced sales to the Indians] will be divided in two parts: one for me, and one for him. Alone he wouldn't be able to do a thing. The catechized Indians will never recognize him as their *apu*.

—What does *apu* mean?

—*Amo, señor*. I will be for them their real master and lord. (Avenidaño 1985 [1861]: 152)

In Ávila today, *amo*—*amu* in Quichua—remains inextricably associated with whites, the “real” masters and lords. But *amu* has also come to mark another *Is* perspective as appreciated from an external vantage point. And like “Runa” and “puma,” it functions as an “imperfect substitute for a pronoun.” That is, *amu* functions as a pronoun, but in the process it pulls in its wake all the predicates associated with the colonial history of domination to which it is linked.

Here is how Narcisa employs the term in her reflections on an encounter, discussed in chapter 3, that she and her family had in the forest with some red brocket deer and the propitious dream that preceded it.

“*cunanca huañuchichinga ranita, yanica amuca*

“therefore, I'll be able to make him kill it,” I—the *amu*—thought

Thanks to what, earlier in the conversation she described as her “good dreaming,” she felt certain she would easily be able to get her husband to kill at least one of the deer they encountered. *Amu*, here combined with the topic-marking suffix *-ca*, highlights the fact that her dreaming (and not the actions of her husband, as her interlocutors might otherwise expect) was what was important.<sup>11</sup> Her husband, who was to shoot the deer, was simply a proximate extension of her agency. This is why she—the *amu*—is the topic of this phrase. *Amuca* encourages us to note the not entirely expected fact that we should understand

the events of the forest that day as revolving around her agency. Her dreaming self (which her narrating self, from a somewhat external position, can regard as *amu*), and not her husband with his gun, is the locus of cause. It is no coincidence that a word whose original and continuing meaning is "white lord" is used to denote this fact.

Because all selves and not just human ones are *Is*, *amu* also marks the subjective viewpoints of animals. After Maxi described to Luis how he had fired at an agouti from his hunting blind, Luis asked him:

*amuca api tucuscachu*  
and the *amu* [—that is, the agouti—], was he hit?

Maxi responded, "Yeah . . . right in the back bone." "Tias," interjected Luis, using a sound image (see chapter 1) that simulates lead shot deftly curving through the unfortunate agouti's flesh and bone—"sliced right through."<sup>12</sup> *Amuca* in this exchange shifts the topic of discussion from a focus on Maxi's action to the fate of the agouti-as-*I*.

The term *amu*, referring to a title that the Runa, as Lazerda observed, would bestow only upon a white person, now also refers to any Runa *I*. But because all beings, and not just humans, see themselves as *I* (and therefore, in a sense, also as Runa) it follows that they also all see themselves as masters. Whiteness is now understood as inseparable from one's sense of self when "saying" *I*, even when the one "saying" *I* is not human.

*Amu*, like Runa and *puma*, marks a subject position. And all of these nouns, which we might otherwise only take to mark, respectively, white, indigenous, or animal essences additionally mark a vantage point—the position of the *I*. The term *amu*, without losing its historical association to particular people with particular physical characteristics and a particular position in a power hierarchy (in fact, because of these accumulated associations), has also come to mark any self's point of view. The living *I*, the self, any self—*qua* self—in this ecology of selves, is *amu*. That self is by definition a master, and therefore in a certain sense "white."

This particular "imperfect substitute for a pronoun" has unique qualities. Along with *puma* (or white), *amu* invokes hierarchy. But it does so in a way that catapults the self into a plane that goes beyond that of the living. And this fact has important implications for what it is to be an *I*, in continuity.

Like Oswaldo and his ambivalent relation to the policeman, the Runa both are and are obviously not "the masters of everything." *Amu* captures something of this disjointed and alienated nature of the self's relation to itself. The

masters have always already been right there, along with the Runa, not just in the realm of the living but also in those realms that span beyond life. The spirits, who control the animals and who live in that timeless always already realm deep in the forest, are known by many names in Ávila, but mainly they are simply called "the masters"—*amu-guna*. These forest masters appear to the Runa in dreams and visions as white rubber estate bosses or Italian priests. It is from the master's vantage point—when the Runa manage to inhabit it—that they are able to hunt successfully. When Oswaldo comes to recognize that he is the white policeman of his dream, he is not just becoming one of those officers who walk the streets of the towns of, say, Tena or Coca; he is also becoming a master of the forest and, in the process, inhabiting, in some way or another, this realm of the spirits.

The Runa, as always already Runa, have always already been in such intimate relation with these sorts of figures that populate the timeless realm of the masters. In mythic times the masters were always already there, as a pair of Christian apostles, who function as "culture heroes" and who walked the earth and guided the Runa.<sup>11</sup> Being guided by master-apostles involves a degree of intimacy mixed with separation and alienation. According to one diluvial myth, recounted by the early-twentieth-century Napo-area Runa (Wavrin 1927: 329), in mythic times the Amazon was inhabited by God and the Saints. During the flood God built a steamboat, which he used to escape up to heaven along with these Saints. When the flood receded God's now-abandoned boat washed up in the land of the foreigners. By observing this boat, the foreigners learned how to make ships as well as other machines. The original owners of modern technology may be white deities, but they have also always already been Amazonian and an intimate if also detached aspect of Runa life.

Let me explain what I mean about this relationship between intimacy and detachment. That the Runa are *amu* when "saying" *I* (and that they also stand in an intimate yet detached and sometimes subservient relation to those *amu* who inhabit an always already realm) distributes the self and marks the pain of those disjunctures that separate its successive instantiations.

Regarding such successive instantiations of the self, linguistic anthropologists working with Gê and Tupi Guarani peoples of central Brazilian Amazonia have noted that the first-person singular—the *I*—used in certain narrative performances can sometimes refer to the skin-bound self performing the myth or song. Whereas at other times it can refer to other skin-bound selves through quotation, and at still other times to a self that is distributed over a lineage that

includes both the performer and the performer's ancestors (Urban 1989; Graham 1995; Oakdale 2002; see also Turner 2007). Regarding the latter, Greg Urban (1989: 41) describes how a Shokleng origin myth-teller enters a trance-like or possessed state when embodying the *I* of his ancestors. Urban refers to this special kind of self-reference, in which the self is also a lineage, as a "projective *I*." It is projective because by embodying these "past *I*s" the narrator also comes to embody the "continuity" (45) of his self—a self that has now become part of a more general "emergent" lineage of selves (42).<sup>14</sup> His *I* becomes an *us*.

I want to suggest that *amu* captures something important about this "projective *I*." It refers to the self in continuity—an "*us*" with its "indefinite possibilities" (Peirce CP 5.402; see chapter 1). This continuity does not just stretch back to the ancestors. It also projects into the future. And it also captures something about how the *I* is constitutively related to a *not-I*—to the whites, the spirits, and the dead that the living Runa are but also are not.

#### BEING IN FUTURO

The Runa self is always already Runa, puma, and especially always already master, or *amu*. This self always has at least one paw in a spirit realm, which is neither located just in the present nor the simple product of the accretions of its cumulative pasts. There is a formal semiotic logic to this. As I argued in the first chapters of this book signs are alive and all selves, human and nonhuman, are semiotic. What a self is, in the most minimal sense, is a locus—however ephemeral—for sign interpretation. That is, it is a locus for the production of a novel sign (termed an "interpretant"; see chapter 1) that also stands in continuity with those signs that have come before it. Selves, human or nonhuman, simple or complex, are waypoints in a semiotic process. They are outcomes of semiosis as well as the starting points for new sign interpretation whose outcome will be a future self. Selves don't exist firmly in the present; they are "just coming into life in the flow of time" (Peirce CP 5.421) by virtue of their dependence on future loci of interpretation—future semiotic selves—that will come to interpret them.

All semiosis, then, creates future. This is something distinctive about self. Being a semiotic self—whether human or nonhuman—involves what Peirce calls "being in futuro" (CP 2.86). That is, in the realm of selves, as opposed to in the inanimate world, it is not just the past that comes to affect the present. The future, as, I discussed in this chapter's introduction, as it is re-presented,

also comes to affect the present (CP 1.325; see also CP 6.127 and 6.70),<sup>15</sup> and this is central to what a self is. The future, and how it is brought into the present, is not reducible to the cause-and-effect dynamic by which the past affects the present. Signs, as “guesses,” re-present a future possible, and through this mediation they bring the future to bear on the present. The future’s influence on the present has its own kind of reality (see CP 8.330). And it is one that makes selves what they are as unique entities in the world.

Peirce refers to the past—the product of causes and effects—as fixed or “dead.” Being in futuro, by contrast, is “living” and “plastic” (CP 8.330). All semiosis, as it grows and lives, creates future. This future is virtual, general, not necessarily existent, and yet real (CP 2.92). All selves partake of this “living future” (CP 8.194). Neotropical forests, such as those around Ávila, proliferate semiotic habits to a degree unprecedented in the biological world, and in the process they also proliferate futures. This is what humans—the Runa and others as well—step into when they enter the forest and begin to relate to its beings.

And yet the kind of future that humans create is emergent with respect to the sorts of futures that characterize the nonsymbolic semiotic world in which such a future is nested. Like an icon or an index, a symbol must come to be interpreted by a future sign potentially coming into being in order for it to function as a sign. However, a symbol additionally depends on these future signs for its very qualities: Its “character . . . can only be realized by the aid of its [i]nterpretant” (CP 2.92). For example, the phonological qualities of a word like *dog* are arbitrary and are only fixed by virtue of the conventional relation the word has to a vast virtual, ethereal, and yet real realm of other such words (and their contrastive phonological qualities) that provide the context for its apprehension and interpretation (see CP 2.304; see also 2.292–93). By contrast icons and indices retain their qualities (but not their ability to function as signs) independent of their interpreters. An icon, such as the Quichua sound image *tsupu*, would retain the sonic qualities that make it significant, even, without the existence of those entities that plunge—*tsupu*—into water or whether it is ever interpreted to sound like such plunging entities. Although the qualities that make an index significant depend on some sort of correlation with its object of reference, like an icon it would retain these characteristics even when it is not interpreted as a sign. A palm tree crashing down in the forest would still make a sound even when no one—not even a skittish woolly monkey—is around to take this crash to be an index of danger (see chapter 1).

In sum, unlike an icon or index, a symbol's very being qua symbol relies on the emergence of a whole host of not necessarily existent and yet real signs that will come to interpret it. It is doubly dependent on the future.

The realm of the masters amplifies this being in futuro logic, which is central to all of semiotic life, at the same time that it is also made into something else by human symbolic semiosis. For Oswaldo to remain a living sign, he must be able to be interpretable by this virtual, yet real, realm of the masters—a realm where he needs to be treated as an *I* and not an *it* to survive. He must, in short, be capable of being hailed by a master as a *you*. And this will only be possible when in the realm of the masters he too actually becomes an *I*, in futuro.

This virtual realm of the masters is physically located deep in the forest. It emerges out of the forest's living ecology of selves—an ecology that is itself creating proliferating networks of futures. These proliferating networks come to shape the future realm of the masters. And so this spirit realm comes to capture the logic of a "living future" in a way that cannot just be explained in terms of the language or culture of its human participants. And this makes this realm more than a symbolic gloss on a nonsymbolic nonhuman world.

Amu, I want to suggest, is a particular colonially inflected way of being a self in an ecology of selves filled with a growing array of future-making habits, many of which are not human. In the process, amu renders visible how a living future gives life some of its special properties and how this involves a dynamic that implicates (but is not reducible to) the past. In doing so, amu, and the spirit realm upon which it draws its power, amplifies something general about life—namely, life's quality of being in futuro. And it ratchets this quality up a notch; the spirit realm of the masters is "more" in futuro than life itself. The realm of the spirits amplifies and generalizes this living-future logic, and it brings it to bear on an everyday political and existential problem: survival.

#### AFTERLIFE

Regarding the view of the afterlife held by one eighteenth-century Upper Amazonian group known as the Peba, the Jesuit missionary priest Juan Magnin (1988 [1740]: 477) reported with exasperation, "Their take on the matter is unequivocal. They say . . . they are all Saints; and that none of them will go to Hell, instead they'll all go to heaven, where their relatives are, Saints like

them." Missionaries had little trouble getting the forebears of the Runa and other Upper Amazonians such as the Peba to comprehend heaven. And yet, to their continuing chagrin, they found that the locals insisted on understanding this afterlife realm as unfolding in a forest of all-too-earthly plenty—one that, according to a bemused missionary working among the Runa, has "rivers that contain more fish than water" and, most important, "astronomical quantities" of manioc beer (Porras 1955: 153). Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century accounts resonate with contemporary ones: This "other life," where the Indians "never die" (Figueroa 1986 [1661]: 282), provides "manioc in great abundance, and meat and drink as much as they wish" (Magnin 1988 [1740]: 477).<sup>16</sup> It is one with "no lack of steel axes and trade beads, monkeys, drinking parties, flutes and drums" (Magnin 1988 [1740]: 490; see also Maroni 1988 [1738]: 173).

Hell is an altogether different matter. It has been a continuing source of concern for missionaries, from Father Magnin's time and even earlier, that many Upper Amazonians were unwilling to conceive of damnation in Hell as a form of personal punishment for worldly sins. For the Runa, as many reports over the years attest, there simply is no Hell.<sup>17</sup> Hell, according to them, is where others suffer, especially whites and blacks.<sup>18</sup>

After Ventura's mother, Rosa, died she went "inside" to the world of the spirit masters (see chapters 3 and 5). She married one of those lords and became one of them—an *amu*. Her old sagging body—sloughed off like a snake's skin—was all that she left behind for her children to bury. Ventura's mother had died quite old, but now, her son explained, she lives eternally young in the realm of the masters. "[F]ire escapes old as you," wrote Allen Ginsberg, in his irreverent prayer poem mourning his own mother, "—Tho you're not old now, that's left here with me." Ventura's mother too was not old now. Never to die again, and never to suffer, she had become again—and now forever—like her pubescent granddaughters.<sup>19</sup> All that was left with her son was her aged body, decrepit like a rusted fire escape.

By becoming a master, Rosa, in a sense, became a Saint. She went to live forever in that realm of eternal abundance, full of game and beer and worldly riches, in that Quito deep inside the forest. She would never to go to Hell, she would never again suffer, and she would be forever free. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Rosa entered inside a form—that always already realm of the masters—where the impacts of time, the past's effects on the present, become less relevant. But Rosa is not the only Saint: "we are all Saints," insisted the Peba Indians who so frustrated the eighteenth-century Jesuit missionary.



I want to unpack this suggestion that Rosa is a Saint, and I want to even explore the possibility that we selves might all be Saints. I do so by attending to the relation that selves like Rosa have to the emergent virtual and “in futuro” realm of the masters. This is a realm of future possibility in which what it is to be an *I*, a self, is also shaped by the many kinds of dead, their many kinds of bodies, and the histories of their many deaths. That Rosa really continues on as a master, and perhaps as a Saint, however, is not just the direct effect of these others. For her continuity only becomes possible by virtue of a negative relation to them. It is an outcome that is not directly affected by the palpable presences of all those others but by their constitutive absences. I hope this will become clearer in the section that follows.

#### THE IMPONDERABLE WEIGHT OF THE DEAD

One day Juanicu went out with his dogs to the forest to collect worms for fish bait when he was badly mauled by a giant anteater. He nearly died from his wounds. Giant anteaters, known to rear up on their hind legs and slash out with the large curved claws of their forefeet when threatened, are truly formidable creatures; even jaguars are said to fear them (see chapter 3). Juanicu alternated between blaming his misfortune on a rival shaman with whom he has had an ongoing feud and, more mundanely, on his dogs, who led him to the animal (they were supposed to have stayed at home). Juanicu never blamed himself, nor did anyone else. Juanicu-as-*I* can never do himself harm. Only others can.

A young Ávila man, of whom I was very fond, was killed on the Huataracu River. They pulled out his body from the bottom of a deep pool. His chest was ripped open. He died while fishing with dynamite. No one doubted that. There was much less agreement as to the ultimate, or even proximate, cause of his death. Some blamed sorcerers and the darts and anacondas they sometimes send when attacking their enemies. Others blamed those responsible for the circumstances that led him to fish with dynamite on that day: a demanding brother-in-law; the fellow who gave him the dynamite; or the folks who took him out to the river. All established culpability with one person or another. Of the half dozen or so different explanations I heard, none put blame on the young man who died.

Omens reveal a similar logic. If the *camarana pishcu*, a kind of antahrike<sup>20</sup> that eats insects flushed by moving army ant colonies, is found flying around a

house, someone will die; for this is how a child circles around her house crying inconsolably when she discovers that her mother or father is dead. The “grave digger” wasp<sup>21</sup> is known as such because it buries the tarantulas and large spiders it paralyzes (see Hogue 1993:417), throwing up fresh piles of red earth in the process, as if digging a grave. As with the antshrike, finding one of these near home is an omen that a relative will die. People in Ávila call such signs (and there are many)<sup>22</sup> *apia*, bad omens. I first thought of these as omens of death, but I soon realized that they refer to something more specific: it is not death that they foretell but the deaths of others. In fact, they never augur the death of the person who finds them.

These examples say something about the counterintuitive relation of the self to that which it is not. Death for the self is ineffable, for the self is simply a continuation of life. The self is a general (see chapter 1). It is the experience of the death of others by the living that is so hard to bear, because it is what is palpable. “The thread of life is a third,” wrote Peirce, whereas “the fate that snips it” is “its second” (CP 1.337; see also chapter 1).

The omens of mourning I have been discussing speak to the pain associated with another becoming other—a second, a thing—another that is no longer an *I*, no longer a possible part of a becoming-*us*-in-relation, or at least not for the moment. For the living mourners, death marks a rupture: the dead become *shuc tunu* or *shican* (different, other). The myth of the man being eaten alive by the *juri juri* demon that I recounted in chapter 3 explores the terrifying prospect of coming to experience oneself as such an object—an experience we will never have when we become objects.

But souls do not simply die; they can continue in that virtual future realm that living (and its attendant deaths) creates. The traditional kaddish—as opposed to Ginsberg’s irreverent version—the Jewish prayer recited in memory of the dead, never mentions death.<sup>23</sup> Death can only be experienced from outside. Only others can snip at the thread of life. And only others, for the Runa, other kinds of people, especially blacks and whites (in the essentialist sense), go to Hell.

The self is always partially invisible to oneself in the sense that visibility requires objectification—secondness—and secondness misses something crucial about what a living self is. The *I* is an *I* because it is in form—because it partakes in a general mode of being that exceeds any particular instantiation of itself. That Rosa will become a master (and a Saint) is what makes her a living self. An anthropology that focuses on difference—one that focuses on

the “nots” and the “seconds” (see chapter 2)—cannot attend to this invisible continuity of the self.

In a similar fashion, although it is true that walking sticks are invisible thanks to a specific relation they have to all of their more visible and less twiggy relatives that were noticed, just focusing on those objectified others misses the continuing persistence of the invisible *I* in a form that, in hindsight, leaves us with a visible proliferation of something general that, in this case we can call “twiginess.”

All signs involve a relationship to something not present. Icons do this in a way that is fundamental to their being. Recall from previous chapters that, although we generally think of it in terms of likeness, iconicity is really the product of what is not noticed. (For example, that we don’t at first notice the difference between a walking stick and a twig.) Indices, by contrast, point to changes in present circumstances—that there is something other to which we must attend (another kind of absence). Symbols incorporate these features but in a special way: they represent via their relation to an absent system of other such symbols that make them meaningful.

Life, being intrinsically semiotic, has a related association to absence. What a living organism-in-lineage, in-continuity-of-*I*—to use the Amazonian concept—is, is the product of what it is not. It is intimately related to the many absent lineages that did not survive, which were selected out to reveal the forms that fit the world around them. In a sense, the living, like the walking stick we mistake for a twig, are the ones that were not noticed. They are the ones that continue to potentially persist in form and out of time thanks to their relationship to what they are not. Note the logical shift: the focus is on what is not present: the imponderable “weight” (I think the oxymoron captures something of the counterintuitive nature of this claim) of the dead.

All of life, then, houses, by virtue of these constitutive absences, the traces of all that has come before it—the traces of that which it is not. The invisible realm of the masters makes, to follow the counterintuitive logic, all of this visible. It is in the realm of the masters that the traces of those who have lived (the pre-Hispanic chiefs, the black-robed priests, the grandparents and parents) and that which has happened (the great sixteenth-century uprising against the Spaniards, the circulation of the old trade beads, the forced tribute payments) continue. And this is the future realm, the realm that gives interpretability to the (human) living one as well. The realm of the masters houses

all of the specters of the past. And it is in this realm that the timeless *I* continues, by virtue of its intimate relation to these absences.

The *I* is in form and outside of history (see chapter 5). This is why nothing can happen to it. Heaven is a continuation of form. Hell is history; it is what happens to others. Heaven is a realm where people are not subject to time. They never age. They never die there. Only *its* can be in time. Only they can be affected, subject to dyadic cause-and-effect, out of form, subject to history—punished.

#### THE YOU OF THE SELF

The realm of the masters is the product of the many futures created by the forest. But it is more than this. A word depends for its meaning on the emergence of a vast symbolic system that will come to interpret it. Something like this is happening in the forest as well. The realm of the masters is that vast virtual system that emerges as humans—in their distinctly human ways—attempt to engage with the other-than-human semiosis of the forest. The realm of the masters, then, is like a language. Except it is more “fleshly” (Haraway 2003) than a language—being, as it is, caught up in vaster swaths of non-human semiosis. It is also at the same time more ethereal. It is a realm that is in the forest but also beyond nature and the human. It is, in a word, “supernatural.”

This spirit realm of masters comes to interpret, and thus permits and constrains, who and how an *I* can be, at the same time that it provides the vessel for the continuity—the survival—of that *I*. In Ávila, whiteness has come to mark this *I* point of view. It marks a relative position within a hierarchy that spans the cosmos—a hierarchy that ranges from the nonhuman to the human realm and from the human one to the realm of the spirits. Therein lies Oswald’s predicament. On the one hand, the Runa have always already been white. On the other hand, they recognize a variety of beings—policemen, priests, and landowners, as well as animal masters and demons—whose superior position in a historically inflected cosmic hierarchy is indexed by their whiteness.

This realm of the masters, however, is not just about the *I*. “Between the reflexive ‘I’ of culture,” writes Viveiros de Castro (and by “culture,” I take him to mean the vantage from which a self sees herself as such, sees herself, that is, as a person), “and the impersonal ‘it’ of nature, there is a position missing, the ‘you,’ the second person, or the other taken as other subject, whose point of

view is the latent echo of that of the 'I' (1998: 483). This *you*, for Viveiros de Castro, gets at something important about the supernatural realm—a realm, I would add, that is not just reducible to nature, nor is it one that is reducible to culture. It is a realm that, according to a formal hierarchical logic, is situated “above” the human realm it makes possible.

“Supernature,” continues Viveiros de Castro, “is the form of the Other as Subject” (1998: 483). I would say that it is the place where one can be called into being by this higher-order other self that is both strange and familiar. This is the realm from which Oswaldo’s policeman hailed him. It is also the realm where all selves can experience themselves as masters—*amu*. So when the term *amu* is used in Ávila, whether in self-reference as in Narcisa’s case or to refer to a being, human or nonhuman, that is properly other, it is done precisely to invoke this other *I*, taken as other subject—one whose voice, however faint, is a “latent echo” of the *I* in futuro.

The challenge is to avoid becoming an object in the process of this interpellation. And this is a real danger. Fear of this is what led Oswaldo to initially conclude that he had dreamed badly when he dreamed of seeing the policeman greet him with hair clippings on his shoulders. It is also why one cannot, for example, look at a *huaturitu supai*, the bird-clawed demon garbed in priestly robes that wanders the forests clutching a Bible. For becoming a *you* of that *I* would permanently transport you out of the realm of the living (Taylor 1993; Viveiros de Castro 1998: 483). And yet a self that is not destabilized by the its and *yous* that it constantly confronts, a self that does not grow to incorporate these into a larger *us*, is not a living *I* but a dead shell of one.

The question for the Runa, then, is how to create the conditions that will assure that they can continue to inhabit an *I* point of view. How, that is, to get into this higher-order *you* that both is but is never fully one’s *I*? The techniques they use to do this are shamanic. Such techniques extend a paw into the future in order to bring some of that future back to the realm of the living.

I want to emphasize that the historical condition of possibility for shamanism is the very hierarchy it attempts to tap. Without the colonially inflected predatory hierarchy that structures the ecology of selves, there is no higher position one can enter from which to frame one’s own. Emblematic of how shamanism relates to the history of hierarchies in which it is immersed is the term *miricu*, one of the names for “shaman” in Ávila.<sup>24</sup> The power of this term resides in the fact that it is a bilingual pun. As such, it captures two concepts in two different registers simultaneously; it is a Quichua-ization of the

Spanish word for doctor (*médico*) and it contains the Quichua verb "to see" (*ricuna*), in its agentive form; *ricu* is a seer. Shamans can see like doctors, those vanguards of modernity armed with all the powerful weapons of medical science. But this does not necessarily imply a desire to become like a Western doctor. Shamanistic seeing changes what it means to see.

How does one inhabit the *you* perspective? How does one make it one's own? One does so by donning what we might call clothing—the equipment, bodily accouterments, and attributes that allow a particular kind of being to inhabit a particular kind of world. Such equipment includes the canines and pelts of the jaguar (see Wavrin 1927: 328), the pants of the white man (see also Vilaça 2007, 2010),<sup>25</sup> the robes of the priest, and the face paints of the "Auca." And such clothing can also be shed. Rosa sloughed off her aged body when she died. And it is reported in Ávila that some men, encountering jaguars in the forest and unable to scare them off, have undressed themselves to battle them. In this way, the jaguar is forced to recognize that his power comes from his clothing and that underneath this he is a person.<sup>26</sup> This is why jaguars, as América fantasized with vengeful glee after her dogs were killed by one of them, so fear the sound of machetes slicing "tilin tilin" through the vegetation of the forest. For this reminds the jaguars of just how effortless it would be for people to slice through their *cushma*, or tunic,<sup>27</sup> which is the kind of clothing jaguars take their hides to be.<sup>28</sup>

Another set of examples of shamanic equipment. At a wedding, a man from a nearby Runa community approached me and, without a word, began to rub his smooth cheek against my beard stubble. Soon after, another young man approached and asked me to impart some of my "shamanic knowledge" by blowing on the crown of his head.<sup>29</sup> On a number of occasions when we were sitting around drinking beer older men would suddenly put on my backpack and strut around and then ask me to take a picture of them carrying my pack as well as other kinds of equipment: a shotgun, an ax, a pail of manioc beer. And one man asked me to take a portrait of his family, with everyone dressed in their best clothing, and he, wearing my backpack.<sup>30</sup> These are all little shamanic acts—attempts to appropriate something of what is imagined as a more powerful *you*.

I want to make clear here that it is not that the Runa want to become white in any sort of acculturative sense. For this is not a matter of acquiring a culture. Nor is the whiteness of whites intrinsically fixed. This is not about race. The Spaniard Jiménez de la Espada learned this on a visit he made in the 1860s to

the Runa of San José de Mote, a now-abandoned village located in the foothills of Sumaco Volcano about a day's walk from Ávila.

The women, despite my generosity in distributing crosses, medallions, and beads, when I jokingly told them that I would like to marry one of them, they replied that who would want that, since I was not Christian. . . . I was a devil. (Jiménez de la Espada 1928: 473)

Although the Runa depend on various kinds of white equipment in order to be and to continue as persons, they do not always extend such personhood to the actual whites they encounter. White is a relational category, not an essentialist one. The jaguar doesn't always have the canines, and the whites aren't always the masters.

#### THE LIVING FUTURE

That Oswaldo managed to kill the peccary instantiated—brought into existence—a heretofore only virtual real, which made that act possible. Oswaldo became the policeman that day in the forest, and in the process he brought back something of that future realm—ambiguously adumbrated in his dream—into the world of the present. The realm of the masters is real. It is real because it can come to inform existence, and it is real as a general possibility not reducible to that which will have happened. Reality is more than that which exists. The realm of the masters is something more than human and cultural, and yet it emerges from a specifically human way of engaging and relating to a living world that lies in part beyond the human.

Spirits are real (see also Chakrabarty 2000; de la Cadena 2010; Singh 2012). How we treat this reality is as important as recognizing it as such; otherwise we risk taking spirits to be a kind of real—the kind that is socially or culturally constructed—that is “all too human” and all too familiar. I concur that gods emerge with human practice (Chakrabarty 1997: 78), but that does not make them reducible to or circumscribed by the human contexts in which such practices unfold.

The spirit realm of the masters of the forest has its own kind of general reality: it is the emergent product of the relation it has to life's living future and it “ratchets up” some of the properties that life harbors. Properties like generality itself, constitutive absence, continuity across disjuncture, and a disruption of cause-and-effect temporal dynamics become so amplified in

the realm of the masters that they become, in a sense, visible even in their invisibility.

Appreciating how spirits are their own kind of real is important for an anthropology that will be capable of attending to the human in relation to that which lies beyond it. But to do so one must be willing to say something general about what makes spirits real—something that includes but also goes beyond the fact that other people take them to be real, that we should take that fact seriously, and that we should even be open to how these kinds of reals might affect us (see, e.g., Nadasdy 2007).

In treating the realm of the masters housed deep in the forests around Ávila as an emergent real, my wish is to rediscover the world's enchantment. The world is animate, whether or not we are animists. It is filled with selves—I daresay souls—human and otherwise. And it is not just located in the here and now, or in the past, but in a being in futuro—a potential living future. A specific comingling of human and nonhuman souls creates this enchanted realm of the spirit masters in the forests around Ávila—a realm that is reducible neither to the forest nor to the cultures and histories of those humans who relate to it, even though it does emerge from these and cannot persist without them.

Living selves create future. Human living selves create even more future. The realm of the masters is the emergent product of a human way of living in a world beyond the human. It is the product of so much interspecies relating, coming together as so often it does, in the hunt. It houses all that future-making in a way that is general, invisible, and haunted by all the dead. It is, perhaps, the future's future.

In that future—that super-nature—lies the possibility for a living future. In killing that pig and not being killed, Oswaldo survived. To survive is to live beyond life: *super + vivre*. But one survives not only in relationship to life but in relation to its many absences as well. "To survive," according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, means, "To continue to live after the death of another, or after the end or cessation of some thing or condition or the occurrence of some event (expressed or implied)." Life grows in relationship to that which it is not.<sup>31</sup>

The fractured and yet necessary relationship between the mundane present and the general future plays out in specific and painful ways in what Lisa Seevenson (2012; see Butler 1997) might call the "psychic life" of the Runa self, immersed and informed, as it is, by the colonially inflected ecology of selves in



which it lives. The Runa are both of and alienated from the realm of the spirit world, and survival requires cultivating ways to allow something of one's future self—living tenuously in the realm of the forest masters—to look back on that more mundane part of oneself who might then hopefully respond. This ethereal realm of continuity and possibility is the emergent product of a whole host of trans-species and transhistorical relations. It is the product of the inponderable weight of the many dead that make a living future possible.

Oswaldo's challenge of surviving as an *I*, as it was revealed in his dream and as it plays out in this ecology of selves, depends on how he is hailed by others. These others may be human or nonhuman, fleshly or virtual; they all in some way make Oswaldo who he is. Oswaldo's survival—like Rosa's ongoing presence in that Quito deep in the forest—speaks to the puzzles of life that the forest amplifies; it speaks to the continual emergence of lineage out of the configuration of the individuals that instantiate them (see chapter 5). And it speaks to the creation of a form that stands in constitutive absence to that which it is not.

The soul, nonspecific and yet real, lives in such a continuity of form (see Peirce CP 7.591; see also chapter 3). The soul is general. Bodies (situated, equipped, erring, animal—not here to be confused with animate) individuate (see Descola 2005: 184–85, citing Durkheim). This gets at something about living futures. For life, in some way or another, is always about this sort of continuity across disjuncture that souls exemplify.

And what of this particular future's future? That which plays out in the neotropical forests around Ávila? What of the future of a future whose instantiation and continuing possibility is premised on killing some of those beings that a dense ecology of selves harbors? The emergence of the spirit realm of the masters of the forest is the product of the relationships among the many kinds of selves that make up this thinking forest. Some of these relationships are filial, others rhizomatic; some are vertical, others lateral; some are arborescent, others reticulate; some are parasitic, others predatory; and, finally, some are with strangers, and others, with those that are intimately familiar.

This vast but fragile realm of relating, played out in the forest and in that future realm that houses the forest's many pasts, is a world of possibility as long as not too many of these relations are killed. Killing, as Haraway (2008) points out, is not the same as killing a relation. And killing may actually permit a kind of relationship. Once the killing ends a larger, much more lasting silence may well follow. The Runa have an intimate relationship with the forest and

with a kind of animacy that enchants the world because they kill—because they are part of this vast ecology of selves in this way. And killing and killing relationship are two different things, just as are individual and kind, token and type, life and afterlife. In all of these instances the first is something specific, the second general; all of these are real. It is by attentively engaging with the many kinds of real others that people this thinking forest—the animals, the dead, the spirits—that this anthropology beyond the human can learn to think about a living future in relation to the deaths that make that future possible.



## Beyond

Animals came from over the horizon. They belonged there and here. Likewise they were mortal and immortal. An animal's blood flowed like human blood, but its species was undying and each lion was Lion, each ox was Ox.

—John Berger, *Why Look at Animals?*

Beyond the horizon there lies a Lion, a Lion more Lion than any mere lion. And beyond saying "lion," which calls forth that Lion, lies yet another, who might just look back. And beyond this eyeing one, lies an undying one, one we call "Lion" because she is a kind.

Why ask anthropology to look beyond the human? And why look to animals to do so? Looking at animals, who look back at us, and who look with us, and who are also, ultimately, part of us, even though their lives extend well beyond us, can tell us something. It can tell us about how that which lies "beyond" the human also sustains us and makes us the beings we are and those we might become.

Something of the living lion can persist beyond its individual death in a lineage of Lion to which it also contributes. And this reality lies beyond a related one that it sustains: when we speak the word *lion* it contributes to, at the same time that it draws on, a general concept—Lion—to invoke a living lion. So, beyond the uttered "lion" (technically a "token") lies the concept (the "type") Lion; and beyond that concept lies a living lion; and beyond any such individual lion lies a kind (or species or lineage)—a Lion—that both emerges from and sustains the many lives of these many lions.

I want to reflect on this idea of a beyond and how it figures in an anthropology beyond the human. I opened this book with an Amazonian Sphinx, a puma, who also looks back and who thus forces us to think about how to account anthropologically for the reality of a kind of regard that extends beyond human ways of looking. This led me to rethink the riddle that antiquity's

Sphinx posed to Oedipus: What goes on four in the morning, on two at noon, and on three in the evening? And I approached this riddle with a question of my own: What difference does it make that the Sphinx's question is posed from somewhere (slightly) beyond the human? *How Forests Think* investigates ethnographically why it matters to see things from the Sphinx's point of view.

That Sphinx beckons us to think with images. And this, ultimately, is what *How Forests Think* is about: learning to think with images. The Sphinx's question is an image, a likeness of its answer, one that is thus a kind of icon. The riddle is like a mathematical equation. Consider something as simple as  $2 + 2 + 2 = 6$ . Because the terms on either side of the equals sign are iconic of each other, learning to see "six" as three "twos" tells us something new about the number 6 (see Peirce CP 2.274–302).

We can learn something by examining the way the Sphinx's question, as icon, impels us to notice new things about Oedipus's answer, the "human." Her question can draw our attention to the animality we share with other living beings (our four-legged legacy) despite our all-too-human symbolic (and hence moral, linguistic, and sociocultural) ways of being in the world (captured in the image of our two-legged human gait). And it can help us notice what the kind of life that extends beyond the human ("four in the morning") and the kind that is all-too-human ("two at noon") share in common: that "three-legged" elder-and-his-cane (whom we might learn to appreciate as "mortal and immortal," self-and-object) invokes three key attributes we share with other living beings. These are finitude, semiotic mediation (the "cane" we living beings all use as we feel our ways through our finite lives), and—I can now add—a peculiar sort of "thirdness" unique to life. This kind of thirdness is the general quality of being in futuro, which captures the logic of life's continuity and how this continuity is made possible thanks to the room each of our individual deaths can make for the lives of others. The image of hobbling off "over the horizon" houses this "living future" as well.

Thinking with images, as I do here with the Sphinx's riddle, and as I do throughout this book, with all kinds of images—be they oneiric, aural, anecdotal, mythic, or even photographic (there are other stories being "told" here without words)—and learning to attend to the ways in which these images amplify, and thus render apparent, something about the human via that which lies beyond the human, is, as I've been arguing, also a way of opening ourselves to the distinctive iconic logics of how the forest's thoughts might think their ways through us. *How Forests Think* aims to think like forests: in images.

Turning our attention to the Sphinx, making her, not Oedipus, the protagonist in our story, asks us to look anthropologically beyond the human. This is no easy task. Chapter 1, "The Open Whole," charted an approach for doing so by finding a way to recognize semiosis as something that extends beyond the symbolic (that distinctively human semiotic modality that makes language, culture, and society, as we know them, possible). Learning to see the symbolic as just one kind of representational modality within the broader semiotic field within which it is nested, allows us to appreciate the fact that we live in sociocultural worlds—"complex wholes"—that, despite their holism, are also "open" to that which lies beyond them.

But recognizing such an open only impels us to ask: What is this world beyond us and the sociocultural worlds we construct? And so the second part of the first chapter turned to a reflection on how we might think about reality as something that extends beyond the two kinds of real that our dualistic metaphysics provides us: our distinctively human socioculturally constructed realities, on the one hand, and the objective "stuff" that exists out there beyond us, on the other.

It is no coincidence that I speak here with my hands to describe the choices this dualistic metaphysics affords. For this dualism is as deeply ingrained in what it means to be human as is our human tendency to think in terms of the right and left hands (see Hertz 2007). And it is no coincidence that I placed the realm of society and culture on the first, and hence the right, hand and relegated the realm of things to the second hand—the hand we consider to be the weaker, illegitimate, and sinister (from the Latin for "left") one. For it is that which we take to be human (our souls, our minds, or our cultures) that currently dominates our dualistic thinking. And this consigns the realm of the others, the nonhumans (evacuated of animacy, agency, or enchantment) to the left hand (a hand that, nonetheless, has its own subversive possibilities; see Hertz 2007; Ochoa 2007).

This dualism is not just a sociocultural product of a particular time or place; it goes "hand in hand" with being human, given that our propensity for dualism (our "twoness," in the Sphinx's terms) is the product of the distinctive properties of human symbolic thought and the ways in which the logic inherent to that kind of thinking creates systems of signs that can come to seem radically separate from their worldly referents.

Thinking in twos, then, is ingrained in what it means to be human, and moving beyond this kind of handedness requires a real feat of defamiliarizing

the human. That is, it requires us to undertake an arduous process of decolonizing our thinking. It asks us to "provincialize" language in order to make room for another kind of thought—a kind of thought that is more capacious, one that holds and sustains the human. This other kind of thinking is the one that forests do, the kind of thinking that thinks its way through the lives of people, like the Runa (and others), who engage intimately with the forest's living beings in ways that amplify life's distinctive logics.

Those living beings enchant and animate the forest. My claim about the reality of enchantment and animism beyond the human, and my attempt to flesh it out and mobilize it conceptually in an anthropological approach that can take us beyond the human, is my left-handed offering to counter what we take to be the "right" ways to think the human.

Chapter 2, "The Living Thought," sought to unpack the claim that lives, and hence forests, think. That is, it looked to forms of representation—forms of thought—beyond language, with specific attention to the domain beyond the human in which these exist. When we focus only on the ways in which distinctively human thoughts relate symbolically—which informs linguistic, cultural, and social relationality and how we think about it—we miss something of the broader associational logic of "living thoughts." That nonhuman living beings are constitutively semiotic makes them selves. These nonhuman selves think, and their thinking is a form of association that also creates relations among selves. Attending to this other form of thought as a kind of relation, feeling it even, at times, emerge as its own conceptual object, and opening ourselves to its strange properties (such as the generative possibilities inherent to confusion or in-distinction), propels us to imagine an anthropology that can go beyond difference as its atomic relational component.

"The Living Thought," then, established why it is so important that anthropology look beyond the human toward life. In chapter 3, "Soul Blindness," I began to observe how the death beyond life is also central to life. My focus here was on how death becomes a problem—a "difficulty of reality"—intrinsic to life, and how the Runa struggle to find ways to come to terms with this.

"Trans-Species Pidgins" is a pivotal chapter. Having ventured beyond the human, and without losing sight of what that offers, I steered this anthropology back to the "all too human"—clarifying why this approach that I advocate is an anthropological approach, and not, say, an ecological one that agnostically charts multispecies relations. In the Runa's journeys beyond the human, in their struggles to communicate with those animals and spirits that "people"

that vast ecology of selves that extends beyond them, they don't want to stop being human. Accordingly, this chapter traced ethnographically the kinds of strategies necessary to move beyond human modes of communication in ways that also secure a space for a distinctively human way of being.

Central to our distinctive ways of being human (which result from our propensity to think through symbols) is that we humans, as opposed to other kinds of living beings, are moral creatures. This is something that is not lost on the Runa as they struggle to get by in an ecology of selves that is everywhere shot through with the legacies of an all-too-human colonial history. Put simply, we cannot afford to ignore this all-too-human realm as we move beyond the human. That said, learning to attend to the kinds of lives that exist beyond the human (and beyond the moral), in ways that allow the logics of life beyond the human to work their ways through us, is itself an ethical practice.

In its attempt to relate the all too human to that which lies beyond the human, "Trans-Species Pidgins" also reveals something about the concept "beyond" as an analytic. "Beyond," as I deploy it, exceeds, at the same time that it is continuous with, its subject matter; an anthropology beyond the human is still about the human, even though and precisely because it looks to that which lies beyond it—a "beyond" that also sustains the human.

If much of this book has been about moving beyond the human to the realm of life, chapter 5, "Form's Effortless Efficacy," sought to move beyond the realm of life to the strange workings of form that sustain both human and nonhuman life. This chapter, then, looked to the particular properties of pattern generation and propagation and how these change our understanding of causality and agency. It argued that form is its own kind of real, one that emerges in the world and is amplified thanks to the distinctive manner in which humans and nonhumans harness it.

Chapter 6, "The Living Future (and the Imponderable Weight of the Dead)," turned to the afterlife of the spirit realm that lies beyond the realm of the living. Its primary task was to understand how this realm says something about the way life itself continues beyond the living bodies that breathe that life. (Spirit, I should note, is etymologically related to breath, and in Quichua, *samai*, breath, is what animates.) The last chapter, then, ventured beyond the existent into the "general." Generals are real; spirits, and even Sphinxes, are real. So are lions. This chapter, then, is, one might say, about the reality of Lion as both kind and type. Lion as "kind" (or species, or lineage) is the product of life broadly construed, whereas Lion as "type" is the product of a human



symbolic form of life. And this chapter focused on the emergent real that comes into being thanks to the particular ways these two kinds of generals—the living one beyond the human and the one that is distinctively human—come to be held together in the forest's ecology of selves.

This emergent real that comes into being in the forests around Ávila is the spirit realm of the masters. It is the product of a special configuration of concept and kind. It is a real that lies beyond the forest in ways that also catch up the life of the forest at the same time that it entangles that life with the all-too-human histories of the many dead that continue to haunt this forest that houses the masters.

Throughout this book I have sought ways to account for difference and novelty despite continuity. *Emergence* is a technical term I used to trace linkages across disjuncture; *beyond* is a broader, more general, one. That beyond human language lies semiosis reminds us that language is connected to the semiosis of the living world, which extends beyond it. That there are selves beyond the human draws attention to the fact that some of the attributes of our human selfhood are continuous with theirs. That there is a death beyond every life gestures toward the ways we might continue, thanks to the spaces opened up by all the absent dead who make us what we are. That form extends beyond life draws our attention to the effortless propagation of pattern that runs through our lives. And, finally, that spirits are a real part of an afterlife that extends beyond life tells us something about the continuity and generality intrinsic to life itself.

I hope to have provided here, in traversing this *selva selvaggia*, this wild "dense" and "difficult" forest where words so often fail us, some intimation of how it is that forests think. This thinking is amplified in a dense ecology of selves and certain historically contingent Runa ways of attending to that ecology.

Runa ways of attending to this forest ecology of selves are (in part) the product of an all-too-human marginalization from the national economy that might otherwise more equitably link rural communities like Ávila to some of Ecuador's growing wealth. Greater integration into national networks will certainly offer much more secure forms of sustenance, ones that would make the more onerous and riskier search for food in the forest obsolete and largely irrelevant. And things are moving in this direction. Quito is—through the nationwide expansion of roads, advances in health care, education, infrastructure, and so on—finally, after all these centuries, coming to the forest.

In pointing out the relation between socioeconomic and political marginalization and the forest-oriented subsistence that the Ávila Runa practice, I do not wish to reduce culture to poverty (as some would). Furthermore, I'm not, as should by now be clear, talking about culture. What is more, there is a certain plentitude to daily life in Ávila, one that is cherished by those who live in Ávila. And this richness exists regardless of the economic or health metrics one might use to evaluate it.

The particular colonially infected, multispecies ecology of selves that I have described here is real in an ethnographic and ontological sense. But it depends for its existence on the continuous flourishing of dense nonhuman ecologies just as it does on the humans who live by tapping into those ecologies. If too many of these elements that make up this ecology of selves disappear, a particular kind of life (and afterlife) will come to an end—forever. And we will have to find ways to mourn its absence.

But it is not as if all life will end. There will be other Runa ways of being human—ones that might well also entangle nonhumans, ones that might call forth other spirits. And we must find ways to listen for the hopes that that kind of reality houses as well.

In turning my ethnographic attention to something potentially ephemeral and fleeting—the reality of a particularly dense ecology of selves, one that is both all too human and lies well beyond the human—I am not doing salvage anthropology. For what I am charting does not just disappear; ethnographic attention to this particular set of relations amplifies and thus allows us to appreciate ways of attending to the living logics that are already part of how forests think themselves through “us.” And if “we” are to survive the Anthropocene—this indeterminate epoch of ours in which the world beyond the human is being increasingly made over by the all-too-human—we will have to actively cultivate these ways of thinking with and like forests.

I want, in this regard, to return to my title, *How Forests Think*. I chose this title because of its resonance, as I've noted, with Lévy-Bruhl's *How Natives Think*, a classic treatment of animistic thinking. At the same time, I wish to draw an important distinction: forests think; and when “natives” (or others, for that matter) think about that, they are made over by the thoughts of a thinking forest. My title *How Forests Think* also resonates with *La Pensée sauvage*, Lévi-Strauss's meditation on wild thought. Lévi-Strauss's meditation is about a kind of thought that both is and is not domesticated by the human. In this way it is like the ornamental flower the pansy—that other meaning of

*pensée*—to which his title playfully alludes. Despite the fact that the pansy is domesticated, and therefore “tame,” it is also alive. And thus, like us, and like the Runa—those “*indios mansos*”—the pansy is also wild. *Sauvage*, of course, is etymologically related to *sylvan*—that which is of the (wild) forest, the “selva selvaggia.”

My own ethnographic meditation has been an attempt to liberate our thinking. It has been an attempt to step out, for a moment, of our doubt-ridden human housing to open ourselves to those wild living thoughts beyond the human—those that also make “us.” To do this, we need to leave our guide the runa puma—our Virgil—and we also need to leave that forest, the selva selvaggia around Ávila. We do so, not necessarily to ascend to Dante’s heavenly spheres (this is not that kind of morality tale; I’m not talking about that kind of telos). We leave this forest to step, for a moment, on our own, into a generality: one that is ethereal, perhaps, and one that lies beyond this particular ethnographic encounter.

In finding ways to open our thinking to living thoughts, to selves and souls, to the forest’s many spirits, and even to the Lion as concept and kind, I have been trying to say something concrete about something general. I have been trying to say something about a general that makes itself felt in us “here” at the same time that it extends beyond us, over “there.” Opening our thinking in this way might allow us to realize a greater *Us*—an *Us* that can flourish not just in our lives, but in the lives of those who will live beyond us. That would be our gift, however modest, to the living future.

## INTRODUCTION

1. For my treatment of Quichua I adopt a practical orthography based on Spanish from Orr and Wrisley (1981: 154). In addition I use an apostrophe (‘ ’) to indicate stops and a superscript h (<sup>h</sup>) to indicate aspiration. Words are to be stressed on the penultimate syllable unless indicated by an accent. The plural marker in Quichua is *-guna*. However, for reasons of clarity, I usually do not include the plural marker in my discussion of individual Quichua words even in contexts in which I use the term in its plural form in English. A hyphen (“-”) indicates that word parts are suppressed. I use an en-dash (“-”) to indicate where the vowels of a word have been drawn out. I use an em-dash (“—”) to indicate an even greater elongation.

2. For ethnographic monographs on the Quichua-speaking Runa of Ecuador’s Upper Amazon, see Whitten (1976), Macdonald (1979), and Uzendoaski (2005). Muratorio (1987) and Oberem (1980) situate Runa lifeways within colonial and republican history and a broader political economy. For Ávila, see Kohn (2002b).

3. *Aya huasca* is prepared from a vine of the same name (*Banisteriopsis caapi*, Malpighiaceae) and sometimes mixed with other ingredients.

4. Norman Whitten’s classic monograph, *Sacha Runa* (1976), astutely captures this tension between sylvan and civilized inherent to Runa ways of being.

5. All translations from Spanish and Quichua are my own.

6. In an earlier work (Kohn 2007) I referred to my approach as an “anthropology of life.” The current iteration is closely related to that approach except that here I am less interested in the anthropological treatment of a subject matter (an anthropology of *x*) and more in an analytic that can take us beyond our subject matter (“the human”) without abandoning it. Although so much of what we can learn about the human involves thinking with the logics of life that extend beyond the human, taking anthropology beyond the human also requires, as I will show, looking beyond life.

7. I do not deny the fact that certain “multinatural” forms of being in and understanding the world, including, most conspicuously, Amazonian ones, can shed critical light on what, by contrast, we can come to see as our folk academic “multicultural” conventions (Viveiros de Castro 1998). Nevertheless, the multiplication of natures is not an antidote to the problem posed by the multiplication of cultures.

8. A caffeine-rich beverage made from *Ilex guayusa* (Aquifoliaceae), a plant that is closely related to that used to make Argentinian mate.

9. I collected over 1,100 specimens of plants as well as 24 specimens of fungi. These are housed in the Herbario Nacional, Quito, with duplicates in the Missouri Botanical Garden. I also collected over 400 specimens of invertebrates, over 90 specimens of herpetofauna, and almost 60 specimens of mammals (all housed in the zoological museum of the Universidad Católica, Quito). My 31 specimens of fish are housed in the zoological museum of the Escuela Politécnica Nacional, Quito. Making specimens of birds is very difficult, requiring the complex preparation of skins. Therefore, I decided instead to document local avian faunal knowledge by taking close-up photographs of hunted specimens and conducting interviews using illustrated field manuals and recordings of calls.

10. By “relata,” I mean a term, object, or entity that is constituted by its relationships to other such terms, objects, or entities, in the relational system in which it exists.

11. This form of citation, referring to the volume and paragraphs in Peirce’s *Collected Papers* (1931), is the standard one used by Peirce scholars.

#### CHAPTER 1

1. I largely follow here the anthropological linguist Janis Nuckolls (1996) in her linguistic conventions for parsing Quichua. “Live” is an English gloss of the lexeme *causa-*; “2” indicates that it is conjugated for the second-person singular; “INTER” indicates that *-chu* is an interrogative, or question-marking suffix (see Cole 1985: 14–16).

2. In structuring my argument by asking you, the reader, to feel *tsupu*, I ask you to bracket, for a moment, your skepticism. But the argument still holds even if you don’t “feel *tsupu*.” As I will be discussing, *tsupu* exhibits formal properties (shared with similar sound images in all languages) that support the argument at hand (see also Sapir 1951 [1929]; Nuckolls 1999; Kilian-Harz 2001).

3. I adopt “becoming worldly” from Donna Haraway (see Haraway 2008: 3, 35, 41) to invoke the possibility of inhabiting unprecedented and more hopeful emergent worlds through a practice of attention to those beings—human and nonhuman—that, in so many different ways, stand beyond us. Human language is both an impediment to and a vehicle for the realization of this project. This chapter attempts to explore how this is so.

4. From Marshall Sahlins’s (1976: 12) classic anthropological statement on the relationship between culture and symbolic meaning to biology: “In the symbolic event, a radical discontinuity is introduced between culture and nature.” This echoes Saussure’s

(1959: 113) insistence on the “radically arbitrary” bond between “sound” (cf. nature) and “idea” (cf. culture).

5. This canopy emergent tree bearing big peapod-like fruits is known as *pusca pacai* in Avila (Latin *Inga alba*, Fabaceae-Mimosoideae).

6. See Kohn (2002b: 148–49) for the Quichua text.

7. For the purposes of this book I am collapsing a more complex division of the semiotic process, which, according to Peircean semiotics, involves three aspects: (1) a sign can be understood in terms of the characteristics it possesses in and of itself (whether it is a quality, an actual existent, or a law); (2) it can be understood in terms of the kind of relation it has to the object it represents; and (3) it can be understood in terms of the way its “interpretant” (a subsequent sign) represents it and its relation to its object. By using the term *sign vehicle* I am focusing here on the first of these three divisions. In general, however, as I will explain in the text, I am only treating signs as icons, indices, or symbols. In the process I am consciously collapsing the triadic division outlined above. Whether a sign is an icon, index, or symbol refers technically only to the second of the three divisions of the sign process (see Peirce CP 2.243–52).

8. Cf. Peirce’s discussion of how suppression of certain features draws the attention to other ones in what he terms “diagrammatic icons” (Peirce 1998b: 13).

9. Of course the icon *pu oh* can also serve as an index (to be defined later in the text) at another level of interpretation. Like the event it is like, it can also startle someone who hears it.

10. See Peirce (1998d: 8).

11. See Peirce (CP 1.346, 1.339).

12. See Peirce (CP 1.339).

13. In this regard, note how in Peirce’s pragmatism, “means” and “meaning” are related (CP 1.343).

14. See Peirce (CP 1.213).

15. Note that by recognizing how all signs, linguistic and otherwise, always “do things” we no longer need to appeal to a performative theory to make up for the deficiencies of a view of language as reference bereft of action (see Austin 1962).

16. See my discussion in the introduction on how even those anthropological approaches that recognize signs other than symbols still see these as exclusively human and interpretively framed by symbolic contexts.

17. Latin *Solanum quitorense*.

18. See Kohn (1992).

19. This example is adapted from Deacon’s (1997: 75–76) discussion of iconism and the evolution of cryptic moth coloration.

20. The argument I make here about the logical relation of indexicality to iconicity follows and is adapted from Deacon (1997: 77–78).

21. Deacon is describing and semiotically reinterpreting the research of Sue Savage-Rumbaugh (see Savage-Rumbaugh 1986).

22. See also Peirce (CP 2.302) and Peirce (1998d: 10).

23. By “inferential,” I mean that lineages of organisms constitute “guesses” about the environment. Via an evolutionary selective dynamic organisms come increasingly to “fit” their environment (see chapter 2).

24. This tends to be collapsed in anthropological treatments of Peirce. That is, thirdness tends to be seen only as a human symbolic attribute (see, e.g., Keane 2003: 414, 415, 420) rather than a property inherent to all semiosis and, in fact, to all regularity in the world.

25. “[The categories of firstness, secondness, and thirdness] suggest a way of thinking; and the possibility of science depends upon the fact that human thought necessarily partakes of whatever character is diffused through the whole universe, and that its natural modes have some tendency to be the modes of action of the universe” (Peirce CP 1.351).

26. And yet we must also recognize Descartes’s insights about the “firstness” of feeling and of self. “I think therefore I am” loses its sense (and feeling) when it is applied to the plural or to the second or third person—just as only you—as an I—can feel *tsupu*.

27. See Kohn (2002b: 150–51) for Quichua text.

28. See Kohn (2002b: 45–46) for Quichua text.

29. Quichua *pishcu anga*.

30. See Kohn (2002b: 76) for Quichua text.

31. As such, it is related to *ticu*, which is used in Ávila to describe clumsy ambulation (see Kohn 2002b: 76).

32. See Bergson (1911: 97). Such a mechanistic logic is only possible because there is already a (whole) self outside the machine that designs or builds it.

33. “Huañuchi shami machacui.”

34. Quichua *huaira machacui*; Latin *Chironius* sp.

35. See Whitten (1985) on this practice of severing the head from the snake’s body and its potential symbolism.

36. Steve Feld’s *Sound and Sentiment* (1990) is an instantiation of this; it is a book-long meditation on the symbolic structures through which the Kaluli (and, eventually, the anthropologist writing about them) come to feel an image.

#### CHAPTER 3

1. Spanish *barbasco*; Latin *Lonchocarpus nicou*; known in Ávila simply as *ambi*, poison.

2. See Kohn (2002b: 114–15) for Quichua text.

3. I adopt this phrase from Peirce (CP 1.221) and apply it to a broader range of phenomena.

4. See Roy Rappaport (1999: 1) for the position that the human species lives “in terms of meanings it must construct in a world devoid of intrinsic meaning but subject to physical law.”

5. That I insist on the centrality of *telos* as an emergent property inherent to the “enchanted” living world that extends beyond the human puts me at odds with Jane Bennett’s (2001) recent reappropriation of enchantment.

6. See Bateson (2000c, 2002); Deacon (1997); Hoffmeyer (2008); Kull et al. (2009).

7. Following Peirce's observations regarding "interpretants" in relation to the thoughts they represent, the organism-as-sign would be "identical . . . though more developed" (CP 5.316) with respect to its progenitor's representation of the world.

8. For a list of some of the organisms that signal to the Runa the coming of the season when the leafcutter ants will fly or, in some cases, more specifically, the exact day when the reproductive ants will emerge, see Kohn (2002b: 99–101).

9. For a discussion of the specimens I collected of organisms found in association with leafcutter ants at the time when the winged reproductive ants emerged, see Kohn (2002b: 97–98).

10. On the kin terminology the Runa use to describe insects, see Kohn (2002b: 267).

11. *Carludovica palmata*, Cyclanthaceae (see Kohn 2002b: 457 n. 16).

12. People in Ávila continue to try to communicate with the ants and their colonies after they have been trapped (see Kohn 2002b: 103 for a discussion).

13. There is actually another layer of interaction among semiotic aelves that causes amplification of the differences among soil conditions, which I've left out of the main text for the sake of clarity. Herbivores are themselves preyed upon by a second level of predators. If it weren't for this constraint, herbivore populations would grow unchecked, and the result would be unlimited herbivory on plants living in rich soils. With unlimited herbivory, the differences afforded by different soils would become irrelevant.

14. See Descola (1994) for an eloquent anti-reductionist critique of environmental determinism related to Amazonian soils and the ecological assemblages they sustain.

15. Here is how John Law and Annemarie Mol characterize nonhuman agency in ways that link it specifically to the relationality of human language:

Within material semiotics, an entity counts as an actor if it makes a perceptible difference. Active entities are relationally linked with one another in webs. They make a difference to each other; they make each other be. Linguistic semiotics teaches that words give each other meaning. Material semiotics extends this insight beyond the linguistic and claims that entities give each other being: that they enact each other. (Law and Mol 2008: 58)

16. Later in this same passage (CP 1.314), Peirce links this ability to imagine ourselves into the being of another human with our ability to do the same with animals.

17. Quichua *manduru*; Latin *Bixa orellana*, Bixaceae; English annatto (see Kohn 2002b: 272–73 for a discussion of its use in Ávila).

18. *Procyon cancrivorus*.

19. This leads Viveiros de Castro (1998: 478) to conclude that there are many natures, each associated with the body-specific interpretive world of a particular kind of being; there is only one culture—in this case, that of the Runa. Accordingly, he refers to this way of thinking as "multinaturalism" and uses it as a critique of the multicultural logic (i.e., many cultures, one nature) typical of contemporary Western folk academic thought, especially in the guise of cultural relativism (cf. Latour 1993: 106; 2004: 48).



20. See Kohn (2002b: 108–41) for a more extensive discussion and many more examples of perspectivism in everyday Ávila life.
21. *Dactylomys dactylinus*.
22. For descriptions of these tree causeways, see Descola (1996: 157).
23. “*Saqi sh*.”
24. For descriptions of this call, see Emmons (1990: 225).
25. This woman was already a grandmother, so this form of flirtatious joking was not seen to be threatening. Such jokes would not be made in reference to younger, recently married women.
26. *Renalmia* sp., Zingiberaceae.
27. Quichua *carachama*: Latin *Chaetostoma dermorynchon*, Loricariidae.

## CHAPTER 3

1. “Isma tucus canga, puma ismasa isman.”
2. A contraction of *ima sbuti*.
3. “*Cara caralla ichurin*.”
4. Quichua *yuyaihuun*, with the ability to think, judge, or react to circumstances.
5. Quichua *ripurana*, to reflect on, attend to, or consider.
6. See Peirce (CP 2.654).
7. See Kohn (2002b: 349–54) for the Quichua transcription of Ventura’s exchange with his father’s puma.
8. See Kohn (2002b: 358–61) for Quichua text.
9. He uses the word *chita* (*chai* ‘chat’ + *-ta* direct object marker)—i.e., *balarcani chita*—to refer to the wounded animal, instead of *pai* (the third-person pronoun used for an animate being regardless of gender or status as human).
10. On laughter as a way of fostering the sort of intimate sociability that Overing and Passes (2000) call “conviviality,” see Overing (2000).
11. “*Shican tucun*.”
12. “*Runata mana llaquin*.” The verb *llaquina* means both sadness and love in Ávila. There is no specific word for love in Ávila Quichua, although there is in Andean Ecuadorian Quichua (*juyana*). In the Andean dialects with which I am familiar, *llaquina* means only sadness.
13. Also known as *aya buda* or *aya tulana*.
14. “*Cai mishqui yacuta upingu*.”
15. “*Shinaca yayarucu tiarangui, astalla shamunchi*.”
16. The place where the afterbirth is buried is known as the *pupu huasi*, the house of the afterbirth.
17. *Urens baccifera*, Urticaceae. This is closely related to the stinging nettles, which among other things are used to keep living beings away (by blocking the paths of dogs and toddlers). It is befitting of the phantasmal nature of the *aya* that a nonstinging variety of nettles is employed to ward it off (see Kohn 2002b: 275).
18. “*Huaglin, singa taparin*.”

19. See Kohn (2002b: 214–15) for the Quichua text of Narcisa's narrative.
20. Cavell also asks whether the term might extend to our relations to nonhuman animals.
21. Quichua "casariana alma."
22. Quichua "curuna."
23. "Catina curunashrumandami ta' canisca."
24. See Bateson (2000b: 486–87); Haraway (2003: 50).
25. See Fausto (2007) for an extensive discussion of the ethnological implications of this dilemma in Amazonia.
26. What Fausto (2007) calls the "direction of predation" can change.
27. "Mana tacana masharucu pufiun."
28. Also known as *gainari*; Pædarinae, Staphylinidae.
29. "Yumai pasapi chimbarin alma." See also Uzendoaki (2005: 133).
30. See Kohn (2002b: 469 n. 95) for a list of these.
31. Also known as *bubya panga*, possibly *Anthurium* sect. *Pteromischum* sp. nov. (see Kohn 1992).
32. It is possible that this is due to unusually high vascular pressure.
33. See Kohn (2002b: 130–31) for Quichua text.
34. See Kohn (2002b: 132) for Quichua text.
35. *Cedrelinga cateniformis*, Fabaceae-Mimosoideae.
36. See Kohn (2002b: 136–39) for Quichua text of this myth.

#### CHAPTER 4

1. This is a variant of *aya*—*i* discussed in chapter 2.
2. The term *all too human* alludes vaguely to Nietzsche (Nietzsche and Hollingdale 1986) and Weber (1948b: 132, 348). I develop the specific way I use it in the passages that follow.
3. Value has been the subject of lively discussion in anthropology. In large part this has centered on how to reconcile the various forms that value takes in human realms (see esp. Graeber 2001; see also Pederson 2008 and Kockelman 2011 for attempts to reconcile anthropological and economic theories of value with Peircean ones). My contribution to this literature is to stress the point that human forms of value stand in a relation of emergent continuity with a basic form of value that emerges with life.
4. See, in this regard, Coppinger and Coppinger (2002) on canine self-domestication.
5. See also Ellen (1999: 66); Haraway (2003: 41).
6. The main ingredient is the inner bark scrapings of the understory tree *tsita* (*Tabernaemontana sananho*, Apocynaceae). Other ingredients include tobacco and *lumu cuchi huandu* (*Brugmansia* sp., Solanaceae), a special canine variety of a very powerful belladonna-related narcotic sometimes used by Runa shamans.
7. Dogs partake of the following human qualities:

1. Unlike animals they are expected to eat cooked food.
  2. According to some, they have souls that are capable of ascending to the Christian heaven.
  3. They acquire the dispositions of their masters; mean owners have mean dogs.
  4. Dogs and children who become lost in the forest become "wild" (*Quichua quita*) and therefore frightened of people.
8. See Oberem (1980: 66); see also Schwartz (1997: 162–63); Ariel de Vidas (2002: 538).
9. In fact mythic man-eating jaguars are said to refer to humans as palm hearts.
  10. See Fausto (2007); Conklin (2001).
  11. These are known in Ávila as "forest masters" (*sacha amuguna*) or "forest lords" (*sacha curagaguna*).
  12. Colonial categories used historically to describe the Runa, such as Christian and *mansu* (tame; *Quichua mansu*), as opposed to infidel (*auca*) and wild (*quita*), however problematic (see Uzendoaki 2005: 165), cannot be discounted because, in Ávila at least, they currently constitute the idiom through which a certain kind of agency, albeit one that is not so overtly visible, is manifested (see chapter 6).
  13. I thank Manuela Carneiro da Cunha for reminding me of this fact, to which several Ávila oral histories that I have collected attest. See also Blomberg (1957) for eyewitness written accounts and photographs of such expeditions.
  14. The term *runa* is also used in Ecuadorean Spanish to describe cattle that are not an identifiable breed. It is also used to describe anything that is considered pejoratively as having supposedly "Indian" qualities (e.g., items considered shabby or dirty).
  15. See also Haraway (2003: 41, 45).
  16. Descola, regarding the Achuar, refers to this form of isolation as the "solipsism of natural idioms" (1989: 443). The emphasis he gives to the failure in communication thus implied is appropriate given this chapter's subject matter.
  17. Willerslev's (2007) discussion of Siberian Yukaghir hunting treats in great detail this threat to human identity posed by relations with animals. The solutions the Yukaghir find are different; the general problem—the challenge of living socially in a world peopled by many kinds of selves—is the same.
  18. *Quichua duiñu*, from the Spanish *dueño*.
  19. For examples of this canine lexicon, see Kohn (2007: 21 n. 30).
  20. As in chapter 1 I follow in this chapter Nuckolls (1996) in her linguistic conventions for parsing Quichua. These include the following: ACC = Accusative case; COR = Coreference; FUT = Future; NEG IMP = Negative Imperative; SUB = Subjunctive; 2 = Second person; 3 = Third person.
  21. *Utucho* refers to the class of small rodents that includes mice, rats, spiny rats, and mouse opossums. It is a euphemism for *sicu*, the class of large edible rodents that includes the agouti, paca, and agouchy.
  22. Here is another example from Ávila, not discussed in the body of this chapter, of giving advice to dogs using canine imperatives while administering *taita*:

2.1 *tutiu-nga ni-sa*  
chase-3FUT say-COR  
thinking/desiring it will chase  
2.2 *ama runa-la capari-nga ni-sa*  
NEG IMP person-ACC bark-3-FUT say-COR  
thinking/desiring it will not bark at people

23. I thank Bill Hanks for suggesting this term.

24. Regarding the anomalous use of a negative imperative in combination with a third-person future marker in line 1.2 (cf. lines 1.5 and 5.3 in the text and 2.2 in note 22), the following are related constructions that *would* be considered grammatically correct in everyday Ávila Quichua:

If addressed to a dog in the second person:

3 *atalpa-ta ama cani-y-chu*  
chicken-ACC NEG IMP bite-3-IMP-NEG  
don't bite chickens

If addressed to another person about a dog:

4a *atalpa-ta mana cani-nga-chu*  
chicken-ACC NEG bite-3FUT-NEG  
it will not bite chickens

or

4b *atalpa-ta ama cani-chun*  
chicken-ACC NEG bite-SUB  
so that it doesn't bite chickens

25. Regarding how humans can bring out human subjectivities in animals by denying them their bodies, compare reports and legends of Runa men undressing themselves before fighting off jaguars they encounter in the forest. By doing so, they remind jaguars that beneath their feline bodily habitus, which can be “divested” like clothing, they too are humans (see chapter 6).

26. According to Janis Nuckolls, Quichua speakers from the Pastaza region of Amazonian Ecuador refer to or address these spirits in songs using third-person future constructions (pers. com.). This is another reason for suspecting that the use of “señora” to address spirit lovers in Ávila is related to the use of “canine imperatives.”

27. Reduplication is frequently used in imitating birdcalls and in onomatopoeic bird names in Ávila (see also Berlin and O'Neill 1981; Berlin 1992).

28. See also Taylor (1996); Viveiros de Castro (1998).

29. On distributed selfhood, see Peirce (CP 3.613; 5.421; 7.572). See also Strathern (1988: 162); and for a somewhat different take Gell (1998).

30. For the semiotic constraints of extraterrestrial grammars, see Deacon (2003).

## CHAPTER 5

1. On how the Huaorani treat peccaries as social others, see Rival (1993).
2. Other examples of apparently spontaneous recognition of wild/domestic parallels by outsiders include the following:
  - 1) Simson's (1878: 509) musings, elsewhere, about how his Záparo guides in Iquitos might compare the European horse with the tapir. In Ávila, the tapir, distant relative of the horse and the New World's only extant native odd-toed ungulate, is understood to be the horse of certain spirit masters of the forest.
  - 2) The correspondence between white domestication and Indian forest predation as noted by the seventeenth-century Jesuit priest Figueroa who marveled at the nuts and fruits that "nature, like an orchard, provides" Amazonians and referred to the "herds of wild pigs" and other animals of the forest as Amazonian "livestock" (*crias*) "that need no care" (Figueroa 1986 [1661]: 263).
  - 3) The nineteenth-century Jesuit priest Pozzi who in a sermon in Loreto compared Runa hunting to civilized animal husbandry (in Jouanen 1977: 90).
3. See Janzen (1970); Wills et al. (1997).
4. My argument about the ways in which the rubber economy was formally constrained is at odds with, but ultimately not inconsistent with, what Steven Bunker has written. Bunker (1985: 68–69) argued that the fungal parasite is not enough to make rubber cropping in the Amazon impossible. Successful grafting and close planting techniques were developed in the Amazon, but these are labor-intensive, and what was lacking in this region was labor. Labor shortages, not parasites, according to Bunker, were what prevented plantation cropping. Surely, the form-propagating tendencies that the rubber boom reveals are weak ones, and with sufficient labor they might well become dampened or even irrelevant. But the shortage of labor at this time allowed for certain formal properties to become amplified and to propagate across a variety of domains, and to thus play a central role in the rubber economy.
  5. *Salminus hilarii*.
  6. *Virola duckeri*, Myristicaceae.
7. For a description of rubber tapping and initial processing and the skill and effort required to get latex to rivers, see Cordova (1995).
8. See Irvine (1987) on the San José Runa preference for erecting hunting blinds by fruiting trees as opposed to searching for game in the forest. This is also a popular technique in Ávila. By waiting by a fruiting tree, hunters in effect harness floristic form.
9. See Oberem (1980: 117); Muratorio (1987: 107). For information on communities that descend from Ávila Runa forcibly resettled on the Peruvian Napo during the rubber boom, see Mercier (1979).
10. For another example of shamanistic harnessing of the Amazon riverine network, see Descola (1996: 323). See Kohn (2002a: 571–73) for an example of the ways in which Jesuit missionaries imagined the Amazon riverine network as a conduit for consecration and conversion.

11. See Martín (1989 [1563]: 119); Ordóñez de Cevallos (1989 [1614]: 429); Oberem (1980: 225).

12. See Oberem (1980: 117); Muratorio (1987); Gianotti (1997).

13. In contrast to other extractive products, such as minerals or petroleum, there is something unique to how certain life forms like wild Amazonian rubber (or wild matsutake mushrooms; see Tsing [2012]) can become commodities. Extraction of these, even under the most ruthless capitalist systems, requires entering into and, to an extent, succumbing to the relational logic that supports this living wealth. The aspect of that logic that concerns me here involves its patterned quality.

14. On the logical properties of hierarchy, see Bateson (2000e).

15. This sort of relationship of bird name to call is common in Ávila (see Kohn 2002b: 146 for another example).

16. *mashuta micusa sacsa rinu-*

17. *-napi imata cara*

18. In Descola's (2005) terms, Silverman's project is to trace the hidden modes of "analogic" thinking in a Western thought otherwise dominated by "naturalistic" thinking.

19. By "history" here, I mean our experience of the effect of past events on the present. Peirce refers to this as our experience of secondness, which includes our experience of change, difference, resistance, otherness, and time (CP 1.336: 1.419); see chapter 1. This is not to deny that there are specific and highly variable sociohistorically situated modalities of representing the past (see Turner 1988) or ideas about causality (Keane 2003). I am making a broader and more general set of claims, namely: (1) the experience of secondness is not necessarily delimited culturally; and (2) there are moments when the dyadic effects of the past on the present that we associate with history becomes less relevant as a causal modality.

20. By "time," I mean the directional process spanning from past to present to probable future. I am making no absolute claim about the ontological status of time. Neither, however, do I want to say that time is wholly a cultural or even a human construct (cf. CP 8.318). My argument is at the level of what Bateson calls "creatura" (2000a: 462). That is, in the realm of life, the past, present, and probable each comes to have specific properties, and these properties are intimately involved in the ways in which semiotic selves represent the world around them. For it is in the realm of life, via semiosis, that the future comes to affect the present through the vehicle of representation (see Peirce CP 1.325). See also chapter 6.

21. Both glossed in Quichua as *turmintu* (from the Spanish *tormento*).

22. In the spirit master's realm, they escape Judgment Day, *juiciu punja*.

23. See Peirce (CP 6.101).

24. Jonathan Hill (1988) and several other contributors to his edited volume provide a critique of Lévi-Strauss's hot/cold distinction. Hill argues that this distinction erases the many ways in which Amazonians are products of, producers of, and conscious of history. Peter Gow (2001) has argued that such a critique misses Lévi-Strauss's point: myths are responses to history in that they are, as Gow puts it,

"instruments for the obliteration of time" (27). That myths have this characteristic is evident. What is less clear from Gow's analysis is why. My argument is that timelessness is an effect of the peculiar properties of form.

25. Cf. Lévi-Strauss: "odds and ends left over from psychological or historical processes, . . . [which] appear as such only in relation to the history which produced them and not from the point of view of the logic for which they are used" (1966: 35).

26. For the position that Amazonian landscape and natural history are always in some ways social, see Raffles (2002). On the "pristine myth" and for a review of the literature on anthropogenic forests, see Denevan (1992); Cleary (2001). Without denying the importance of historicizing "natural history," the position I take is somewhat different. The idea that all nature is always already historical is related to the representational problem we face in our field—namely, that we don't know how to talk about that which stands outside the human-specific conventional logic of symbolic reference without reducing the human to matter (see chapter 1).

27. On the hopes for symmetrical relations between Upper Amazonians and Europeans, see Taylor (1999: 218).

28. See Kohn (2002b: 363–64) for a more detailed account.

29. People in Ávila today recount a myth that explains why a certain king, sometimes referred to as an Inca, abandoned his attempts to build Quito near Ávila and finally built it in the Andes. Some people even discern the remnants of this failed jungle Quito in the landscape. This idea of a Quito having quite literally abandoned the region also comes up in the nearby community Oyacachi (see Kohn 2000b: 249–50; Kohn 2002a).

30. There are also all-too-human contexts in which form propagates. Late Soviet socialism provides one such example (see Yurchak 2006, 2008; and my comment on the latter [Kohn 2008]). Here, the severing of official discursive form from any indexical specification—a form that was nevertheless sustained by the entire might of the Soviet state—allowed a certain kind of invisible self-organizing politics to emerge spontaneously and simultaneously throughout various parts of the Soviet Union. Yurchak appropriately calls this a "politics of indistinction," alluding to the way it harnessed and proliferated official discursive forms (for some sort of an end, however undefined) rather than acquiescing to or resisting them.

31. See Peirce (1998d: 4); cf. Bateson (2000: 135).

32. Quoted in Colapietro (1989: 38). I thank Frank Salomon for first drawing my attention to this passage.

## CHAPTER 6

1. *Quichua sabana chuspi* (peccary flies); Latin Diptera.

2. By drawing on Freud's understanding of the uncanny, as "that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar" (Freud 2003: 124), I wish to make explicit reference to Mary Weismantel's (2001) treatment of the *pištaco*, the white bogeyman of the Andes that eats Indian fat. The pišt-

taco, like the policeman for Oswald, is inextricably embedded in what it is to be Andean in ways that are uncanny—frightening but also intimate and familiar.

3. And yet such a generalized power could not exist without the specific instances of its manifestation. Structures of domination are ultimately given their “brutal” efficacy through what Peirce has called “secondness” (see chapter 1), manifest, according to one example he gives, in “the sheriff’s hand” on your shoulder (CP 1.24) or, in Oswald’s case, in the policeman who suddenly appears at a friend’s door (see CP 1.213). And yet, as Butler underscores, power is something more than such easily externalized brutality.

4. We live in a sort of gift economy with the dead, with the spirits, and with the future selves we might come to be and without whom we are nothing. Marcel Mauss’s notion of the debts that make us who we are applies to our relations to all of these others: “by giving one is giving oneself, and if one gives oneself, it is because one owes oneself—one’s person and one’s goods—to others” (Mauss 1990 [1950]: 46).

5. Wooden slit drums used for long-distance communication were among the first things that the Spaniards banned in the Upper Amazon (Oberem 1980).

6. This is not to say that they would consider themselves unclothed. Penis strings and face paints function in important ways as clothing.

7. “hacerlos de brutos, hombres, y de hombres, cristianos.”

8. This form of always already inhabiting something that might otherwise be understood as the cumulative effect of history makes itself manifest in Oyacachi, a cloud forest village to the west of Ávila that in the early colonial period was part of the same Quijos chiefdom. As people there understand it there was never a time when they were not Christian. In fact, according to one myth (see Kohn 2002a), it is the white European priests, not the natives, who are the pagans in need of conversion.

9. Sometimes, of course, self-objectification is an important strategy for achieving political visibility.

10. Refillable metal shotgun cartridges have a little hole at the base where one fits the firing cap. Oswald’s dream image, I should note, has shamanistic overtones. Blowing through a shotgun cartridge is like blowing through a blowgun, and soecersers attack their victims by placing their cupped hands to their mouths and shooting invisible blowgun darts (*sagra tullu*) at their victims.

11. By “topic” here, I mean the theme of a sentence, that about which the sentence gives information, as opposed to its grammatical subject, which may or may not also be the topic. Quichua speakers often mark the topic (which may be either the subject, object, adverb, or verb of the sentence) for a number of reasons, including, as is done in the example treated here, to emphasize a theme that might not otherwise be noted given the assumed context. For a discussion of topic, on which my treatment of the matter is based, and for a further explanation of the use of topic-marking suffixes in Ecuadorian Quichua, see Chuquín and Salomon (1992: 70–73) and Cole (1985: 95–96).

12. For the Quichua text, see Kohn (2002b: 292).



13. In an otherwise identical series of myths these apostles replace the well-known culture hero brothers Cuillur and Duciru of other Upper Amazonian Runa communities (e.g., Orr and Hudelson 1971).

14. Urban writes about this in terms of the continuity of “culture,” not of self.

15. “In the flow of time in the mind, the past appears to act directly upon the future, its effect being called memory, while the future only acts upon the past through the medium of thirds” (CP 1.325).

16. This is in reference to the Tupian Omagua.

17. See Gianotti (1997: 128); Oberem (1980: 290); Wavrin (1927: 335).

18. See Wavrin (1927: 335); see also Gianotti (1997: 128); Avendaño (1985 [1861]: 152); Orton (1876: 193); Colini (1883: 296); cf. Maroni (1988 [1738]: 172, 378); Kohn (2002b: 238).

19. “*Chuchuyu*,” “with breasts,” was how Ventura referred to Rosa’s granddaughters, before explaining that in the master’s realm, Rosa would “live forever, never to die again, without suffering, like a child” (“*Huiñai huiñai causangapa, mana mas huafun-gapa, mana tormento, huahuacuintallata*”).

20. This probably refers to the barred *antshrike*.

21. Quichua: *runa pamba* (lit., “people burier”); English: tarantula hawk; Latin: *Pepsis* sp., Pompilidae.

22. For more such examples, see Kohn (2002b: 242–43, 462 n. 54).

23. Ginsberg’s “kaddish” does mention death.

24. For a discussion of names for shamans and shamanism, see Kohn (2002b: 336–38).

25. Regarding the abandonment of shorts for long pants among the Tena Runa, see Gianotti (1997: 253).

26. Wavrin similarly reports that men who encounter jaguars are not afraid of them and can do battle with them, “fighting one-on-one as equals” as if they were men because they know these jaguars were once men (Wavrin 1927: 335; see also Kohn 2002b: 270).

27. *Cushma* refers to a gown traditionally worn by Cofin as well as western Tukanano Siona and Secoya men.

28. See Kohn (2002b: 271–72) for an early colonial Ávila area example of the use of clothing to confer power.

29. “*Pucuhuai, cambia yachaita japingapa*.”

30. See Kohn (2002b: 281) for eighteenth-century Amazonian strategies of appropriating white clothing as equipment.

31. My thinking about survival has been greatly influenced by Lisa Stevenson’s work.

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