WHEN METAPHYSICAL WORDS BLOSSOM

Pierre and Hélène Clastres on Guarani Thought

Renato Sztutman

Translated by Julia Frajtag Sauma

Words of the world are the life of the world.

– Wallace Stevens

This essay is about neither the Guarani people nor the work of Pierre and Hélène Clastres. Rather, it concerns the nature of the encounter between the Clastres and the Guarani (mainly the Guarani-Mbya) in Paraguay and, to a lesser extent, on the southeastern coast of Brazil in the 1960s and 1970s. As anthropologists trained in philosophy, the Clastres participated in a true dialogue between Western and Guarani modes of thought.[1] In two chapters of his best-known book, *La Société contre l'État*, published in 1974, Pierre Clastres established an ontological, rather than sociological, association between the logic speech of Guarani sages and the refusal of centralized political power.[2] He was able to do so because he understood, as he wrote in his introduction to a collection of Guarani texts, *Le Grand Parler*, likewise published in 1974, that "to translate the Guarani is to translate them in Guarani."[3] What he found, in doing so, was a metaphysics different from most of those proposed in the West since the ancient Greek intellectual revolution—a metaphysics to which the principle of identity (or non contradiction) is foreign, and the unification of political authority conjured. Pierre, who died in 1977, and Hélène, who is today a *chargée de recherche* at the Centre national de la recherche scientifique in Paris, anticipated by many years

the metaphysical or ontological turn that would take place in anthropology in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

An original alliance between anthropology and philosophy was advanced by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro in his book *Métaphysiques cannibales* (2009), which redescribes indigenous ideas as *concepts*,[4] in the sense in which "creating concepts" is the definition of philosophy proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.[5] Viveiros de Castro argues that indigenous ideas are endowed with conceptual meaning and philosophical potential.[6] For his purposes, however, he has had to extend the reach of the *concept*-concept to a logic unobliged to reflect upon itself. His aim is to go beyond the Deleuze-Guattarian opposition between (philosophical) concept and (religious) figure and to understand the former as a "local, historical and provincial variation of an intrinsically figural or mythopoetical imagination—not just as a pan-human capacity but . . . as inherent to the living as such."[7] We are dealing, then, with an approach that, since it takes the aim of dialogue between Western and indigenous thought with high seriousness, was foreseen by Pierre Clastres as early as 1968, in a brief article written in honor of Claude Lévi-Strauss.[8] Carrying on Clastres' aim to set up a real dialogue, Viveiros de Castro takes the "ontological self-determination of peoples" and the "permanent decolonization of thought" as basic to his normative aims.[9] It is in light of the "ontological" or "metaphysical turn" in contemporary anthropology that this article aims to revisit the encounter between the Guarani and the Clastres.[10]

The Clastres among the Guarani

In the early 1960s, Pierre and Hélène Clastres conducted fieldwork in Paraguay with two different Tupi-Guarani peoples: the Aché Guayaki and then, later, with the

Guarani-Mbya. The intellectual environment in France was undergoing major changes at that time: structuralism was accused of having forgotten history, society, and politics; the hitherto annihilated *sujet* was being reconstituted. Simultaneously, capitalism was expanding in a predatory mode in tropical South America and, as a result, many indigenous peoples were finding themselves progressively more enclosed within dramatically reduced territories and compelled to join an undervalued workforce. It is this background that accounts for the pessimism usually associated with the Clastres's writings on the Guarani and other indigenous peoples, whose lives they regarded as incompatible with capitalism, the nation-state, and, consequently, the expansion of *jurua* ("hairy mouth," which is to say "white") society. A lot of criticism was directed at Pierre and Hélène Clastres' texts on the Guarani due to its general pessimism but also due to their analysis' mystifying feature, according to which religion and the search for a "land without evil" was the core of Guarani social life, which was grounded on a type of asceticism, the refusal of an earthly life, so to speak.[11] I do not wish to list and discuss these criticisms here but would rather indicate that, despite the controversial and dated character of their work, Pierre and Hélène Clastres made a significant contribution to the history of anthropology and intellectual reflection by placing Indigenous and Western thought side by side, and thus renovating the dialogue between anthropology and philosophy by politicizing it.[12]

The Clastres emphasized the conceptual architecture of Guarani thought as well as the creativity of their sages (the *karai* in Mbya).[15] In constant dialogue with the renowned Guarani specialist León Cadogan, they discovered in these sages' reflections a critique of the principles of identity and noncontradiction that are foundational to Western metaphysics. They compared, on an equal footing, the

metaphysics of Being—the Western speculative exploration of what-there-is—to the knowledge of the Mbya *karai*, which is rooted in their own experience of the divine by way of praying, dancing, and singing.

Pierre Clastres also found in the Guarani sages' discourse his very concept of a "counter-State."[16] Notions of this kind had until then been explored largely in sociological terms—in studies of chieftainship, intercommunity relations, and warfare—but he pursued them in metaphysical terms. The chapter titled "De l'Un sans le Multiple" in *La Société contre l'État* argues that the metaphysical concept of the "One"—which, in Western thought, is very often given primacy over the "Many," just as "Being" is often accorded primacy over "Becoming"—is treated by the Mbya sages as a principle of corruption, produced by the distinction and separation of humans from divinities. To escape corruption and attain to the "Not-One" (*le Non-Un* or even *le Contr'Un*, a concept borrowed from the sixteenth-century political philosopher Étienne de la Boétie) is possible once the principle of noncontradiction is overcome. To do so, however, would require becoming divine and human simultaneously. Among the results, were that feat accomplished, would be an incorruptible "true language," along with the extinction of corruption and death. In 1975, in *La Terre sans Mal*, Hélène Clastres took up similar aspects of Tupi-Guarani thought, which aims, in what she called its "prophetism," to bring humans and divinities together in pursuit of freedom from corruption and escape from death. This prophetism, in her view, is an immanent religion without a theology or a transcendent foundation. The relationship of humans to divinities is not one of worship but of a becoming-divine made possible through ritual practices, including articulated speech and dance, and by migrating to places inhabited by divinities.[17]

My interest here is in the Clastres's engagement with Guarani conceptual imagery and, particularly, in the way they analyzed the Guarani triple articulation between metaphysics, language and politics. Through a comparison of historical sources and ethnographic data, Hélène Clastres revealed the importance of the relation between language and prophetism, which is above all a critique of society and the human condition. By calling the Mbya *karai* prophets—a term that appears in sources from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—the Clastres sought to distinguish these figures from the shamans that abound in the literature on Amazonian peoples.[18] Rather than healers, the *karai* are bearers of valuable knowledge, and they are highly expressive speakers. Their prophetic discourse, which works with the *nhe'ẽ porã* ("beautiful words"), urge people to seek a "land without evil" (*yvy marã e'y*, literally a "land that does not perish"), so that they may approach closer to the divinities and leave the "bad and imperfect land" (*yvy mba'emegua*). The "beautiful words" are addressed to the divinities and are at once a means of communication and a vector of divinization.

Word and Worlding

Hélène Clastres rightly pointed out, in 2011, that the question of language pervades the entirety of her late husband's work and is indissociable from his more famous reflections on political power.[19] In his earliest article "Échange et pouvoir" (1962), Pierre Clastres argues—while endorsing the generalization that in "primitive societies" chiefs are those who have the gift of oratory—that the gift imposes an obligation, rather than bestowing the power to command.[20] Their linguistic gift is the means by which chiefs reassert traditional order, and it is incumbent on them to do so. Language has a dual nature—as simultaneously sign and value—like the spouses

whom Lévi-Strauss describes in *Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté*.[21] On the one hand, language is rooted in the realm of communication and exchange; on the other hand, it surpasses and even denies its communicative function so as to be adorned and celebrated as itself. More than a means, language is an act; rather than naming things, from which it is detached, it is constitutive of them. Language as value entails concern with the form of expression: the manner of speaking is integral to what is spoken.[22] In the case both of the chief and of the Guarani prophet, we find ourselves dealing with language as value. The prophet's speech (*nhe'ẽ porã*) is a means of communicating with divinities but also of making them present, and the chief's speech institutes society.[23] Hélène Clastres's assertion that "to speak—to chant—is to act" applies both to the chief and to the prophet.[24] According to her, such speech-acts are performative, bringing realities irreversibly into existence. One might even say that they constitute a form of "worlding."[25]

In *Le Grand Parler*, Pierre Clastres offers a rich commentary on a heterogeneous range of Guarani texts and a reflection on how the Guarani regard and use language. Some of the texts were collected by Clastres himself, some by León Cadogan. *Le Grand Parler* also includes *apapocúva* texts, which were compiled by Curt Nimuendaju at the beginning of the twentieth century, as well as excerpts from André Thevet's *Cosmographie Universelle* (1575). The genres of text are various, and the same narratives can figure in more than one genre. Included are "mythical narratives," often told fairly openly and using daily language. There are also "religious or sacred texts" that retain esoteric knowledge, use a highly metaphorical language, and are rarely addressed to the *jurua*, along with exegetical analyses of mythic narratives charged with reflections of a more "subjective" nature. Clastres

regards the latter, which he refers to as "metaphysical discourses," as a generic innovation comparable to that of early philosophical speech of ancient Greece.

Writing about the problem of temporality among the Wajãpi, a Tupi-Guarani people who live in eastern Amazonia, Dominique Gallois[28] cautions her readers about the need to recognize different discursive genres or regimes, which are nevertheless woven together. According to the author, this is a particular quality of that we use to name "oral traditions".[29] As such, it is not a matter of exactly separating "historical" and "mythical" accounts, but rather of distinguishing between different sources of information and the narrators' different positions of authority, mechanisms that can guarantee their veracity. On the one had, one has stories in which those who witnessed the events are familiar—grandparents, the elderly in general—and, on the other, stories whose sources are always "the ancients," generic "ancestors," and thus come closer to what we commonly call mythology. Gallois adds that so-called mythological Wajãpi narratives are rarely told in full but instead appear in conversations and allusions. In any case, the distinctions relative to the temporality of discursive genres are never absolute, the regimes are woven together at all times, as history models itself on myth, and vice-versa, as Marshall Sahlins has also argued for other ethnographic contexts.[31]

In *Le Grand Parler*, we are faced with discursive regimes or genres that distinguish themselves not so much by their temporality as by the contexts of enunciation and by the agency of their words. If "commonplace myths" are simply narrated, the "beautiful words" that are endowed with a highly metaphorical language, allow for communication with a divine world to take place; something that can also be understood as a becoming-divine, for speaking *with* is also to speak *like* the gods.[33] As Lucas Keese dos Santos suggests in his recent study about the contemporary Mbya

in the State of São Paulo, it is less a matter of thinking in terms of discursive classes than practices, since the same narratives can appear in diverse forms and can be called upon in various ways. The stories that are commonly narrated beyond the prayer house (*opy*), and thus beyond the shamanic domain, are less concerned with divinities (*nhanderu kwery*). Santos emphasizes that these accounts are often referred to as *kaujos* (a transformation of the folk Portuguese term "causos"), which include accounts of events that took place long ago, stories and anecdotes and, above all, narratives about corporeal transformations (*-jepota*, most often transformations of humans into animals and vice-versa) that are always seeped in humor.[36]

Generally speaking, all of the discourses in these genres are "myths," in the sense that they refer to immemorial knowledge, to a-historical events or, to summon Viveiros de Castro's terms, to a "virtual and intensive plane".[37] Thus, the distinctions among them are to be found in their contexts of enunciation and in the nature of the language that each employs, which presupposes modulation of agency and effect. To understand these different types of text, we must consider the implicit Guarani theories of language and subjectivity.[38] Cadogan's view is that the Mbya-Guarani merge in a single concept the idea of speech or language and the divine portion of a living being's soul. According to *Ayvu Rapyta*, his collection of translated chants, a "properly human language" (*ayvu*) is based or founded (*apyta*) on the actions of the first divinities.[39] Cadogan compares *ayvu* to *nhe'ẽ*, which he translates into Spanish as *alma-palabra* ("soul-word"). This language category, broader than *ayvu*, encompasses birdsong and sounds made by other animals. Pierre Clastres prefers to translate *nhe'ẽ* (into French) as *parole habitante* ("dwelling word"), since *nhe'ẽ* is sent by the divinities to inhabit the bodies of various beings. According to him,

> *nhe'ẽ* means word, speech, but also our language, soul, spirit. *Nhe'ẽ* is what constitutes a human being as a person, that which, emanating from the gods, comes to inhabit the body that is destined to be its dwelling place. In terms of a genealogical chain: the individual is determined as such by *nhe'ẽ*, a principle of individuation that simultaneously establishes the person's attachment to the community of those gathered by *ayvu*.[40]

If relations between divinities and humans are necessarily corporeal, one might conclude that language too is somehow corporeal. Valéria Macedo, moving even farther away than Pierre Clastres from Cadogan's rather Christian image of an immaterial soul, suggests translating *nhe'ẽ* as "language affection," thus emphasizing in a spinozioan inspiration its both agentive and material character.[41] Hélène Clastres writes, accordingly, that *nhe'ẽ* circulates in the skeleton, although, unlike *angue*, which is a person's earthly part, *nhe'ẽ* cannot be corrupted and is thus destined for passage to *yvy marã e'y*, an incorruptible land of inexhaustible resources.[42]

In any case, Mbya sages are *nhe'ẽ jara*, "word masters" par excellence, who retain the esoteric knowledge contained in the *nhe'ẽ porã* ("beautiful words") and are responsible for searching in various divine dwellings for the name-souls of small children. Among the Guarani, "settling" (or, more literally, "giving seat to") a name (-*ery*) is requisite to generating a person: naming is the act of incarnating a word. Since one is named as one learns to walk, receiving a name is, as Hélène Clastres observes, equivalent to "keeping the flow of speech upright."[43] The emphasis on speech is homologous to the emphasis on verticality, suggesting the interdependence of chanted

speech and dance movements: while stressing corporeality, both bring humans closer to the divine.

Given its simultaneous corporeality and its emphasis on the spiritual realm, the Guarani "beautiful words", which are pronounced by the *karai*, have, as Josely Vianna Baptista puts it, a "quasi-ideogrammatic materiality" and is profuse with metaphors.[44] And, as Pierre Clastres observes, *arrow* in such a language is "bow's flower," and *pipe* is "mist's skeleton." Continuing from such reflections on Guarani metaphorization, Daniel Calazans Pierri discusses the obsession with "the true name of things" in Guarani ritual language. On comparing the Guarani and Platonic oppositions between elements in the empirical world and incorruptible models in the divine (*nhe'ẽ kwery*) world, Pierri concludes that, unlike Plato, for whom words are always deceptive, for the Guarani the metaphorical word is the "true name" of an object or a state of affairs, as well as a "privileged means of overcoming the discontinuity between the celestial world (with its imperishable elements) and the terrestrial world (with its corporeal images)."[45]

When Words Blossom

The relationship, for the Guarani, between the celestial and terrestrial words has been a matter of dispute among commentators on the *Ayvu Rapyta*. For the opening verses—*Nhande Ru Papa Tenonde / gueterã ombojera / pytu ymágui*—Cadogan offers the following translation: *Nuestro Padre Ultimo-ultimo Primero / para su propio cuerpo creó / de las tinieblas primigenias* ("Our Last-last First Father / created for his own body / from the primeval darkness").[46] In Cadogan's rendering, Nhande Ru Papa Tenonde, a primeval divinity, creates everything that exists "in the course of

his own evolution." In *Le Grand Parler*, Pierre Clastres insists on the translation of *ombojera* as *déploiement* (or "unfolding"), thus disputing Cadogan's translation of *-jera* as "act of creation" and *oguero-jera* as "creating in the course of his own evolution." Clastres's translation of the same lines reads: "Our father, the last; our father, the first, / makes his own body arise / from the primordial night. // Divine feet soles, / the small round seat: / in the heart of the primeval night / he unfolds everything by unfolding himself."[47] As Cadogan explains it, the expressions *-jera*, *-mbo-jera*, and *guero-jera* refer to the emergence of new divinities and should be understood as the action of causing something to open itself. They derive from the stem *-ra*, commonly used to indicate the blooming of flowers (*ojera yvoty*).[48] Cadogan derives an Mbya concept of creation from this phrase: "not a creation from Nothing, but instead causing things to develop, to open up, to appear."[49] As Pierri points out, in his consideration of Cadogan's material and analysis, "the sensory model embedded in this concept of creation is that of transformation, such as that of a budding flower."[50]

The sun deity Nhamandu unfolds himself as "a flower that opens up to the sunlight": he is simultaneously "sun and flower."[51] Pierre Clastres sees Nhamandu as "unfolding himself into his own unfolding."[52] Instead of an ex nihilo act of creation, as in Genesis, we have here the emergence of a divinity who created himself by unfolding and blooming. Nhamandu creates and, recursively, is created by his creation.[53] In a comparison between the *Ayvu Rapyta* and other Amerindian (not just South American) "origin narratives," Pedro de Niemeyer Cesarino accepts the translation of *-ombojera* as *déploiement* or *unfolding* and argues that Clastres lifted the semantic and metaphysical weight of Cadogan's idea of creation off of the dynamic image of a divinity blossoming.[54] Cesarino argues, further, that, by rejecting

Cadogan's image of Nhamandu rising "in the course of his own evolution," Clastres freed the Guarani texts from personification of their creator figure. Nhamandu is himself pure unfolding: he unfolds into other divinities and into the "souls" of those yet born. It would be a mistake to take him for a distinct god, whose act of unfolding founds a dichotomy between creator and created. It would be equally misguided to consider him a supreme divinity in a henotheist hierarchy. Cesarino argues that the foundation or source of Guarani speech is "a recursive multiple voice, without which the world cannot exist"—a single voice that unfolds into a multitude of other voices, thus making the opposition between the one and the multiple inapposite.[55] As Tânia Stolze Lima writes in assessing Pierre Clastres's translation: "the author invites us to understand the greatest divinity in the Mbya pantheon, Nhamandu, as one = multiplicity."[56]

Amerindian narratives, as Cesarino notes, rarely proceed from an image of primordial nothingness. Unlike in Genesis, the primordial darkness of Amerindian myth tends to be filled with odd and often minuscule beings; moreover, there is always an other that the demiurge unfolds into himself: in the first *Ayvu Rapyta* song, there is the hummingbird (*Maino*, "primordial bird") that flies around Nhamandu's colorful coif. In Nimuendaju's Guarani *apapocúva* version there are bats that, during the primordial night in which Nhanderuvuçu finds himself, fill the empty spaces.[57] Besides the divinity that unfolds, in Mbya cosmology, his brother and rival Xariã is often mentioned, either associated with or juxtaposed to Anhã's image.[58] There are narratives in which Xariã is recognized as the creator of white people, others in which he appears as the cause of discord between the demiurge and his wife Nhandexy—to say nothing of the myths about the twins Kuaray and Jaxy, one of those irreducible Amerindian dualities about which Lévi-Strauss wrote magisterially.[59] The

metaphysics involved is clearly one founded on the refusal of finite unity, of an absolute point of view—and crucially the metaphysics is explicit rather than merely implicit. Clastres's work in *Le Grand Parler* is not one of extraction, for, as he observes, the Guarani sages do the work of extraction themselves. As the language-affection of divinity unfolds in speech, so Guarani myth unfolds into "metamythology," a discursive genre of metaphysical reflection.[60]

Metaphysical Meditations in the Forest

Pierre Clastres detected an "eclosion of thought, in the Western sense of the term," in his long nocturnal conversations with a Mbya sage called Soria.[61] It was 1965, and they were in a village close to the Paraná River. The conversations, which concerned the Guarani myths of Kuaray and Jaxy, went on for ten continuous nights. In *Le Grand Parler*, Clastres notes that, little by little, the narrator produced freer formulations of the myths, along with reflections on the human condition and words of advice for his contemporaries. The specific story that Soria discussed was the episode in the saga in which Kuaray (Sun) and Jaxy (Moon) ascend to the celestial plateau in search of their demiurge father through a short-cut made of arrows shot up at the sky. They leave their sister Urutau behind on Earth (her name is also that of a nocturnal bird whose sad song recalls to mind the siblings' moment of separation). This episode is a variation on the pan-Tupi theme of abandonment. The demiurge abandons the brothers, who abandon their sister and all human beings, who stay behind on Earth, where everything perishes. As in other Amerindian myths, this saga identifies the moment of separation between Sky and Earth, the moment in which spatial distances and temporal periods are established, as well as the origin of humanity's hard luck. Soria turns this implicit reflection on the human condition into

an explicit consideration of correct conduct for those who, like Kuaray and Jaxy, seek to approach the divine world.

In making this move, Clastres writes, Soria left the field of myth and entered that of metaphysics:[62]

> He progressively left the domain of myth and allowed himself to be taken by a reflection on myth, an enquiry about the purpose of its meaning, a work of interpretation through which he tried to answer a question that the Guarani obsessively pose to themselves: where is evil, where does unhappiness come from? Here is what he declares, on a cool winter's night in the Paraguayan forest, near a fire that now and then thoughtfully flared: "*Things in their totality are one. And, for us, who have not desired it, they are evil.*" Thus, Soria brought together the evil of this world and the reason for its existence; the unhappiness of the condition of the world's inhabitants and the source of their unhappiness. It is because the totality of things that constitute the world can be said to be One, and not Many, that evil is inscribed on the world's surface. As for us, the adorned, this is not the world we desired, we are not guilty, we suffer the weight of One: Evil is One. Our existence is sick, *axy*, since it unfolds under the sign of One.[63]

The Guarani wish to be divinities, as they once were and will be again, yet they are all too human now and live in a perishable world. They therefore track what Clastres calls the "genealogy of misfortune" through intense ritual work, involving chanting,

dancing, adorning and painting their bodies, smoking tobacco, and following the special diet required to reach the state of *aguyje* ("plenitude," "maturity").

To understand Guarani metamythological discourse, it is crucial to observe the sage's mode of enunciation. In Clastres's words: "At times we are dealing with an Indian telling a myth; at times with a sage that transmits his knowledge and advice to the members of a tribe; and then at times it is the divinity itself who annuls him completely and makes the divine word inhabit him entirely."[64] When narrating the myth of Sun and Moon, Soria spoke to Clastres in Sun's name, expressing himself in "free indirect discourse" (as defined by Tânia Stolze Lima, inspired by Deleuze and Guattari).[65] Soria indeed took Sun's voice, the voice of the elder brother, and spoke as if he were the divinity himself. He then recovered the human position, taking the place of a spiritual leader and sage, casting admonitions at the inhabitants of the perishable land: "Don't forget to dance!" "Don't dress like white people!" "Paint yourselves with urucum, and always be adorned!" Clastres, in other words, was faced with what Deleuze and Guattari called "collective assemblages of enunciation,"[66] or even with what Carlo Severi (referring to Kuna shamanism) termed the "paradoxal subject."[67]

From this assemblage of enunciations, a vertiginous metaphysical discourse emerged: "Things in their totality are one. And, for us, who have not desired it, they are evil." In what sense is the "one" that Soria evokes "evil"? In his essay "De l'Un sans le Multiple," Clastres expands on Soria's discourse in such a way that we do not know whether it is Soria's or Clastres's thinking to which we are exposed: "Evil is One. Good is not Many, it is Two, at once One and its Other, the Two that truly designates complete beings."[68] These "complete beings" are those that have reached *aguyje*, which may mean a state in which human and divine predicates are

indiscernible. It is in the possibility of passing between the one and the other condition that the image of the Two seems to reside.[69] The problem, then, is not (as it was in Greek philosophy) how to reduce multiplicity to unity but, rather, how to produce (or return to) indiscernibility between the two states. Unlike the Greeks, the Guarani sages have no contemplative nostalgia for the One.[70] Duality, then, is the experience of plenitude or *aguyje* that the Guarani contrast with the Earth and its corruption. It is in the context of this duality—this "perpetual imbalance," as Lévi-Strauss puts it[71]—that we may associate the Guarani refusal of the principle of noncontradiction (at the level of logic) with their rejection of coercive power (at the level of politics).[72]

The Savage Logos

But, when narrating the story of Sun and Moon, Soria did not speak in his own voice. The voice of Kuaray, the Sun, spoke through him. Even though Pierre Clastres note that the discourse's enunciator is constituted by means of a collective assemblage, in some way he ultimately falls into the type of evolutionism that is common to the standard history of Western philosophy: thought, in any culture, would proceed from authorless, unself-reflective, mythic kinds to kinds of rational and logical discourse that are engaged in by free subjects able to compare the conditions described in inherited myths to the conditions of the external world. Although he admits the continuity between the narration of myth and metaphysical reflection, the latter only seems to acquire a name to the extent that it is enunciated by a subject that is able to keep a certain distance, think about the myth from above, fold thought in on itself, even while he is "inspired" by a divinity. On this point, Clastres is far from contemporary considerations about the relation between mythology and philosophy,

such as that developed by Viveiros de Castro, in *Cannibal Metaphysics*, who takes Amerindian mythology as "virtual philosophies" by right, as constituting a plane of immanence from which concepts can be extracted. According to this view, a thought that reflects about order in the world does not necessarily presuppose a reflexive subject.

At the opening of *Le Grand Parler*, Clastres explains that his study of the Mbya case turned him away from structuralist analysis, for, contrary to Lévi-Strauss's assertion that Amazonian myths are not thought by men but "think themselves through men",[74] Clastres had found that the Guarani are relatively "poor in myths" but "rich in analysis" of them, "rich in thought".[75] In other words, the Guarani, unlike most of Amerindian peoples, turn away from subjectless mythical regimes to give birth to a proper reflexive thought, which entails subjective work of exegesis. Note that the theme of Tupi-Guarani exceptionalism in the lowland South American landscape is present in many of Clastres's works. A frequent argument of his is that, due to the empowerment of war chiefs and charismatic prophets, the ancient coastal Tupi and the Paraguayan Guarani lived through the dizzying eruption of a proto-state just before the arrival of European colonizers.[76] Again, following the standard history of Western philosophy, and going back to Ancient Greeks, Clastres recognizes the birth of reflexive thought in the emergence of the polis, an expression of the State Form.

The distinction that Clastres wanted to make, however, between Guarani development and the development of other Amerindian peoples may be more artificial than he imagined. Even if the prophetic fervor and the vector of deterritorialization with which metaphysical discourses are associated are more evident among Tupi-Guarani peoples, current ethnographies confirm that both factors always have been

present in other Amerindian landscapes. The opposition between mythos and logos falters in the forest, and no Amerindian sage would accept the abandonment of myth and the transcending of religion that the Western philosopher proposes since Plato. The Amerindian sage is not an individuated and reflexive subject aspiring toward a sovereign voice; rather, diverse voices reverberate through him.[77] In this sense, his is a "fallible voice"[78] that "shifts perspectives" with no intention of synthesis. The origin of philosophy among the Guarani Mbya, as in Amazonia generally, is not aptly describable—as the origin of philosophy in Greece is describable—as a passage from mythos to logos and from a religion that projects figures to an immanent rationality that devises concepts. Nor can the appearance of metaphysics in the forest be thought of as representing a shift from a collective mentality to a reflexive subject. The origin of metaphysical thought among Amerindians is, again, their incessant extraction of that which was virtually present in their myths. And this extraction does not presuppose a single creative subject, but an assemblage of subjectivities. We find, once again, the model of unfolding as the model for creation: discursive regimes or genres do not emerge once and for all but, instead, unfold into one another as subjects unfold into one another. There is no reason, in the Amerindian context, to oppose mythological thought to reflexivity and creativity. As Peter Gow has shown in his study of mythopoesis among the Piro of the lower Urubamba, each narration of a myth is itself an act of creation involving the relation of narrator and listener in the singular event of the myth's narration.[80] The idea of prereflexive, precreative thought is perhaps the greatest mistake that we make in thinking about the emergence of philosophy and metaphysics, in any context.

The Erratic Polis

As we have seen, Pierre Clastres draws attention to the overlap between two registers in his interaction with Soria. At times, the narrator took the position of the divinity Kwaray, who guides his younger brother toward an imperishable, celestial place, while at other times Soria took up the role of a spiritual leader who counsels his people, guiding them in the search for *aguyje*. In effect, the elder brother in the mythological saga supplies the model for the spiritual leader—the sage or prophet—who also serves as a conductor. His words of counsel exhort the Guarani to maintain their connection with the divine world and eventually leave this corrupt land, much as Sun and Moon did[81]:

> Can you hear me, my children? I am advising you. I no longer feel happy here. We should leave this corrupt land. On this corrupt land we will leave our body. But our Speech, yes, we will take it to heaven. As for our Speech, we must take it to heaven.[82]

The transit from "this corrupt land" to "heaven," Soria emphasizes, depends (as already noted) on technologies of becoming—a strict ritual regime including dance, music, song, and bodily adornment:

> Many nations spread themselves throughout the Earth. Don't lose your patience with them! Continue to dance! Shake your rattles with force. So that your sisters accompany you with the dance staff. So that they know how to use them! Your sisters! Sing the songs inspired by Tupã well, without stopping. Bring them all together for your sisters: only like this will they know how to sing them. If you don't bring these

> songs together, if you lose patience, if your perseverance is lacking, if you lose patience with your own body, then you will not become strong. . . . May he keep erect, the imperfect urucum! May the women paint themselves with this urucum: and not with white men's ornaments! For we should keep to ourselves. White men's things, we cannot bear them on this ugly land!"[83]

The "corrupt land" is associated with the *jurua* world. Everything is as if they maximize it. Soria opposes the Guarani Tupã, the divinity of storms and freshness, to the Christian God (which the missionaries insisted on identifying with Tupã), the divinity of "heavy fog," which prevents the Guarani from approaching the world of the *nhe'e kwery*, the divinities. Under the "heavy fog" of the *jurua*'s Tupã, existence becomes even more difficult and more distant to *aguyje*. This is Soria's lament – "[the jurua's] Tupã sings louder than me…" – as if to proclaim an insurmountable feeling of impotence. This metaphysical discourse, which never sways from a reflection about perishability, reveals a strong prophetic quality, in the sense suggested by Hélène Clastres in *La Terre sans mal*: a critique of the social and human condition that produces an ethical and political direction that prompts action, impels movement. To abandon this corrupt land it is necessary to sing beautiful words, dance and adorn one's body; it is also necessary to reject the world of white people, where everything is heavier. This discourse is one given by a spiritual leader, a modality cultivated by the Guarani, who prefer not to separate their agreements with divinities and other non-human agents from what we consider to be political leadership.

We could identify the outlines of a political discourse in these words of advice; but while we can talk about a "polis" that the Guarani cultivate in the forest

and at the edges of great cities, we do not aim to establish an exclusively human domain among them, for their refusal of the separation between humans and divinities means that this polis emerges in the domain of becoming. Prophetic speech is thus a "cosmopolitical" speech, in the sense given to this term by Isabelle Stengers: it is a speech in which the cosmos – the Multiplicity that constitutes it – "insists on politics"; words that are already becoming because they connect disparate worlds. In other words, a cosmos as Multiplicity that insists on politics would be one that refuses all ontological unification.[84] The Guarani cosmopolitical discourse is thus at once political and metaphysical: its politics consists, precisely, in denying the ontological separation between humans and divinities, in the denial of *jurua* thought, which turns the order of things from the "corrupt land" into the ultimate reality.

One could comparece Soria's metaphysical exhortative discourse with that of Davi Kopenawa—the Yanomami political and spiritual leader who coauthored, with Bruce Albert, the celebrated book *La Chute du ciel*. Kopenawa criticizes, in cosmological terms, the modes of knowledge and the modes of existence of white people.[87] The mythology of the *xapiripë* spirits (also described as "ancestral animals") is applied to the interpretation of events such as conflicts with white explorers and miners, the advent of epidemics, and Amazonian ecological crises. The Hutukara, the Earth on which we live, is on this basis said to risk the sky falling upon it. Kopenawa's use of language, whether he is speaking of the *xapiripë* and shamanic practice or of ecological science, is precise and always apt for its specific context. The Yanomami have a variety of discursive genres: the chiefs' words of advice are called *hereamu* or *patamu* and tend to associate mythic episodes with exhortations and with warnings of the imminence of war. There are also, as Kopenawa emphasizes, important ceremonial dialogues (called *wayamu* and *yaimu*), delivered in a strongly

agonistic tone, even while they aim to establish peaceful relations with foreign groups. Thus Kopenawa has the means, in *La Chute du ciel*, to speak strongly and even harshly to white people about the reprehensible behavior of those who threaten the Yanomami. Addressing his own kin with words of encouragement, he says: "Awe! You will speak in *hereamu* to white people. We cannot go as far as their houses, they would not understand. You know how to imitate their tongue. You will give them our words. Have no fear of them! Answer them with the same tone! At this time, from afar, we will defend the forest and its inhabitants with you by dancing the *xapiripë.*"[88]

A properly prophetic discourse emerges in the final part of *La Chute du ciel*, where Kopenawa interprets historical events through a mythological lens, in what Viveiros de Castro, in a related context, calls a "historical warming of shamanism."[89] For example, Kopenawa interprets the catastrophic exploitation of gold in the context of a mythology associating the origin of metal with the demiurge Omama and a pathogenic character, Yoasi, master of death. Shamanism is engaged to mobilize collective action. In his cosmopolitical discourse, Kopenawa explains that, with the death of many shamans, chaos will reign, for their orphan spirits will become angry and make the sky fall in retribution against the white people. When that time comes, he prophesies, humans will become cannibals. Yanomami shamanism is thus made relevant and even indispensable not only for the Yanomami but for everybody that inhabit the Earth. (Note that the theme of Yanomami and other people "sharing the same Earth", which forces to think about a "common world", does not appear in the discourse of Soria, for whom it is necessary abandon the corrupt land and live away from white people.) Up to a point, we can read Kopenawa's discourse as an *hereamu*, an elder's words, a chief's speech, explaining the appropriate way to inhabit the

world. But this *hereamu* is directed outward, toward white people with whom one must learn to coexist.

Kopenawa's discourse puts white readers in the position of "sons" or "sons-in-law"—of apprentices—and makes them both conscious of their own ignorance and sensitive to Yanomami knowledge. White people are not familiar with the art of ceremonial dialogue and do not know how to see the *xapiripë*, how to access shamanic knowledge:

> If they [white people] could understand me, I would speak in *yãimu* [a ceremonial dialogue among elders]: "Stop pretending to be big men, I pity you! I will make your bad words stop! If you didn't think in such a closed manner, you would cast out the earth-eaters from our forest! You lie by saying that you want a part of Brazil to keep all the land. . . . You know nothing about the forest. You just know how to cut down and burn trees, make holes and change a river's course. However, the forest does not belong to you and none of you created it!"[90]

What makes the Kopenawa-Albert exchange, published in 2010, comparable to that of Soria and Pierre Clastres, published in 1974, is the capacity of both to unfold indigenous knowledge and verbal genres, making a metaphysical and political assemblage appear – a cosmopolitical assemblage, it is worth insisting – that interprets the world while, at the same time, impelling action. Both Kopenawa and Soria reproach the nonindigenous world for its lack of connection to an other-than-human world that is the source of all possible knowledge and agency. It was in his

respectful solicitation, translation, interpretation, and diffusion of Soria's prophetic discourse—directed against the disconnection of worlds, against the principle of noncontradiction, and against the metaphysics that renders each of those intellectual mistakes inevitable—that Pierre Clastres, in a constant dialogue with Hélène Clastres, anticipated the hopeful and politically charged confluence of anthropology and metaphysics that *Common Knowledge* drew attention to in its recent symposium "Anthropological Philosophy."

<Begin unnumbered note>

An early version of this essay was presented orally at a colloquium on "Guarani networks" held at the University of São Paulo in November 2013, where the author was grateful for the opportunity to speak with Guarani who were present. He wishes to thank Dominique Gallois and Valéria Macedo for their invitation to participate, as well as Valéria Macedo, Henrique Pougy, Lucas Keese, Patrice Maniglier, and Peter Skafish for their comments on different versions of this text.

<End unnumbered note>

---

[1] Unlike Pierre Clastres, who often wrote in general terms about "primitive society" standing "against the State," Hélène devoted her only book, *La Terre sans Mal: Le prophétisme tupi-guarani* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), to a highly specific topic: Tupi-Guarani prophetics. Her book compares historical sources on the ancient Tupi-Guarani peoples to ethnographic data (including her own) on the contemporary Guarani. Pierre did write a ethnography of another Tupi-Guarani people, the Aché Guayaki: *Chroniques des indiens Guayaki: Ce que savent les Aché, chasseurs nomades du Paraguay* (Plon: Paris, 1972), translated into English by the novelist Paul Auster, under the title

Chronicle of Guayaki Indians (New York: Zone, 1998). Pierre wrote as well on the Chulupi Nivacle of the Chaco and the Yanomami of northern Amazonia. For the relationship between Pierre and Hélène's Clastres's work, see Renato Sztutman, "Religião nômade ou germe do Estado? Pierre e Hélène Clastres diante da vertigem tupi," *Novos Estudos Cebrap*, no. 83 (2009): 129–57.

[2] Pierre Clastres, "Les prophètes dans la jongle" and "De l'Un sans le Multiple," in *La Société contre l'État: recherches d'anthropologie politique* (Paris: Minuit, 1974). In English translation, see *Society against the State*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone, 1987).

[3] Pierre Clastres, *Le Grand Parler: Mythes et chants sacrés des indiens Guarani* (Paris: Seuil, 1974), 15.

[4] Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Métaphysiques cannibales: Lignes d'anthropologie post-structuraliste* (Paris: PUF, 2009). In English translation: *Cannibal Metaphysics: For a Post-Structural Anthropology*, trans. Peter Skafish (Minneapolis, MN: Univocal, 2014).

[5] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (1991; New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

[6] This exercise is a *fiction* in Marilyn Strathern's sense of the term. In the words of Viveiros de Castro's *Cannibal Metaphysics*: "The fiction consists in treating indigenous ideas as concepts and then following the consequences of this decision: defining the pre-conceptual ground or plane of immanence the concepts presuppose, the conceptual persona they conjure into existence, and the matter of the real that they suppose. Treating these ideas as concepts does not involve objectively determining them as something other than what they are, such as another kind of actual object. By casting them in terms of default anthropological "concepts"—individual cognitions,

collective representations, propositional attitudes, cosmological beliefs, unconscious schemas, textual complexes, embodied dispositions, and so on—we make mere anthropological fictions of them" (187).

[7] This passage from Viveiros de Castro's *Métaphysiques cannibales* was added to the Brazilian edition, *Metafísicas canibais*, is not found in the French and English versions. [Translator's Translation.]

[8] Pierre Clastres 1968. "Entre silence et dialogue", L'Arc, pp. 76-78.

[9] *Cannibal Metaphysics*, 10, 32, 40, 48, 92.

[10] For the convergence between anthropology and metaphysics, see the symposium "Philosophical Anthropology," *Common Knowledge* 22, no. 3 (2016), as well as the intro. to *Thinking through Things: Theorizing Artefacts Ethnographically*, ed. Amiria Henare, Martin Holbraad, and Sari Wastell (London: Routledge, 2007); Holbraad, *Truth in Motion: The Recursive Anthropology of Cuban Divination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Patrice Maniglier, "Un Tournant métaphysique?" *Critique* 786 (2012): 916–32, and "Manifeste pour un comparatisme supérieur en philosophie," *Les Temps Modernes*, no. 682 (2015): 86–145; Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, "Who's Afraid of Ontological Wolf? Some Comments on an Ongoing Anthropological Debate," Marilyn Strathern Lecture, 2014, Cambridge University Social Anthropology Society; and Peter Skafish, intro. to Viveiros de Castro, *Cannibal Metaphysics*.

[11] For critical views of this type of mystification, see, Bartolomeu Meliá, *El Guarani Conquistado y Reducido: Ensayos de Etnohistoria* (Asunción, Universidad Católica, 1988); Cristina Pompa, *Religião como Tradução: Missionários, Tupi e Tapuia no Brasil colonial* (Bauru: Edusc, 2003); Elizabeth de Paula Pissolato, *A duração da pessoa: mobilidade, parentesco e xamanismo mbya (Guarani*) (São Paulo: Unesp,

ISA; Rio de Janeiro: NuTI, 2006); Diego Villar and Isabelle Combès, "La Tierra sin Mal: Leyenda de la creación y destrucción de un mito," *Revista Tellus* 24 (2013): 201–25; and Pablo Barbosa, "A 'Terra sem Mal' de Curt Nimuendaju e a 'Emigração dos Caiuáz' de João Henrique Elliott: Notas sobre os deslocamentos guaranis na segunda metade do século XIX," *Revista Tellus* 24 (2013): 121–58. For reviews of these criticisms, see, Renato Sztutman, *O profeta e o principal: A ação política ameríndia e seus personagens* (São Paulo: Edusp/Fapesp, 2012), and Daniel Calazans Pierri, "O perecível o imperecível: Lógica do sensível e corporalidade no pensamento mbya-guarani" (MA thesis, University of São Paulo, 2013).

[12] I have written on the dated nature of Pierre Clastres's work in a recent essay (Sztutman, 2013, "As metamorfoses do contra-Estado: Pierre Clastres e as políticas ameríndias", *Ponto Urbe* n. 13), in which I discuss the background of hopelessness against which most of the ethnological work on Lowland South America was being produced at the time. This was especially true in Brazil, because of its a strong policy in favor of integration, along with the intensification of predatory expansion, that led to a dramatic fall in the indigenous population. In this context, the focus of anthropologists was on processes of "acculturation" and "ethnification," and on the need to organize in the face of the Modern State's consolidation. For Pierre Clastres, however, the problem was one of ethnocide and of what he considered the ontological impossibility of indigenous peoples coexisting with societies that were "for the State" and thus "against liberty." See, in particular, Pierre Clastres, *Recherches d'anthropologie politique* ([Paris: Seuil, 1980]). [English translation is titled *Archeology of Violence*, trans. Jeanine Herman and Ashley Lebner (Los Angeles: Semiotext[e], 2010).]

[15] The Mbya term *karai* has received different translations, including "shamans," "prophets," "spiritual leaders," and sages. *Karai* is also, however, the name used for divinities associated with various celestial regions. For a discussion of Guarani reflections on these divine beings, see Pierri, "O perecível o imperecível," and Valéria Macedo and Renato Sztutman, "A parte de que se é parte: Notas sobre individuação e divinização a partir dos Guarani," *Cadernos de Campo* 23 (2010): 287–302. In some Tupi-Guarani languages, *karai* is used as well to designate mythical heroes and foreigners (white people, for instance).

16 Pierre Clastres, *La Société contre l'État*, chaps. 8 ("Prophètes dans la jongle") and 9 ("De l'Un sans le Multiple").

[17] The concept of Becoming and its immanent significance in Tupi-Guarani prophetism is discussed in Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *From the Enemy's Point of View: Humanity and Divinity in an Amazonian Society* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), which concerns the Araweté, a Tupi-Guarani people. The contrast between immanent and transcendent religions is treated in Sztutman, "Religião nômade ou germe do Estado?," which considers writings by both Pierre and Hélène Clastres.

[18] In the specialist Guarani literature, different terms are used to address these figures (such as *tamoi*, *xeramoi*, and *pa'i*), and the Clastrian distinction between sages and *pajés* is not always accepted. The native terms for these individuals also modulate relative to functions and magnitudes. See Pissolato, *A duração da pessoa*; Valéria Macedo, "Vetores porã e vai na cosmopolítica guarani," *Tellus* no. 21 (2011): 25–52; and Pierri "O perecível o imperecível."

[19] Hélène Clastres, "De quoi parlent les indiens," in *Pierre Clastres*, ed. Miguel Abensour and Kupiec (Paris: Sens and Tonka, 2011), 211-221.

[20] Pierre Clastres, "Échange et pouvoir: philosophie de la chefferie indienne," *L'Homme* 2, no. 4 (1962): 51-65.

[21] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté* (1949; repr., Paris: Mouton, 1967).

[22] Pierre Clastres's views correlate in this respect with those of Lévi-Strauss in *Mythologiques*, where the latter discusses "pathologies of language" and their relationship in indigenous myths to "pathologies of alliance." In the case of both language and alliance-making, excessive or atrophied use, too much nearness or distance, can cause cosmic catastrophes, which is why both marriage and language must be modulated to establish a common ethical ground. In *Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté*, Lévi-Strauss reveals the homology between structures of language and structures of kinship in the (universal) transition from nature to culture and, thus, in establishing the imperative of exchange. In the volumes of *Mythologiques* (which include the tetralogy plus the three "petites *Mythologiques*"), Lévi-Strauss takes Amerindian myths as a vantage point from which to think about the principles of social life and language. It is particularly in *Les Origines des manières à table: Mythologiques III* (Paris: Plon, 1967) that he develops his finer reflections on an Amerindian "moral philosophy" of the word and the body. On this ethical standpoint taken throughout the *Mythologiques*, see Renato Sztutman, "Ética e profética nas Mitológicas de Lévi-Strauss," *Horizontes Antropológicos* 15, no. 31 (2009): 293–319.

[23] Unfortunately, Pierre Clastres does not describe this type of speech in the same detail as he does the Guarani sages' discourses, not even when he writes about the speech of the Guayaki leader Jyvukugi (in *Chroniques des indiens Guayaki*). There is a need for more ethnographies of them so that we can better understand these

discursive regimes. See Henrique Pougy, "Por uma pragmática do poder: a fala do chefe no Alto Xingu," MS 2015. For analysis of the Kalapalo (Upper Xingu) chief's speech, see Antonio Guerreiro Jr., "Political Chimeras: The Uncertainty of the Chief's Speech in the Upper Xingu," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographical Theory* 5, no. 1 (2015): 59–85).

[24] Hélène Clastres, "De quoi parlent les indiens," 214. There are two different interpretations of Pierre Clastres's theory of "primitive religion." Marcel Gauchet, in 1977 ("La dette de sens et les racines de l'État: politique de la religion primitive", *Libre* 2, 1-43) focuses on the idea of myth as the "divine law" of primitive society, an idea present in Clastres's early essays—a Malinowskian rather than Lévi-Straussian formula. Meanwhile, in her study of Tupi-Guarani prophetism, Hélène Clastres describes tupian religion as purely immanent, since humans are in the process of becoming-divine.

[25] For a wider discussion of the concept of "worlding" in the context of0 the "French ontological turn," see Philippe Descola (2014, "Modes of being and forms of predication", *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4, n. 1: 271-280) and Bruno Latour (2014, "Another way to compose the common world", *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4, n. 1: 301-307). Both emphasize the shift from "world views" to "world making." Descola is particularly interested in the way that the environment is perceived; Latour (inspired by A. N. Whitehead) argues that philosophy and anthropology should be concerned with objects rather than subjects. See, also, Joanna Overing, "The Shaman as Maker of Worlds: Nelson Goodman in the Amazon," *Man* 25, no. 4 (1990): 602–619.

[28] Dominique Tilkin Gallois, *Mairi revisitada: a reintegração da fortaleza de Macapá na tradição oral dos Wajãpi*. São Paulo: FAPESP/NHII, 1994.

[29] The contrast between "written" and "oral" traditions has been widely criticized in contemporary anthropology. See, for instance, Carlo Severi, *Le Principe de la chimère: une anthropologie de la mémoire* (Paris, Eds. Rue d'Um – Musée du Quai Branly, 2007), and Pierre Déléage, *Repartir de zéro* (Paris, Mix, 2016).

[31] Marshall Sahlins. *Islands of History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

[33] Similarly, the contemporary Marubo (Panoan speakers) of the Javari Valley distinguish "sung myths" (*saiti*), which are characterized by a strongly metaphorical language, and "spoken speech." Only the former contain mythopoetical knowledge about the world's formation. Cesarino (*Quando a terra deixou de falar: cantos da mitologia marubo*. São Paulo: Ed. 34, 2013) indicates that these sung myths and this knowledge frequently reappear in shamanic activities and connect to shamanic songs, thus revealing an "inter-discursive system."

[36] Lucas Keese dos Santos. "A esquiva do xondaro: movimento e ação política entre os Guarani Mbya", MA thesis, University of São Paulo, 2016.

[37] *Cannibal Metaphysics*, 129-130. In a dialogue with Lévi-Strauss, Viveiros de Castro defines mythology more broadly as the "system's intensive conditions," as the "field of the given". Myth would delineate a "virtual and intensive plane," from which sociality can emerge. And from this "virtual plane," which we might call pre-discursive or even pre-expressive, different discursive and expressive pieces can emerge, from ordinary narratives that have little effect on the world, to powerful dialogues that can trigger becomings, that is, more or less reversible transformations.

[38] For discussion of the relation between language, intentionality, and personhood, see, for instance, Pedro de Niemeyer Cesarino, *Oniska: Poética do xamanismo na Amazônia* (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2011), and Magnus Course, "The Birth of the

Word : Language, Force, and Mapuche Ritual Authority," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2, no. 1 (2012, 1–26).

[39] León Cadogan, *Ayvu Rapyta: Textos míficos de los Mbyá-Guarani del Guairá* (São Paolo: Boletins da Faculdade de Filosofia, Ciencias, e Letras, 1959), no. 227. This text is the outcome of a dialogue, on the origins of human language, between Cadogan and the Mbya chief Pablo Vera.

[40] Pierre Clastres, *Le Grand parler*, 29.

[41] Valéria Macedo, "Nexos da diferença: Cultura e afecção em uma aldeia guarani na Serra do mar" (PhD diss., University of São Paulo, 2009).

[42] According to Pierri (in "O perecível o imperecível"), the "land where nothing is exhausted" must be understood in ontological, rather than mystical, terms. Understanding the trope demands attention to the distinction between *mara* (the "perishable") and *mara e'y* (the "imperishable"). *Aguyje* is, for Pierri, the way to attain the state of imperishability. He rejects Cadogan's translation of *aguyje* as "perfection" and also Pierre Clastres's as "completeness," preferring to translate the term as "body maturation." Becoming divine, which is what *aguyje* ultimately suggests, is reached through the body, by acts of eating, dancing, adornment, and so forth. Pierri refers, in the course of this discussion, to stories of the Nhanderu Miri, ancient shamans who reached *yvy mara e'y* through their bodies' maturation, rather than as a postmortem destiny.

[43] Hélène Clastres, *La Terre sans mal*, 108.

[44] Josely Vianna Baptista, *Roça barroca* (São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2011), 13.

[45] Pierri, "O perecível e o imperecível," 139.

[46] Cadogan, *Ayvu Rapyta*, 25.

[47] Clastres's translation from Guarani into French is as follows: "Notre père le dernier, notre père le premier, / fait que son propre corps surgisse / de la nuit originaire. // La divine plante de pieds, / le petit siege rond: / au coeur de la nuit originaire / *il les déploie se déployant lui-même."* Pierre Clastres, *Le Grand parler*, 18.

[48] Cadogan (*Ayvu Rapyta*, 25) finds the same particle *-ra* in the expression *kuaa-ra-ra*, which he translates as "sacred words" or as "creative power/wisdom." *Kuaa-ra-ra* as "creative power" manifests in flames (*tataendy*) and mist (*tatachina*). The latter connects humans and divinities, as does the *karai*'s tobacco smoke. The name used to designate the sun, *Kuaray*, is itself derived from *kuaa-ra-ra*: the sun is the highest manifestation of wisdom (*kua'a*) and creative power.

[49] "Comparing the verb *guero-jera* with the 'reflexive' forms *jupi* = 'to go up' and *guejy* = 'to go down', for example: *oguero-jupi* = he makes it go up while he goes up; *oguero-guejy* = he makes it go down while he goes down" (Cadogan, *Ayvu Rapyta*, 17). We might therefore gloss *oguero-jera as "*making something while at the same time making oneself," which would reveal what some philosophers call an "internal relation."

[50] Pierri, "O perecível o imperecível," 102.

[51] Pierre Clastres, *Le Grand parler*, 19.

[52] "Nhamandu se déployant lui-même en son propre déploiement" (Clastres, *Le Grand parler*, 25). In comparing the *Ayvu Rapyta* with Genesis, Henrique Pougy disputes Cadogan's translation of *ombojera* as "creation." While in Genesis, God himself creates light, in the *Ayvu Rapyta* Nhamandu does not *create* light but brings it forth from his chest; thus light, in the Guarani myth, is an integral part of a god who unfolds himself. Pougy, "Ombojera: o Ser e a diferença na (onto)gênesis Guarani," MS, 2014.

[53] It is not without reason that, in her poetic translation of *Ayvu Rapyta*, Josely Vianna Baptista chose to translate *oguero-jera* in some places as "to unfold," and in others as "to blossom" ("desdobrar" and "aflorar," respectively, in Portugese).

[54] Pedro de Niemeyer Cesarino, "A voz falível: Ensaio sobre as formações ameríndias de mundos," *Literatura e Sociedade* 19 (2015): 76–99.

[55] Ibid., 91.

[56] Tânia Stolze Lima, "Por uma cartografia do poder e da diferença nas cosmopoliticas ameríndias," *Revista de Antropologia* 2, no 54 (2011): 632.

[57] Curt Unkel Nimuendaju, *As Lendas da Criação e Destruição do Mundo como Fundamentos da Religião dos Apapocúva-Guarani* (1914; repr., São Paulo: Hucitec/Edusp, 1987).

[58] Xariã appears as Nhanderu Mba'ekuaa (*mba'e*: a "nonhuman"; *kuaa*: "to know," "knowledge") in Cadogan's *Ayvu Rapyta*, and as *Mba'e Poxy* in Pierri's "O perecível o imperecível."

[59] Claude Lévi-Strauss. *Histoire de Lynx*. Paris: Plon, 1991.

[60] Pierre Clastres, *Le Grand parler*, 123.

[61] Pierre Clastres, *Le Grand parler*, 10.

[62] Pierre Clastres, *Le Grand parler*, 15.

[63] Pierre Clastres, *Le Grand parler*, 12.

[64] Pierre Clastres, *Le Grand parler*, 124.

[65] Lima, "Por uma cartografia do poder e da diferença nas cosmopoliticas ameríndias."

[66] See, especially, the discussion led by Deleuze and Guattari in the forth plateau, "Les postulats de la linguistique". *Mille Plateaux* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1980).

[67] Carlo Severi, "Memory, Reflexivity, and Belief: Reflections on the Ritual Use of Language," *Social Anthropology* 10, no. 1 (2002): 23–40.

[68] Pierre Clastres, "De l'Un sans le Multiple," 150.

[69] In reference to a comment by Nicole Loraux, Lima ("Por uma cartografia do poder e da diferença nas cosmopoliticas ameríndias," 613) writes that "the nature of the problem raised by Clastres is certainly not numerical. The ontology that one could expect to find in his work should be much more consistent to the forces than to numbers."

[70] At this point, Pierre Clastres compares Soria's discourse to that of the first Ancient Greek philosophers: both pass from a mythopoetic genre to a more properly reflexive genre. However, if the Guarani sages propel the "active insurrection against the Empire of One," the Greeks keep themselves under the "contemplative nostalgia of One." If in Classical Greek though, One is Good, in Guarani thought it is misfortune and it is necessary to seek out the Not-One, the imperishable, the unlimited. Bento Prado Jr. alleges that what propelled Clastres' comparative exercise was not the contrast between Guarani thought and the reflections of Parmenides of Elea – a thinker who placed the Being at the center of the metaphysical discussion – but rather a consideration of a fragment of Heraclitus: "Listening not to me, but to the *logos* (word), it is wise to agree that all things are one." Despite proffering that everything is flux, Heraclitus argued for the need to reduce all multiplicity to Unity. As Prado Jr. ("Lembranças e reflexões sobre Pierre Clastres: entrevista com Bento Prado Jr, por Piero de Camargo Leirner e Luiz Henrique de Toledo". In: *Revista de Antropologia* 46, n. 2, 2003: 430) states, "in political and ethical terms, this implies the reduction of multiple desires to the desire of one, connecting social hierarchy to order in the

cosmos." According to Clastres, this reduction is precisely what the Guarani and many Amerindians always aim to avoid.

[71] *Histoire de lynx*, Paris: Plon, 1991.

[72] The problem that Pierre and also Hélène Clastres detect among the Guarani inevitably refers to the "principle of participation" that Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (*La mentalité primitive*, Paris: Alcan, 1922) attributed to the "pre-logical mind", which does not recognize the principle of non contradiction. For their part, the Clastres associated it not as an anteriority but an "other logic," connected to another ontology that is less concerned with Being and with identity than with Becoming. More than that, they associate this other logic and other ontology with an other politics: a revolt against the principle of identity would also be a revolt against coercive power, which creates a fixed hierarchy between beings.

[74] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Le Cru et le Cuit: Mythologiques I* (Paris: Plon, 1964), 20.

[75] "Nous pensons, en d'autres termes, que, pauvres en mythes, les Guarani sont riches en pensée; que leur pauvreté en mythes résulte d'une perte consécutive à la naissance de leur pensée". *Le Grand parler*, 10.

[76] See Pierre Clastres, "Les prophètes dans la jongle" and "De l'Un sans le Multiple," in *La Société contre l'État*.

[77] See Pedro de Niemeyer Cesarino, ed. and trans., *Quando a terra deixou de falar: Cantos de mitologia marubo* (São Paulo: Editora 34, 2013), and *Oniska* for a thorough analysis of the "multiplication of the enunciative function" in shamanic songs.

[78] "Fallible voice": Pedo de Niemeyer Cesarino, "A voz falível—ensaio sobre as formações amerindia de mundos," *Literatura e Sociedade* 19 (2014): 77–99.

[80] Peter Gow, *An Amazonian Myth and its History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[81] Guarani name *mongeta* these words of counsel. They are not specific to *karai* speeches and take place in daily life. As Adriana Testa ("Caminhos de saberes Guarani Mbya: modos de criar, crescer e comunicar", PhD dissertation, University of São Paulo, 2014) explains, *mongeta* are an important expression of *ayvu porã* ("beautiful speech").

[82] Pierre Clastres, *Le Grand parler*, 129.

[83] Pierre Clastres, *Le Grand parler*, 134–35.

[84] For "cosmopolitics," see, e.g., Isabelle Stengers, "La Proposition cosmopolitique," in *L'émergence des cosmopolitiques*, ed. Jacques Lolive and Olivier Soubeyran (Paris: La Découverte, 2007). For Stengers (and also for Latour) there is no unified cosmos and no given common world. While Latour endorse a "composicionist task", Stengers underlines the need to resist against any act of political-ontological unification.

[87] Davi Kopenawa and Bruce Albert, *La Chute du ciel: Paroles d'un chamane yanomami* (Paris: Plon, 2010). In English: *The Falling Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman*, trans. Nicholas Elliot and Alison Dundy (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

[88] Kopenawa and Albert, *Falling Sky*, 404.

[89] Viveiros de Castro, *Métaphysiques cannibales*, p. 155.

[90] Kopenawa and Albert, *Falling Sky*, 414.