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CULTIVATING FUTURES: BOTANICAL ECONOMIES AND KNOWLEDGE ECOLOGIES IN MIGRANT COLOMBIAN AMAZONIA

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Dedication

I dedicate this text to the curing and well-being of the *Dɨona Urukɨ* (People of Tobacco), of their territory, and of the world for which they are working with all of the strength and levity and ferocious generativity they possess. The people of *Kaziya Naɨraɨ* and Km 11 in the Resguardo Tikuna-Uitoto Km 6-11 near Leticia shared their homes and lives with me with generosity I could not deserve and teasing that I certainly did. Sara Butuna and Alfredo Bolívar loved me like a daughter, and taught me things any child should know and yet I did not. Anastasia Candre shared her poetic and ironic senses in equal measure, and she is sorely missed. The members of the reserve I call here Heron River allowed me to travel with them through fraught territory in every sense, and their persistence in the midst of impossible conditions reflects a more than human force. In Bogotá, Ary Mendoza at the *maloca* of the Jardín Botánico José Celestino Mutis offered me a place to land and many animating stories. The women of the Cabildo Uitoto let me accompany them in their travels in the worlds of the city, and in the questions of making worlds where women can live well. Claudia Mejía Eimenekene, Tɨra Paola Atama, Diocelina Rivera Olaya, and Sylvia made me their sister, and folded me into the reciprocities of laughter and insight and strength that remake a world. Don Isaias Román shared his genius as a teacher and artist with great humour. Cantalicio Eimenekene led me through the Seven Worlds, and his presence in it proves this to be the right one.

To the *Dɨona Urukɨ* who have made me family, to those whom I carry in me with love and who carry me in them, to all of our ancestors and to all of our kin to come, I give back this work, hoping that it will do the best kind of magic, and turn all that we gathered together, bitter and wild and dangerous, into something that feeds us all.

"There is a land of the living and a land of the dead and the bridge is love,

the only survival, the only meaning."

--Thornton Wilder, 1927

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The week that I returned from fieldwork, in late September 2014, my adoptive grandfather Cantalicio gave me a way of working that would make it possible to be a conduit for all that I had carried back from the field, to carry what I loved and also what I could not, to love what I could carry and also what I could not.

I was sleeping little, rising at four a.m. to follow *dietas* that he had asked me to keep in order to protect proprietary curing knowledge that he had worked for the month before my departure from Bogotá to settle in my body. To substantiate it in a way that was safe for the plant divinities to whom it belonged, that would bring abundance to all the others that were its surrogates, and that would keep me from becoming ill while we were separated—this time by intercontinental distance and indefinite months and years. My partner at the time kindly obliged in taking on the roles of ritual spouse and anthropologist's side-kick, and blew cured tobacco smoke over the crown of my head while the rest of Hyde Park was still asleep. I bathed in basil water and ate tobacco paste before sitting at my desk in the pre-dawn hush to write. Writing at that point meant touching sheaves of field notes, feeling their paper and also their seeming radioactivity. It meant moving audio files from one folder into another, changing their names, opening them gingerly, hoping the ones labeled with the name of a place that had blown me open might not feel like landmines, might just be accidental recordings of ambient life in a reserve. Dogs and chickens, babies and laughter, wind in the trees or rain on the roof. And if it was the roof that I was going to hear, that it be a soft one made of palms, flammable and uncutting. Not a tin roof, made of money made of murder, a hard shell against the sky and a blade hanging in the night.

The things I had carried back saturated me. I closed the files, sealed the field notes in a plastic bag. Turned my attention gratefully to the reading for the class I was co-teaching. Ignored the clench in my jaw and the ever present white noise in my nervous system. Ignored the source of the clench and the signal inside the noise.

Arriving can take a long time, and I was still traveling then. Dreaming every night of a reserve that was not my home but had refused to let me leave. Was refusing still. Like so many of the Uitoto people with whom I had lived and grown close, I was suffering from the perplexities of being bound to a place where I could not live, and living in a place where I could not fully be. Like so many people living in the territories of trauma, I was living in a shadow country, a world with many worlds next to it, and one in particular. A world like the one where my Uitoto kin knew their missing ones, their ancestral ones, their haunted ones, lived. A world whose qualities they knew, a world to which they were strange but not strangers. Adjacent, so very similar, but no longer the human one.

Unbearable. In sleep, I was wandering in the places Uitoto people recognize as lands of illness. But that night, I arrived where Cantalicio was. I leaned with the low sun through the door of his *maloca*, in the hour when women return from their gardens to unpack the heaving baskets they've filled with manioc and palm fruits and herbs. Maybe with seeds if someone has a new garden, or a few sections of sugar cane for the kids to suck on as the evening cools. I dropped the impossibly heavy basket I was carrying on my back and sat next to him on a low bench. "*¿Cómo voy a cargar todo esto?*," I asked in desperation. "How am I going to carry all of this?" "*Tienes que sacar una cosa a la vez*," he said gently, "you have to take out one thing at a time."

In Uitoto aesthetics of the knowing body, the knowledge that allows one to contribute to making the world, to tending one's kin and garden and cosmos as they slip in and out of coolness, in and out of alignment, in and out of sense, is figured as purified plant substances that are carried in the basket of the chest. One's heart, cooled and sweetened, resonates with and mediates the speech of ancestral tobacco and coca and sweet manioc starch. One's insight and will are honed by the heat of chilis, and one's dreaming is animated and instructed by the fierce healers, *yagé* and *toé*, (*Banasteriopsis* and *Datura*), and by sweet or investigatory herbs.

The basket of my body was reworked by all of the Uitoto kin with whom I lived and apprenticed and grown close by telling and carrying each other's burdens and each other's sweetness. They cured me when I was ill with fevers and with less measurable and more total disruptions, with herbal waters and tobacco paste, with stinging nettles and curing stories. And they slowly filled me up with stories of the lives and worlds they held together in their own bodies. They made themselves my mother, sisters, aunties and nieces, my grandparents and father and brothers and nephews. They wove me in to the connective bindings that hold together the Uitoto world even as it is picked at and sundered by forces and actions antithetical to abundant life, and held me close enough to feel worthy to carry their stories home with me.

The text I have made since I last saw Cantalicio is made in the ways he advised. It was more than I could carry all at once, and still is. The stories that Uitoto people have trusted me to carry here—to sort and strain and render into something nourishing and even curative—contain the bitterest parts of the historical and existential consequences of the history of colonization in the Colombian Amazon. They are dangerous, because they can poison the bodies that hold them if

not held properly. They are also dangerous because they include the names of evil and illness. Speaking their histories of grief and despair, of the loss of kin and language and the world those held together, risks calling those histories back. But speaking them in the right ways, in spaces held open through the forces of mutual attending and shielded by forceful assertions of love, opens the possibility of transforming them. The stories with which my Uitoto kin filled my basket came here with me in the guise of bitter manioc roots—promising to feed us all, but needing to be transformed and cured first.

On both counts--the danger, the cure--the work of writing this text has demanded from the beginning a great deal of caution about the timing and the form through which those stories can be retold. The condensed (rather than abstracted) formulations that appear in the genres of argument I take to be the rendered substance of the ambivalent and volatile materials from which they have been worked. They remain condensed in some cases, perhaps under explicated to some sensibilities. To the extent that that seems to be the case, it is because I haven't felt able to approach them directly, through a straight path.

Ethnographers classically conceive of the inherently comparative work of description and translation out of the contexts to which they have hyper-attuned their attentions as engaging a dialectic of estrangement and familiarization. Writing this text has for me involved an experience of writing not from the field or from home, not from a place of stable or identifiable familiarities, but both *from* and *about* the territory of trauma—a territory where familiarity and estrangement are violently confounded, where the familiar itself can become explosively alienating, where estrangement can become one's most familiar referent.

I was writing about the territory of trauma as the world shared by Uitoto kin living far from one another, in moments of displacement, illness, and grief, and in situations of ever-increasing precarity in alien cities and vulnerability in occupied rainforest communities. The languages of that territory are non-linear, complexly lacunate, and unpredictably charged.

Those languages and their obliqueness were the ones in which I needed to write from that territory, too. Among the stories of violence and disorganization of self within the bindings of relationality were my own. The stories I carried were full of wormholes, portals through time, between worlds and states. But they were at work on me in a new way following the reorganization of my own embodied attunements during my time in Uitoto kinworlds in ways that bore both edges of the pharmakon's power. I came home alien and kin in reconfigured measures to my first family and familiar kinworlds, and had to find my way back through and alongside this writing.

To all of the close ones who held the things that came here in that heavy basket, who held me in a space that was strong enough to sweeten the bitterest parts of it, who carried what I couldn't love, and loved what I couldn't bear, I owe everything. That includes my dissertation committee, Joseph P. Masco, Susan Gal, and Julie Y. Chu, who let me tell whatever was necessary in whatever way was possible; my family, who have found ways to fold an unfamiliar world into ours (my parents Jan Kernaghan and Manley McLachlan, Thomas McLachlan and Dayna Forsgren, Liam McLachlan and Marlene Stewart, Kristy Kernaghan, Patrick Kernaghan and Janet Ward, and Lily, Marley, Ramona, and Angus); my colleagues and co-conspirators in

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I am grateful to Hussein Ali Agrama, Lauren Berlant, Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, Judith Farquhar, Jorge Gasché, Emilio Kurí, Agnes Lugo Ortiz, Steve Rubenstein, Marshall Sahlins, Michael Silverstein, and Mick Taussig for their care at key moments with this project's design and consequences. Anne Ch'ien's generous and expert advice was indispensable. I also wish to thank members of the Semiotics Workshop, the Workshop on Latin America & the Caribbean, the Knowledge/Value Workshop, the Medicine & Its Objects Workshop, and the Global Studies Program at the University of Chicago, and the Engineered Worlds Project, including Tim Choy, Jake Kosek, and Michelle Murphy, for their critical insight and support. The support of the

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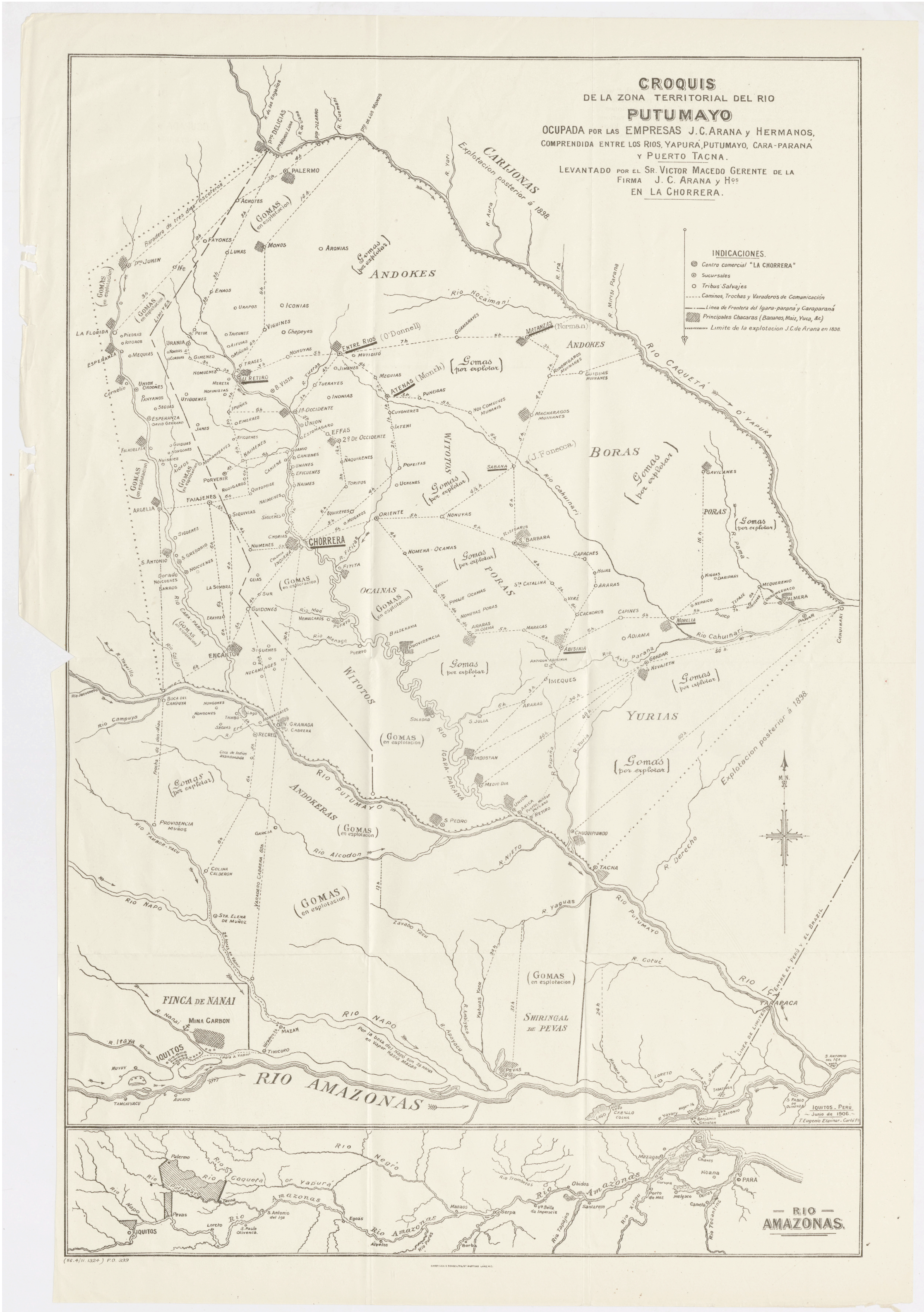
Abstract

This dissertation traces a colonial history of the Colombian Amazon through extractive botanical economies from rubber to cocaine to bioprospecting. It centers the botanical in alignment with the Indigenous Uitoto philosophy that it seeks to translate, as an archive of the Uitoto community's work to remake kinworlds and cosmological order in the wake and the midst of world-rending violence. I argue that Uitoto experimental efforts to reconstitute the substantial foundations of a mode of ethical affectivity beyond the human represent a Sisyphean cosmopoesis with and through the non-human in a context of apparent impossibility. Translating Uitoto praxis into a reflection on the meaning of relation in the midst of planetary ecological collapse, this dissertation asks: What does it mean to continue a project of cosmopoesis even as that world unspools at an accelerating pace? What possibilities for ethical relation remain, or are revealed, in a moment of unimaginable loss?

Figure 1: Map of Colombia showing primary field research sites (2006-2014).
SOURCE: Google Maps, with alterations by author.

Figure 2 (Following): “Sketch of the territorial zone of the Putumayo River occupied by the Enterprise J.C. Arana & Bros.” [1911]
SOURCE National Archives, London, NA/ FO 881/9818.


CROQUIS
DE LA ZONA TERRITORIAL DEL RIO
PUTUMAYO
OCUPADA POR LAS EMPRESAS J. C. ARANA y HERMANOS,
COMPRENDIDA ENTRE LOS RIOS, YAPURÁ, PUTUMAYO, CARA-PARANÁ
Y PUERTO TACNA.
LEVANTADO POR EL SR. VICTOR MACEDO GERENTE DE LA
FIRMA J. C. ARANA y Hos
EN LA CHORRERA.
INDICACIONES.
Centro comercial "LA CHORRERA"
Sucursales
Tribus Salvajes
Caminos, Trochas y Varaderos de Comunicación
Linea de Frontera del Igara-paraná y Caraparaná
Principales Chacaras (Bananos, Maiz, Yuca, &c.)
Limite de la explotacion J. C. de Arana en 1898.
CARIJONAS
Explotacion posterior á 1898.
ANDOKES
BORAS
WITOTOS
OCAINAS
YURIAS
ANDOKERAS
CHORRERA
ENTRE RIOS (O'Donnell)
MATANZAS (Norman)
ATENAS (Morris)
SABANA (J. Fonseca)
Rio Caquetá ó Yapura
Rio Putumayo
Rio Napo
Rio Amazonas
FINCA DE NANAI
MINA CARBON
IQUITOS
TACNA
SHIRINGAL DE PEVAS
Gomas por explotar
Gomas en explotacion
IQUITOS, PERU
Junio de 1906.
RIO AMAZONAS.

Preface

For people who understand themselves to be composed of, animated by, and kin to ancestral spirits whose bodies are plants, what does it mean to make lives in a place where those plants are missing, lifeless, or transformed beyond recognition? What does it mean to live where ones' kin cannot, and where the vital foundations of a good life are unavailable? What does it mean to continue a project of cosmopoesis—of world-making praxis—even as that world unspools at an accelerating pace? This dissertation traces a century-long history of the undoing of a world composed of dense and vital connections between a human community and their more-than-human kin, and that community's experimental efforts to reconstitute the substantive foundations of a mode of ethical affectivity beyond the human, a Sisyphean cosmopoesis with and through the more-than-human, in a context of apparent impossibility[1].

Based on two and a half years' travel, accompaniment, and apprenticeship (between 2006 and 2014) with Indigenous Uitoto communities living in reserves in the Colombian Amazon, in peri-urban settlements on the Colombian triple border with Brazil and Peru, and in *barrios* of the displaced in Bogotá, as well as archival research into the photographic and commercial records of their colonization, this dissertation is an archive of an Indigenous Amazonian community's negotiation with the violent logics of industrial capital, national territoriality, and transnational counter-insurgency as they have been articulated, rendered, and reiterated through the vital matter of plant life.

This dissertation is about the ethics of world-making when the conditions of making have

1 C.f. Londoño 2012.

become impossible. It is located within the particular cosmology and historical and political ecological context of an Indigenous Amazonian community in the midst of the Colombian Armed conflict. But the ethical, creative, and psychic questions animating it resonate with what are arguably defining dilemmas of our shared historical moment: how to formulate ethical modes of generativity, of connection and repair, in the midst and in the wake of lethal orders of extraction and extermination. As we grapple analytically with the legacies of industrial and military projects as forces of planetary and situated world-making,[2] Uitoto practices of, and reflections on, world-making as perpetual, ethical, and curative social praxis are here translated as a reflection on the potentials for regeneration that does not depend on apocalyptic, heroic, developmental, or possessive frames of human agency.

Organizing questions and methodology

This project began as an ethnography of the politics of plant life in Colombian Amazonia. That framing organized its methodology and its central questions. The project's original organizing questions concerned centrally how particular plants are taken up in conflicting or radically incommensurate political projects. How do historical configurations of plant life express or articulate shifting socio-cultural formations? What does a social world look like if plants are at the center? These were questions of commensuration, translation, and contestation. They were connected with discussions then lively in the "multi-species turn" in anthropology, in political and historical ecology, and in philosophical turns toward the more-than-human.

2 C.f. Masco 2015.

Genre, form, translation

The resulting text has taken the form less of a study of comparative translations of plant forms into political process (as "boundary objects"[3]), and has become, rather, a project of translation in its own right across several different registers. The first is as a translation out of an archive of migration-and/as-illness histories that Uitoto informants shared with me, and whose narration represented enactments of kin-making and of transformative memory work. In some sections of the text, this takes the form of transcription and translation of autobiographical accounts. In others, it takes the form of a second kind of translation, that of genre and sensibility into ethnographic narratives that seek to convey the co-presence of multiple worlds, historicities, and timespaces that Uitoto ritual exegesis and intimate story telling alike take for granted.

The construction of the text around plants is motivated by a desire to take seriously Uitoto people's philosophical understanding of plant life as divine and ancestral agency alive in the world in botanical form and at work in human bodies, as the animating force of human life and of the cosmos. As a study of the social, affective, and curative work that organizes contemporary Uitoto life, this dissertation seeks to translate a Uitoto conception of plant natures and forms of agency through the organization of the text, through its guiding analytic framework, through its aesthetics, and through the forms of plantwork that have made its writing possible.

While "the botanical" has been an organizing frame for attention and analysis in this project, the resulting text has not taken on the forms that a primary focus on the botanical might be expected to take. It is not an ethnobotanical study in any way that preserves the twin objects of that sub-discipline--neither the borders of ethnos or the botanical remain intact. While it does

3 Star & Greisemer 1999.

seek to trace and to track distinctive practices of collecting, cultivating, circulating, and curing with particular plant beings, it does so without presuming a nature separate from that complex of social, disciplinary, embodied and aesthetic practices. It refuses to remove plants from their social worlds. While it separates particular plants from the assemblages in which they dwell only insofar as human actors in their worlds do so (whether in the curing lessons of elders, or in the extractive discourses of industrial, state, or scientific actors), it does not presume species has a reality beyond the social worlds where it is constructed as such. Similarly, while this text is an archive of the transformations wrought by extractive botanical economies in the Colombian Amazon, it is not a commodity history. That is, it does not presume or preserve the autonomy of plants as extractable objects of inquiry by virtue of their being extractable objects of value.

I have tried to refuse the reifying logics of both species and commodity forms, in order to preserve space in the forms of the text for the dense social and intersubjective nature of plant beings in a Uitoto world. While this may lead to friction and confusion in the forms and voicings of the text, those points of dissonance are sites of (always partial) translation--a central goal of the project.

A conception of plants-as-persons is translated in the text through constructions that may be disorienting--plants are referred to with personal pronouns, attributed personality and agency and reflexivity, as well as gender. Those constructions are a dimension of the rhetorical work of the text, but not as a matter of anthropomorphic attribution or autopoetic aesthetic preference. Where they appear in the text, slippages between plants-as-persons and persons-as-plants are translations of the social and richly intersubjective relations Uitoto people sustain with plant

beings. In that sense, this in an empirical rather than aesthetic decision, albeit one whose form is poetic.

The same can be said of the slippages and unclarities in the text's tenses and chronology, especially in those sections that are most explicitly historical. While this text is a historical study of the transformation of Uitoto lifeworlds and lively ecologies over a century of violent occupation and reiterating dismemberments, it is not a history as linear, causal accounting. It seeks to translate, instead, the modes of temporal experience and disruption that characterize Uitoto dwelling in and rendering of historical processes. In many cases, those modes are distinguished by the discontinuities, repetitions, and condensations of what clinical language apprehends as the "post-traumatic": an unstable lamination of multiple moments, a porosity to co-present and volatile timespaces registered in the sensorium. The structures and styles of narration in the text--both others', transcribed, and my own, translating--reflect those modes and refuse to resolve them.

The Uitoto present is haunted and multiple, obliquely resonant with relations that can become suddenly visible, tangible, and agentive, either through acts of cultivated attunement or through accidental and pathological interruptions. The forms of the text—the chronologies that it renders as adjacent and mutually disruptive, the confusions of agentive voicing and personification, and the aesthetics of sensory overload—are efforts to find genres that would not only transcribe the narratives that Uitoto migrants shared with me (translating their content), but that might translate something of the potency and complex animacy that Uitoto semiotic ideologies[4] attribute to acts of narration: to tell something is to (re)materialize it, to call it back or

4 Keane 1997.

”make it dawn,” that is, to give it material form and social life. To that end, there are many stories I have told only obliquely, refusing them breath or a clear path into our world.

The forms of the text also reflect an effort to write in a way that transcribes the disrupted temporalities and volatile aesthetics of a post- (or continuously) traumatic archive. I was writing with a post-traumatic relation to many of the materials. That meant that approaching some stories, some sensory details, some parts of the archive had the effect that Uitoto speakers carefully hold in check: they rendered dangerous stories materially and vitally present. That relation disrupted the temporality on which we rely to construct narratives of entry into and exit from the field, narratives that underpin the epistemological processes of ethnographic representation and reflection; that let us mark an "after" from which we can analyze and out of which we can abstract. My work to translate Uitoto migrants’ narrations of world ruptures and sutures, of sensory (mis)calibrations and life-long hauntings could not be abstract or analytic in the same ways once my own sensorium and mnemonic capacities had been reorganized by traveling through that world, too.

Those choices have produced a text that may be frustrating to certain expectations of explicative accounting or analytic abstraction. The text seeks to make an argument about the possibilities of world-making in the midst and the wake of world-ending violence[5] as requiring a refusal of final resolution, and calling for an ethics of Sisyphean cosmopoesis in perpetuity--and it does so in large part through its forms.

5 C.f. Murphy 2018; Sharpe 2016.

Plant logics, plant powers

The methodological, analytic, and formal organization of this dissertation take up a distinctly Uitoto (though familiarly Amazonian) conception of plant life as the vital—lively and indispensable—mediator of the moral social orders in which human lives come to matter. In Uitoto mythical and curing discourses, as in quotidian work with and through plants, and in Uitoto migrants' most intimate accounts of self, plants are figured as gendered and idiosyncratic social actors, as alternately adoptive and ancestral kin, and as the embodied form of beings whose affective dispositions govern human social, psychic, and spiritual life[6]. They are the ultimate source of what we understand to be distinctly human capacities: speech, reflective consciousness, moral discernment, and affective resonance. Plant life here is, apparently paradoxically, what defines human ontology and subjectivity.

Uitoto conceptions of reproduction and regeneration, of value and agency, of moral and temporal order, are mediated through a gendered conception of the powers of plant life. Social life and cosmological order are mattered forth through the conjuring in plant substance of masculine and feminine agencies that are as distinct as they are complementary. Masculine capacities for predatory curing (to hunt in the spirit world for the inhuman sources of human suffering) are registered and distributed, for instance, in tobacco paste and powdered coca leaves. Feminine capacities for the rendering transformation of rage and bitterness into work and love are similarly transmitted, for example, through chili paste and the pulp of detoxified bitter manioc[7]. The mixing of these substances, and the powers that inhere in them, at scales ranging

6 C.f. Rival 2001.
7 McLachlan 2011a.

from the family meal to cosmologically ordering cycles of feasting rituals, represent a perpetual project of of ontological reciprocity between gendered realms, and between human and more-than-human orders.

This dissertation takes plant life to be the vital mediator of the worlds and worldings of which it offers an archive. It does so as a matter of commitment to translating—in whatever degree possible—a Uitoto proposition about the indispensable and generative alterity that plant life embodies for human ethical and ecological relationality, a distinctive ontological orientation toward the more-than-human that is also necessarily an affective and epistemological one.

It also, however, seeks to make an argument, through the tracing of another set of alterities, that the formations of violence that have worked over the past century to undo Uitoto worlds and worlding powers depend in their own distinct ways upon a set of consistent and contingent orientations to plant life no less powerful in organizing and mattering forth orders of reproduction, sociality, pathology, and difference. The colonial, industrial, nationalist, revolutionary, counter-insurgent, and commercial projects that have variously and violently occupied Uitoto territory since the early 20th century have each turned upon a set of vital and world-making convictions about the powers of particular plants. They have relied upon and reproduced systematic understandings of the nature(s) of plant life including the gendered order of botanical reproduction, the ontological, political, and moral potencies of plant substances in relation to human social orders, and the transformative capacities of particular plants to cure or corrupt human health, sociality, and power relations.

For 20th century rubber traders—who extracted in the course of 30 years an unthinkable

quotient of plant matter, human suffering, and value in the form of tons of wild rubber—*Hevea paraensis*, the rubber tree, was a medium for the astonishing accrual of power and capital. For a right-wing state allied with global anti-communist counter-insurgency, *Erythroxylum coca*, the basis of cocaine, appeared as the enemy in plant form, as yet another insurgent force hiding under cover of the rainforest canopy, plotting an economic and political coup. It was, in the words of former President Alvaro Uribe Velez, "*la mata que mata"*—the plant that kills—worthy of summary execution through the bombing of rainforest cover with carcinogenic defoliants. For a neoliberal state dedicated to lubricating transnational extraction of value, the potency of Uitoto plant medicines inheres in their availability for abstraction into laboratory and patenting régimes as much as in their astonishing capacity for curing.

Historical and ethnographic methodologies and materials

The analytic project of this dissertation combines two streams, and involves two complementary methodologies. The first is historical, and traces the history of botanical economies (industrial and market economies organized around the extraction of value from plant life, and from proprietary botanical knowledge to various degrees) as the primary engine of colonization, territorial reordering, and war-making in the Colombian Amazon since the early 20th century. I argue that the history of the colonization of Uitoto worlds represents a reiterative process of ontological undoing, or dismemberment—the disarticulation of bonds of kinship, ecology, and cosmos that Uitoto people understand to be substantiated through the shared embodiment of ancestral plant substances. The project's historical methodology included the

gathering of archival and oral histories of extractive botanical economies, landscape histories and narratives of uncanny returns, and life histories as histories of child-bearing, apprenticeship, illness and recovery, of migration and travel variously inflected with loss, appetite, alienation, desperation, and curiosity**.**

The second analytic stream is ethnographic, and offers an account of contemporary Uitoto efforts to cultivate emergent knowledge ecologies, to transform through vital relations to plant life and plant knowing, the pathological legacies of colonization, armed conflict, and industrial capitalism in their territory into the bases of regenerated ties to kin and cosmos. The project's ethnographic methodology draws on object-centered ethnography (including travel alongside plants in transit with various informants and in various guises), extended interviewing and collaborative map-making, as well as gardening and curing apprenticeships as part of long-term co-residential fieldwork. Across these modes of historical, narrative, and practical attention, the guiding frame of this research has been accompaniment: to travel alongside the plant and human kin that let me spend time in their worlds through paths of memory, uncertainty, transformation, and the pleasures of reciprocity.

Period of research

The period of research was from 2006 to 2020 (including periods of field research in Uitoto reserves and in Bogotá in 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2013-14; and archival research in Perú, 2009, and London 2020). In 2006, when this research project began, Colombia was in the midst of the US-Colombian "Plan Colombia," a series of policy and military interventions

targeting both leftist insurgency and the narcotics trade. Nightly news reports echoed the atmospheric awareness of paramilitary violence rippling through rural communities, and many of my Uitoto informants were negotiating the precarities of their involvement with narco-trafficking. During the period of my dissertation research, the political climate in Colombia was defined around anticipation and cynicism toward the immanent peace agreement between the Colombian state and its largest leftist insurgent group, the FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, Colombian Armed Revolutionary Forces). In late 2013, Uitoto friends joined thousands of protestors in the streets of Bogotá as part of a national agrarian strike against a US-Colombian free trade agreement. The national police's special forces (the ESMAD) sprayed tear gas against farmers and Indigenous leaders, students and others refusing to cede the means of plant reproduction to one of the agreement's primary beneficiaries, Monsanto, that sought to sell patented seeds to the same communities living in the wake of exposure to its best-selling poison, glyphosate, which had been weaponized as part of Plan Colombia's program of aerial fumigation. Uitoto people then living in Bogotá had survived *guerrilla*, paramilitary, and military occupations of their home territories in the central Colombian Amazon. Those living in their home reserves were struggling with increasing occupations by gold miners and narco-traffickers. During the period of writing, following the 2016 peace agreement, those same communities suffered an increase in the presence of gold miners, enabled by the withdrawal of insurgent forces, and leading to rising rates of exposure to mercury in waterways and wild food sources.

Historical period

The historical period addressed in this study begins with the first effective colonization of Uitoto territories, and the 1902 arrival to the Igara-Paraná river of Julio César Arana, a Peruvian rubber trader who would become the author of a genocidal régime of forced labour and the first mass displacement of People of the Center (see note below on ethnonyms). The oldest generation of elders now living recall the end of that period, which lasted until the Colombo-Peruvian border conflict of 1933. The generation that followed them navigated the arrival of the Colombian armed conflict to the Caquetá, Putumayo, and Amazon departments, followed by the intensification of the narcotics trade beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and the increasingly complex entanglement of the two through the present. Since the 1990s, Uitoto communities have also negotiated the presence of commercial and scientific interest in pharmaceutical *materia medica,* that is, in bioprospecting endeavours seeking the botanical bases of new drugs. That has taken place amid shifting forms of conservation policy, environmental activism, and extractive development programming, as well as dramatic changes in regional ecologies and global climate.

All of these transformations have been inflected through gendered dynamics at the national, community, and household scales. Many of the Uitoto women migrants with whom I lived and worked had negotiated intimate landscapes of danger and volatility. This was most intensely the case in communities most strongly impacted by the injuries of political violence, narco-trafficking, and alcohol and *basuco* use.[8] By seeking to write an account of a distinctive Indigenous Amazonian world-in-the-making that refuses to exclude the political economic,

8 See Ch. 3, for instance.

ecological, or gendered violences within and against which it is being articulated, this text aims to not only translate the logics of that world, but also to reflect its most profound powers and potentials--those that are historically constituted forms of magical action, those that are the work of magic in history.

The territory of trauma

This text is a history of colonization and genocidal violence--a history of the undoing of a world--that seeks to refuse an apocalyptic frame at the collective and biographical levels. It attempts to attend diligently to the recursive and compulsively repeating forms of violence visited on Uitoto communities, kinworlds, and ecologies since the early 20th century. It does so through presentations of archival and oral historical narrative that keep Uitoto experiences and critical understandings at the center. But as a translation of Uitoto telling and semiotic ideologies, and an effort to translate Uitoto genres of dwelling in post-traumatic affective landscapes, it offers a history that escapes linear, resolute, direct, or explicative form. Uitoto theories of naming and narration identify telling with calling into being--the same generative potency that allows ritual speech to materialize in well-cured bodies, abundant gardens, and contented kin also risks calling back disastrous forms of violence through direct historical narration. The oral histories we recorded together include stories of inconceivable violence in the experiences of children captured by white slave raiders, young people absorbed into insurgency, narco-trafficking and addiction, women suffering violence from their partners, and of generations struggling to recover forms of curing and kinship amid a seemingly endless war.

Those stories were told in spaces and in forms that allowed them to be approached--often obliquely--and rendered. They were also told alongside practices of suspension and active forgetting,[9] within states of dissociation and hyper-attunement, and in spaces that were lived and addressed as haunted, multi-layered, and ontologically treacherous. They were told in contexts of cultivated relations of trust, intimacy, and resonant mutuality, and they were told so that they could be undone.

Learning to live in relation to those histories has meant learning to be sensitized to the silences, reduplications, and temporal-affective rents that make up Uitoto social landscapes as much as any clearly referential assertions of relationality or agency. It has meant learning to navigate a post-traumatic landscape (often not so "post"), in the shifting registers of a reconfigured sensorium and extraordinary modes of attunement. The Uitoto present is haunted and multiple, obliquely resonant with relations that can become suddenly visible, tangible, and agentive, either through acts of cultivated attunement or through accidental and pathological interruptions. The shamanic healers with whom I worked, as well as the many Uitoto migrants and *desplazados* that shared their travels with me, manage that sensory and existential complexity by a variety of means and with different degrees of volition. Uitoto bodies are assemblages of capacities registered in them through the endless work of human and more-than-human kin. The invitation and permission to enter into relation with those kin has entailed a sensory, affective, and psychic reorganization of my embodied self in relation. That process is acknowledged in the text as an index of the nature of that making, and as a disclosure about the nature of this text in its making.

9 C.f. McLachlan 2011a.

This text is written both from and about the territory of trauma. Its forms, erasure, repetitions, and symptomatic structures are as important in translating Uitoto projects and processes of world-making as any explicatory articulation of its contents could be. It does not, as it cannot, aspire to be complete or corrective. But my hope is that it conjures a space for dwelling with questions that my Uitoto kin keep close, in an expectation that that dwelling is perpetual and always partial.

Note on pseudonyms, ethnonyms, and language

The communities that were the hosts of this research identify under various collective ethnonyms that emphasize their shared onto-geographic orientation (to the sacred place in the landscape from which humanity first emerged), as *Gente de Centro* (People of the Center), or shared use of *ambil* (tobacco paste),as *Gente de Ambil* (People of Tobacco Paste). As the Uitoto population has remained the largest, many communities in reconstruction and under displacement collectively represent themselves as Uitoto, while individuals and families may identify according to either maternal or paternal ethnicities, or by clan affiliation. I use *Gente de Centro* (People of the Center) here to describe the historical communities collectively enslaved by the Casa Arana, and *Uitoto* to name the contemporary communities with whom I worked, following their own collective representation, and the specific ethnonyms or clan names by which my informants individually identify.

The interviews translated here in the text were almost entirely recorded in Spanish. While many of my informants speak dialects of Uitoto (M̶i̶n̶i̶ke, Nipode, Murui), Muinane, Tikuna,

Ocaina, and Bora, the multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic composition of many households and in particular of more recently established reserves means that many speakers live in households where no one else shares their dialect. While I was and am committed to learning Uitoto dialects, (and one dimension of this research has been building a collaborative archive of curing songs recorded in Nipode), the practical requirement to spend extensive periods of time with one speaker or one household was disruptive to other research goals and requirements of sociality.

Where transcriptions include terms in Mɨnɨke or Nipode, the character "ɨ" denotes a high central unrounded vowel. The names of informants and places (aside from Bogotá) that appear throughout have been anonymized, unless otherwise noted. In those cases where informants are cited and named, this is in keeping with their expressed preferences, and where doing so did not endanger any other community members. Individual healers, leaders, and story-tellers appear throughout the text. They were key companions and instructors during the period of my dissertation field research. Many many others have taught me and shared their homes and gardens and travels, and remain unnamed here not because they were not important but because holding back their individual stories keeps them safer. Their stories inform every part of the argument, the sensibilities, and the predicaments that I have sought to represent throughout.

1 A Change in the Air: Spectral Occupation & Atmospheric Curing in a Uitoto Dreamspace

Figure 3: Heron River at dusk.
SOURCE: Author photo (2014).

1.

The brothers and I, each in our hammocks, were still.[10] Profound bitterness in our mouths was mercifully tempered by the slice of sugar cane that had followed each small cupful of concentrated remedy. It seemed Jenaro had stopped singing, though we felt his voice continue to resonate in the house, in the night. The house was small—six posts, eight beams, an earth floor, a palm roof. There were no walls, but a narrow groove in the earth marked a perimeter. Just beyond were sweet basil plants, a low smoldering fire, a clearing in the forest damp with moonlight, and small pools of poison where the remedy had wrung it from us in purgative spasms. Further outside this perimeter were hungry and treacherous beings—spirits who could steal us away from the human world, neighbours who walked at night in the air above us, rivals whose envy or anger could settle as illness into our bodies, enemies unsatisfied with earthly weapons who might have paid someone like Jenaro to send death or grief through these ceremonial channels that turn medicine into (yet more) war.

Inside the perimeter, the air was rich with scent—heavy smoke and steam from half-extinguished coals were tangled through with the sweeter smoke of copal resin, curling from a swinging censor to ease the drunken nausea that, nearing the ceremony's visionary peak, rocked us in our hammocks like sailors on high seas. Thin riffs of tobacco smoke laced through our fingers, around our heads, mixing with the smoke and *aguas floridas*[11] that Jenaro had blown through our hair, a stream of prayer and power and perfume wafted over the crowns of our

10 Most often, the participants included Jenaro, his brothers and nephews, his *compadres* and their wives and children, and any patients who had come with a specific complaint. This ceremony included only Jenaro, his bothers and nephews and I, in ceremonial roles as apprentices, and was dedicated to materializing resources for a project we hoped to undertake together.

11 "Floral waters," or hydrosols.

heads, as fans of *guacamayo* feathers and palm leaves brushed away illness, envy, evil, all that was distasteful to the medicine's stringent sensibility.

This medicine, *yagé*, is a fierce and bitter elder, a healer whose human incarnations "suffer like Jesus did," Jenaro says, absorbing the illness and suffering of their patients in order to transcend them. The crossed feathers of the *Taita*[12]'s crown, he says, represent the crucifiction of surrogacy in ceremony, where the *Taita* takes into his person both the agency of *yagé* and the suffering of his patients--incarnating human ills and divine force to reinstate grace.[13] Beyond the ceremonial space, *yagé* is lively in the healer, and requires a fastidious aesthetic arrangement of daily habits.[14] *Yagé* is a distributed being, one whose nature confounds easy distinctions of matter and spirit, body and soul, or person and collective. He is an ancestor spirit, embodied as a twisting vine, and as a bitter concentrated brew made with catalysing female plants. The vine is brewed with "*la pinta,*" (the painting, or the vision), usually *Psychotria viridis*, gendered as a female partner to the male vine, and responsible for the medicine's visionary dimensions[15]. *Yagé*

12 *Taita* is the title of a master *yagé* healer. It is also the term of address given to the master spirit of *yagé*. In this way and many others, the healer and the plant-person are constructed as identical, mutually embodied. This is the basis of the healer's efficacy through a form of surrogacy, of their authority, and of the demand on the healer to follow a regime of aesthetic, dietary, and social proscriptions.

13 Jenaro and his apprentices are Uitoto, and descendants of Uitoto *yageceros*, but Jenaro himself apprenticed with Siona *Taitas*, or master *yagé* healers. Their ceremonial practice reflects this blending of traditions, along with Catholic imagery and prayers that are reflect the dominance of missionary activity—including schooling—in Uitoto traditional territory.

14 This includes the observance of "diets" surrounding food, sex, bathing, and scents applied to the body and the clothing, as well as a system of taboos surrounding the care of the home, the washing of clothes and dishes, the choice of colours in clothing, bedding, hammocks, and ceremonial paraphernalia, the protection of ceremonial implements from exposure to sunlight, jealous glances, and above all, menstruating women. Indeed, the management of menstrual taboos is "the most challenging aspect of the ritual observances," according to Jenaro, and one understood to have catastrophic and even lethal consequences if mismanaged.

15 *Psychotria viridis* contains dimethyltryptamine, or DMT, an alkaloid that induces visions. DMT is a compound produced spontaneously by the human brain at the moments of birth and death, and *yagé* is called in some communities the "vine of death," including as it often does

is embodied, too, in the mutual attunement of healer and patients as an extended body in ceremony and beyond. As ancestor, plant, remedy, and kinbody, he is a channel to time beyond death who is also urgently of this time, inseparable from the kinds of death that live in this landscape, that saturate the atmosphere of this place on the periphery of three states, on the edge of several territorial orders that fracture those states, at the end of the world's oldest civil war (whose ending may be the start of another kind of death here)[16], at the eye of a chemical tempest that has turned the air into a weapon, an illness, and a battleground.[17]

The atmosphere in the house is richer still with sound. Through the haze of smoke and nausea, Jenaro calls the spirits by breathing through an enchanted harmonica, and sings in a language that belongs to the ancestors of all *Taitas*, the *gente yagecera* (the people of *yagé*)[18].

His prayers come and go through the shimmering medium of the forests' nocturnal buzzing, through our small constellation of dreaming bodies.[19] The cycling electric whine of

visions of the beginnings and endings of one's own life and predecessors.

16 The signing of the Colombian peace accord on 26 September, 2016 marked the formal end of the armed conflict between the Colombian state and the FARC, or *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*. In Uitoto territory, and in much occupied Indigenous territory in Colombia, however, the disarmament and withdrawal of the FARC led to a rapid escalation of occupation by illegal gold miners and loggers, and a surge in paramilitary activity. It has also led to a rapid escalation in deforestation across Colombia's rainforest territories, including a 44% increase in deforested area from the previous year in 2016 alone (IDEAM 2016; La Semana, 2018/06/26; Zárate 2019).

17 On atmospheres, c.f. Choy 2011; Choy & Zee 2015; Masco 2010; Simmons 2017; Stewart 2011.

18 Jenaro describes these as a father-in-law and sons-in-law who first learned to work with the remedy. They drank *yagé* and cured themselves, and the others in their community were so full of envy that the *gente yagecera* (the people of *yagé*) left the human world behind. This sense of separateness in the face of envy and suspicion characterized Jenaro's relationship to his community, and so his narration was decidedly a reflection of that discomfort.

19 Dreaming includes what we understand it to (spontaneous imagery during sleep), as well as vision work in ceremonial and curing contexts, and in relation to sacred plants (*yagé* ceremonies, *borrachera* with *ambil*--tobacco paste--, preparations of *toé*--datura--, herb baths, or transitively induced by infusing someone (with or without their knowledge) with magical herbs or scented waters, or by treating objects of their person (for instance, washing the clothing of

insects irradiates this atmosphere ripe with scent. It reverberates through the waves of intoxication that flood the brothers and I, through the shivering that shakes us until we come apart, that seizes our guts and wrings out poison, that swells our vision until it includes a spectrum from x-ray to extraterrestrial. The sensible world stutters as Jenaro's singing turns to buzzing, buzzing turns to earthquaking drunkenness, quaking turns to throbbing, to thrumming, to drumming, to sonic pulses as the air above the house is shattered by enormous blades descending, descending but not even ruffling the canopy of the forest around us or the palms of the roof—the fragile roof on which, impossibly, a helicopter is about to land.

2.

In the dawning quiet in the wake of the ceremony, Jenaro, his brothers, *compadres*, and nephew, constructed a diagnosis of the spectral helicopter that had descended so abruptly the night before. This distributed vision had disrupted the ceremony's usual cycle of ritual cleansing and invocations of ancestral support for projects ranging from school fees to sobriety, from family repair to protection from rival *brujos*.

The helicopter had descended, Jenaro announced, in response to his petitions to the ancestors of his immediate patriline, and was about to arrive, bearing the spirits of his father and grandfather, both *yageceros*, when they had abruptly vanished. "It's because we're not in good conditions," he berated his closest male kin and apprentices; "look, our families are coming apart, you don't keep the diets, you come to ceremony with your blood contaminated, your bodies heavy with meat and alcohol, your thoughts on women. We'll never get ahead unless we respect our body, our ancestors, and the plant."

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children with herbs to modify or safeguard their own dreaming).

Jenaro's own life and bodily integrity teetered on the edge of chaotic disorder, but his efforts to adhere to the strict dietary and aesthetic proscriptions required of *yageceros* had helped him to recover from periods of addiction (to alcohol, *basuco*[20]), from eight years of forced conscription to the *guerrilla*, from a childhood of abuse by his own tormented *yagecero* father. *Yagé* had protected him, he said, in his work as a community organizer against the many forms of war that had arrived in this territory and against the commodification and criminalization of sacred plants (including especially *yagé* and *coca*).

His harsh reprimands of the brothers that morning was born, he assured them, of love and of the desire to see them free of their own vices, united and working for peace, abundance, and equality.

Describing his experiences in ceremony, Jenaro told me, "The first thing is to look at how the territory is." Each ceremony began for him with an aerial overview—a shamanic fly-over of the territory in avian form. As an embodiment of the medicine, he took on a bird's eye view of the reserve, or in cases where the ceremony was addressed to a broader illness, of vast reaches of the earth or, occasionally, of the planet as a whole viewed from deep space. This diagnostic work was almost infinitely scalable in space—from the planetary to the intra-cellular—and in time—from the biographical to the cosmogonic. It also wedded, in his accounts, territory and atmosphere in multiple ways.

In Uitoto accounts, the atmosphere is not only a set of climatological conditions, but also a shifting configuration of moral qualities and subtle beings—rather than a single system of physical influences, it is the cumulative effect of curative or pathogenic actions by human actors, by ancestral plants, and by the spirits of the dead. As such, atmospheric conditions are moral,

20 An industrial by-product of cocaine making.

ontological, social, and affective indices of states of relationality and social intentions scaling from the intrasubjective to the galactic.

Atmosphere and territory are also bound up with embodied qualities on intimate scales in Uitoto curing practice and ordinary sociality. The intimate atmospheres of scent both index and reorder territorial belonging and ontological location.[21] [22]

The atmosphere in Uitoto territory—like the abundance of gardens and orchards, like the cycles of paucity and fattening of fish and game, like the well-being and fertility of the extended kinbody—is a matter of ongoing, deliberate and collective making.

21 See also Ch. 4.

22 Scent is attributed moral, intersubjective, and ontological efficacy and discernment in Uitoto accounts, and among People of the Center more generally, as elsewhere in the Amazonian literature. See e.g. Londoño 2004, pp. 2, 13-14, 122.

Figure 4: A woman of the Heron River reserve, at the edge of a *chagra*.
SOURCE: Author photo (2014).

In Jenaro's mother's house, the afternoon was quiet. The 83 year old *abuela* Leocadia lived withdrawn from the community with just her grandson and hunting dogs. Two of her sons lived nearby, abandoned by their wives who had fled their own battles at home. One daughter had died recently of a sudden illness, and her other five daughters had left the territory, to live with their husbands in towns upriver, or alone with their own daughters among other *desplazados* on the very edges of Bogotá. Doña Leocadia's house was unusually silent, beyond the reach of the omnipresent radio noise that echoed through the community. The only station that reached clearly into the reserve was military radio from the base in Puerto X, and it offered a distinctive

mix of *vallenato* heart-break classics, evangelical prayer hours, and anti-*guerrilla* propaganda. The legends of *vallenato* sang about treacherous women, preachers beseeched the Virgin Mary to heal the world's poor, actors pitched demobilization to *guerrilleros* who were camped in the forests throughout this region: "*guerrillero*, surrender yourself and your gun", "you *also* deserve freedom"; a catchy raggaetón jingle bounced, "*guerrillero*, demobilize now!".

We were making *cassave* and *farinha*: Uitoto staple foods, made from toxic manioc tubers that are peeled and soaked and fermented for several days to remove their cyanide, then mashed, strained and roasted into either broad cakes or tiny granules.[23] Both are eaten daily in fish broth or chili sauce, but in leaner and more mobile times, *farinha* is drunk as *chibe,* a slurry made with creek water—a food for famine, travel, and long hunting expeditions.

As we worked, Doña Leocadia told me about learning to make *cassave* and *farinha* with the grandmother that raised her and her fifteen siblings. Doña Leocadia's grandmother was a survivor of rubber indenture and displacement from her clan's traditional territory in the Caquetá river region. She was a member of the generation who were torn from their *malocas*[24] and their densely interwoven kin worlds, into a period of horrific violence, starvation, disease, and brutal indenture that left the estimated twenty percent of Uitoto people who had survived scattered from the upper Amazon river in Peru, and as far East as Manaus in Brazil.[25]

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23 The symbolic, social, gendered, economic, and mythical valuations of manioc (*Manihot esculenta*, and other varietals) is richly represented in the Amazonianist literature. See, for instance: Almeida et al 2009; Candre & Echeverri 1996; Carneiro da Cunha 2012; Emperaire et al 2008; Descola 1993; Heckler 2004; Londoño Sulkin 2012, 2004; Miller 2018; McLachlan 2011; Oliveira 2008; Rival 2001; Rivière 1987; Walker 2013.

24 *Malocas* are traditional ceremonial and co-residential roundhouses.

25 Londoño (2012: 15) offers the following demographic overview of People of the Center, from pre-colonial to contemporary communities in traditional territory, and in diaspora following migration since the 1930s to Leticia, Villavicencio, Florencia, Puerto Asís, Puerto Leguízamo, and Bogotá. Whiffen (1908) estimated some 46,000 Uitoto, Andoke, Muinane people between the Putumayo and Caquetá basins. Pineda (1989) estimates 8,500 People of the Center (Londoño

In the period following what Colombian historian Roberto Pineda has called "the rubber holocaust,"[26] Uitoto people found themselves without land, without seeds to plant where they were then settling,[27] and with language eroding (in no small part due to missionization in Capuchin boarding schools). The clan system was devastated, and without hereditary ceremonial masters and clan heads to manage the reproduction of an intricately scaled cosmological order wherein they were the protected children of *Buinaima*, the Grandfather of Tobacco, and *Eiño Komuiya Buinaiño,* the Chili Mother and Mother of Creation, the survivors of one of extractive capitalism's most brutal bonanzas were "orphaned."[28]

In the wake of the displacements of the rubber trade, Doña Leocadia's grandmother had settled with a few other families in the curve of Heron River in the late days of the boom in Amazon rubber.[29] In 1932, following disputes over territory and control of rubber producing regions, Peru and Colombia went to war over the definition of their national boundaries.

That war came first to Heron River, Doña Leocadia recalled, as a sound. "We heard the shots, and my grandmother said, "*viene la guerra*"—"war is coming". She made her fire, and made *farinha* for two days without resting. She packed it all in baskets, and took all of us

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thinks this is an optimistic estimate). Echeverri (1997) estimated 4,400 People of the Center then living in Putumayo-Caquetá (3,250 Uitoto, 150 Miraña, 400 Bora, 220 Andoke, 150 Ocaina, 140 Muinane, 60 Nonuya). Londoño in 1998 found around 160 Muinane in a census, and notes there were also significant Uitoto and Bora populations in Peru, and that any estimate by linguistic or ethnic identification should account for mutual assimilation (and differentiate by descent vs language), through descent and adoption. I would add that contemporary ethnic identifications can also be politically and socially strategic.

26 Pineda 2000.

27 This is based on interviews with elders who were children at the time of resettlement in the wake of the rubber boom.

28 Echeverri 1997; Pineda 1985, 2000.

29 On the history of the rubber economy in the region, see e.g. Chirif et al 2013; Goodman 2009; Grandin 2010; Hardenburg 1912; Jackson 2008; Mitchell 2003; Olarte Camacho 1932; Pineda Camacho 2001, 2000, 1995, 1985; Stanfield 1988; Sampedro et al 2014; Taussig 1987; Thomson 1914; Tully 2011; Whiffen 1915; Vasquéz 2015.

children into the forest. She made a palm frond shelter for us there, and we waited, eating *farinha* and listening. "*Ella sabía lo que era la guerra*"—"She knew what war was," said Doña Leocadia of her survivor grandmother, hiding in the forest, eating *chibe* with her grandchildren, listening to the war that was like a terrible thunder without the relief of rain.

Doña Leocadia rose to turn her *cassave*, and the palms shivered in a wind that smelled of afternoon rain. The sound of thunder shuddered toward the clearing, but did not roll and dissolve over the forest as it should have. The sky rumbled insistently, thunder turned to throbbing as we realized that what was coming was not rain, but another war. We crouched to peer out from the thatch into the sky above the *abuela*'s cacao orchard, into the head-shattering pulse of a military helicopter. It dropped from the sky to just above the house's fragile roof, hovering only long enough for its occupants to meet our eyes and relax their trigger fingers.

Figure 5: Aerial view of a section of the Putumayo River.
SOURCE: Author photo (2014).

3.

Daily helicopter fly-overs are a regular—if only the most conspicuous—dimension of territorial surveillance in this part of the Putumayo region. As one of the country's centers of coca cultivation,[30] the region has been a focal point of the Colombian state's campaign to eradicate illicit coca production and along with it, the insurgent organizations that the coca trade has partly funded.

Since 1994, under the rubric of "Plan Colombia", the Colombian state, (with US funding

30 UNODC 2016 (1, 2).

and technologies, and often via US contractors) has dispersed the herbicide glyphosate[31] over more than 1.6 million hectares of forests and farms suspected of harbouring coca plantations.[32] Uitoto traditional territory has been among the most heavily targeted.[33]

The aerial dispersal of glyphosate, like the use of Agent Orange during the Vietnam war, is a form of action on and through the atmosphere akin to what Peter Sloterdijk has described as the defining feature of the 20th Century: the intersection of design, environmental thinking, and terrorism.[34] As part of the joint wars on drugs and Marxist insurgency, fumigation turns on what Sloterdijk describes as "an assault on the enemy's acute environmental living conditions [...and] the malign exploitation of the victim's life-sustaining habits".[35]

Attacks on coca depend on a recursive identification[36] between an insurgency made illegal, and illicit plants constructed as enemies.[37] However, as in many other parts of Colombian counter-insurgency, the intended enemy (in this case coca plants) is often the least impacted.

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31 Marketed by Monsanto as RoundUp, a staple of industrial agriculture in the US.

32 The Washington Office on Latin America (2013) offers the following statistical overview:

> "This program has operated in Colombia, with heavy U.S. support, since 1994. Aircraft, mostly piloted by contractor personnel, fly over coca-growing zones spraying "Round-Up Ultra," an herbicide including the active ingredient glyphosate, over about 100,000 hectares per year of Colombian territory. Between 1996 and 2012, aircraft have sprayed herbicides over 1.6 million hectares of Colombia—an area equivalent to a square 80 miles on each side. The corners of such a square would stretch from the Washington suburbs to the Philadelphia suburbs. That's the equivalent of one hectare sprayed every 5 minutes and 29 seconds since January 1, 1996."

33 Washington Office on Latin America 2013.

34 Sloterdijk 2009:22.

35 Sloterdijk 2009:22; c.f. Simmons 2019. In a kind of reduplication of the dynamic of fumigation in Colombia's coca producing regions, Colombians who occupied central Bogotá during a national strike in protest against a 2013 US-Colombia free trade agreement granting Monsanto massive legislative and economic sway over the patenting of seeds and use of "round-up ready" seed in particular were met with massive waves of teargas and the brutality of ESMAD special forces.

36 Irvine & Gal 2000.

37 See for reference a state campaign against the cultivation of "*la mata que mata*"(the plant that kills), debated in e.g. *El Espectador* by Isaza (2010).

While the powerful leaf desiccant very effectively destroys the crops on which subsistence gardeners rely for life and livelihood (including manioc, plantain, pineapple, papaya, etc), coca itself often rallies after spraying. My friend Travel tells me this is because coca is a master plant, the botanical form of an ancestral spirit that is very strong.[38]

While its effectiveness in reducing either illicit coca production, or the strength of insurgent groups is dubious, its effects on ecology and human health are undeniable. Acute exposure (especially in the concentrations required for application from altitudes out of the range of *guerrilla* artillery) can cause respiratory damage, skin lesions, and burns. Ongoing exposure, (including to residues accumulated in waterways, soils, and trophic chains, has devastating long-term impacts.[39]

As a chemical intervention into the atmosphere surrounding enemy plants and combatants, fumigation with glyphosate is not merely a chemical attack, but also an ontological one, that (again quoting Sloterdijk) "voids the distinction between violence against people and violence against things: it comprises a form of violence against the very human-ambient 'things' without which people cannot remain people."[40]

In this context, those things include a lively and dense network of beings, foremost among them sacred plants, that for Uitoto people are both kin and the key mediators of human fertility, sociality, and knowledge transmission. The staple foods that Uitoto people understand to constitute the shared substance of an extended kinbody have been increasingly replaced by

38 Re: fumigation and garden crops, and Travel, see also Ch 4.

39 Research by Colombian economists claims to demonstrate that the areas of most intensive fumigation (including Putumayo and Caquetá) have suffered increases in rates of miscarriage, birth defects, and other effects of endocrine disruption (Camacho & Mejía 2017). The question of specific toxic impacts of glyphosate on human health has been hotly contested.

40 Sloterdijk 2009:25.

industrially farmed rice and beans—foods they complain are "*genetizado*" ("geneticised," genetically modified) and "full of chemicals". Those foods are blamed for disturbances in fertility and sexual development,[41] as well as for impairing the transmission of traditional knowledge and healing capacities. This war on one form of botanical reproduction has partly entailed a crisis in reproduction on biological, social, cultural, and cosmological levels.

The aerial dispersal of glyphosate has been just one engine by which a war that began as a largely agrarian struggle for land redistribution[42] has become a conflict experienced in increasingly atmospheric terms.[43] Kin ties themselves have become increasingly atmospheric, tenuous and prone to dispersal and suspicion. Indeed, for Uitoto people living in target regions, aerial fumigation with glyphosate is simply one among many kinds of toxic dispersals within which they are living.

41 Informants told me, for instance, "our food is full of chemicals now, that is why our young girls are beginning their menstruation so much earlier."

42 On the history of political violence in Colombia, see e.g. Palacios 2002.

43 See, e.g. Gill 2009 on semiotic ambiguity and paramilitary terror in Barrancabermeja, Colombia.


Figure 6: Uitoto girl on a path through her reserve.
SOURCE: Author photo (2009).

4.

In the late nineteenth century, the Austrian General Clausewitz coined the image of the "fog of war" to describe the epistemic condition of life under conflict:

> "War is the realm of uncertainty; three quarters of the factors on which action in war is based are wrapped in a fog of greater or lesser uncertainty. A sensitive and discriminating judgment is called for; a skilled intelligence to scent out the truth."[44] [45]

44 Clausewitz 1968[1832].

45 Clausewitz cast a long shadow over the Colombian Amazon in the form of military epistemology. *On War* is a lodestar for military strategy of counterinsurgency by US trained Colombian military personnel. See e.g. Pérez 2004, who argues:
"The Colombian experience during the last eighteen months [2002-04] not only has brought a new hope for a solution to the most complex conflict in the Americas, but also demonstrates that Clausewitz's ideas still are

Weaponized glyphosate—along with other atmospheric forms of surveillance, intervention, and attack in Uitoto territory—has rendered this uncertainty even more profound, and more politically charged. Attacks on and through the atmosphere characterize, for Sloterdijk, both the characteristic mode of violence and an epistemic regime of the twentieth century, where the quality of "latency itself" is weaponized.[46] In this model, the previously taken for granted conditions of a lifeworld are suddenly rendered both knowable and lethal in an instant of violent explication. In Sloterdijk's history of twentieth century "atmoterrorism," this moment is irrevocable. The attack initiates a new historical, political, and epistemic moment, as the atmospheric conditions of ongoing life activity are never again beyond perceptibility or unconcern.

But in Uitoto worlds, at least, any prior state of insensibility is neither historically innocent nor politically neutral. The particular violence of fumigation is certainly parallel to the gas attacks that for Sloterdijk define twentieth century warfare and political life. In Uitoto territories and sensory orders, however, the efficacy of fumigation is not only a one-way explication, a movement into knowability. Its efficacies unfold from its capacities to constitute an order of only ever partial knowability, a political order established through the constant threat of attack (a future in suspension) and through the disavowal of its lethal effects in the bodies and ecologies inseparable from the forests and soils and waterways that absorb glyphosate, condensing and disclosing it over time. The transformative effects of fumigation require a lens that can find resolution on the distinctive temporality of its violence,[47] and on the ways in which it both relies on and constitutes a political order through the reconfiguration of what Rancière

appropriate references today for strategists worldwide."(8)

46 Sloterdijk 2009:59.

47 Nixon 2011.

calls a "distribution of the sensible" and the epistemic blindspots that it engenders.[48] The most lethal legacies of some two decades of fumigation require an analytic approach in which "latency itself" is not the inert backdrop to human action, a state of innocence that is *instantly undone* by an attack on and through the environment. As with Michelle Murphy's "regime of imperceptibility,"[49] latency as a sensory and epistemic condition of the war in Uitoto territory, is a political outcome.[50] The erasure of fumigation's consequences (for instance in state disavowals of its health impacts on human and non-human bodies) is the epistemic dimension of its violence. Fumigation, along with military surveillance and propaganda, and half-visible occupation by the insurgency, constitute an uncanny political order, a form of assault whose efficacies and ontological disordering turn on modes of doubled and repressed half-knowings.

48 Rancière 2004.
49 Murphy 2008.
50 As such, the forms of sensory attunement that work against that making latent are also political praxis.

Figure 7: Abandoned military equipment on Heron River.
SOURCE: Author photo (2014).

For Uitoto communities living in the chemical fog of the war on drugs, forms of subtle knowledge including dreams and visions—along with paranoid rumours, intuitions, and uncanny encounters—are ways of apprehending relations and realities that have been forced *into* latency, out of knowability, by the ongoing violence of territorial occupation and ontological erasure.

As a newly arrived visitor to the Heron River reserve, I had a recurring dream of being watched in my sleep by a *guerrillero* smoking a cigarette. Jenaro interpreted this dream as a kind of spectral surveillance with a reality equal to the military surveillance we withstood on a daily basis. "It's because you've just arrived in the territory," he said, "they're coming to look at you…

they are the ones that watch us." He meant that the ancestral spirit masters of the plants he manages—the *gente yagecera*—were, like everyone else in the community, curiously evaluating the intentions of a foreign woman who had arrived without any ties, and whose body had not been attuned to this place, to its regimes of care and mutual influence, to its scents or their sensitivities.

Why did a dream of intimate surveillance by the insurgency so readily suggest the watchful authority of those conscientious spirits? What is the slippage by which the machines of war and omnipresent surveillance are one side of a coin whose other face is patrilineal authority, healing power, and cosmological mobility? Perhaps their interpretive intuitions were resonant with what Freud described as "the first achievement of the dreamwork,"[51] the semiotic magic of condensation by which irreconcilable parts of experience are synthesized in the visual images of dreams—"as if several photographs had been taken on the same plate."[52] For Freud, dreams were condensations of wishes or injuries inadmissible to consciousness (like the symptoms of trauma, signs of something at once known and unknowable).[53] In Uitoto interpretations, dreams are a key form of subtle knowledge about states of relationality, ambient influence, and territorial as cosmological order.[54]

51 Freud 1943[1917]:152.
52 Freud 1943[1917]:152.
53 Freud 1943[1917].
54 Cf. e.g. Kohn 2007 on dreaming and knowing in Amazonia.

Figure 8: On a path through the Heron River reserve.
SOURCE: Author photo (2014).

In the Heron River reserve, and throughout Uitoto territory, invisible and omnipresent observers were understood to be just out of sight, capable of spiriting away one's kin, of slipping them into a parallel but alien life just next to the one that was properly theirs.[55] Uitoto hunters, like shamans,[56] are experts at managing relations with the spectral, quasi-human, and predatory beings that govern the forest and its game. Virgilio, a hunter and former narco-trafficker in his sixties, with a gift for bone-setting and an equally glorious talent for dirty jokes, told me about

55 McLachlan 2011. See also Chapters 3, 4, 5.
56 In some figurations, shamans are hunters, too.

the kinds of uncanny relations he negotiated in the forest at night. "Once, Emileia, I was sleeping in my hammock, when I dreamt that a woman had laid down beside me. She was beautiful, but when I touched her body, that part of the woman, it was covered in spines." This was, he explained to me, a manifestation of the *Madre Monte*—(the "Forest Mother") the spirit master of forest game that is figured in narrative and gift exchanges as at once a seductive affinal woman and a father-in-law. In other moments, the *Madre Monte* is also a shapeshifter that appears in the guise of one's kin, at the edges of gardens and house clearings, to steal the unsuspecting into an inhuman life in the forest.[57]

In order to mitigate the *Madre Monte*'s potential rapaciousness and kin-stealing danger, to regulate the always fraught exchange with affines, and to set up relations of affinal reciprocity, Virgilio, like other hunters, regularly offered gifts of tobacco paste and coca powder to the *Madre Monte* at the edge of the forest, hoping to trade the substances of masculine agency and affinal sociality[58] for game as affines[59] and the ontological stability of their own kin.

57 The negotiation of gendered relations of exchange and seduction with game masters is represented in the Amazonian literature. For a recent review and socio-ecological perspective, see e.g. Fernández-Llamazares & Virtanen 2020. See also McLachlan 2011.

58 C.f. Londoño on plant substances and affinity (2012:95).

59 C.f. Taylor 2000, on *anent*, love songs to prey.

Figure 9: A fence around a *chagra* in the Heron River reserve.
SOURCE: Author photo (2014).

In Uitoto accounts, the *Madre Monte* wasn't the only being capable of carrying off kin. Virgilio's wife, Sibel—a fiery woman who in the early days of the 1980s coca bonanza had smuggled cocaine (ingeniously disguised as baby powder) across the border with Peru—warned me with rumours of predatory spirits called, terrifyingly enough, "head-cutters"[60]. A hunter alone in the forest would see lights blinking above him, something flying quickly, erratically, that would

60 These narratives echo the widespread stories of murderous and extractive beings including *pishtacos* described in e.g. Gow 2001, and Weismantel 2001.

descend and then appear as a white man wearing a hat and a jetpack.[61] He would wrap his victim in a "radio lasso" which either decapitated him or drained his body of its vital substances (including fat and blood), leaving him "like a pile of dirty clothes"[62] on the forest floor. Sibel explained, in hushed tones, that this jet-packed monster emerged from a nearby military base and (she whispered) from an even more covert US base nested inside that Colombian one.

Virgilio also spoke about the armed actors in their midst[63] like spectral, quasi-human predators. "Some nights, Emileia, I know the *guerrilla* are close by, patrolling or maybe hunting. I never see them, but I know when they're close by the scent of their cigarettes." All of these dreams, rumours, apparitions, and suspicions represent shadow versions of properly substantiated human sociality and reproduction. These spectral predators embody and condense (in their shifting and distorted ways) a range of threats to Uitoto lives, relations, and possibilities, as well as Uitoto people's "discriminating judgment"[64] in the midst of an occupation as opaque as smoke.

If the helicopter of our distributed vision, or the spectral *guerrillero* of my surveillance dreams translate[65] a relationship between war and the Uitoto world, they do so by turning on an ambiguity of Uitoto people's reckoning and negotiations with an ongoing history of colonial, capitalist, environmental, and political violence. Frequently, their negotiations at once risk and

61 This appears to be a condensation in the Freudian sense of colonial and military presence —include an image of *caucheros* in hats, and of counterinsurgency media, including military personnel in packs.

62 This is a common figure in Uitoto death tales, and resonates with literature on the body and/as clothing. See e.g. Viveiros de Castro (1998:482): "it is not so much that the body is a clothing but rather that clothing is a body," and Santos-Granero 2009.

63 This included military and police, but in particular paramilitary actors who remained covert, and especially insurgents who lived hidden in the forest.

64 Clausewitz 1968[1832].

65 Translate, that is, according to the semiotics of the Freudian symptom, as a condensation and displacement.

mitigate the loss and disappearance of kin, and of dimensions of relationality in general.

The spirits descending in a helicopter, and otherwise appearing from the other side of a perceptual boundary as thin as sleep, are complex images of war as atmosphere, but they are not simple representations or abstractions. In Uitoto accounts of, and practices in, subtle sensory registers, the object of their attunements are the omnipresent multitude of kin who are just out of reach—the children now living with the *guerrilla,* the daughters displaced to cold mountain *invasiones,*[66] the sons disappeared by paramilitaries, the fathers shot for refusing food or money, or for not, the grandparents starved for missing ounces of rubber. They are the dead, disappeared, and displaced who are as nearby as a waft of cigarette smoke in the night air, as irrevocably distant as an unmarked grave, as tangible as a breeze through the house, and as impossible to resolve as the logics of a world of relations being unwoven, one thread at a time.

66 *Invasiones* are settlements without title on the peripheries of cities where many displaced persons land.

Figure 10: Tobacco plants in a *chagra*.
SOURCE: Author photo (2009).

5.

Uitoto persons describe themselves as products of continuous making by kinspersons (human and non-), as accretions of plant substance, materialized affect, and corporeal memory. In a context where relationships to kin, to ecology, and to cosmos are always already disturbed, contemporary Uitoto plantwork[67] seeks not just to reproduce a shared body through the extended kin network (a project which appears so often in the Amazonianist literature);[68] it also works to

67 I use this term to encompass the full range of Uitoto ethnobotanical praxis.
68 See, e.g. Conklin 2001; Cormier 2003; Da Matta et al 1979; Gow 1991; Londoño 2012; McCallum 2001; McLachlan 2011; Nieto Moreno 2006; Overing & Passes et al 2001; Vilaça

undo the toxic accretions of chemical, political, and colonial violence that define contemporary Uitoto lifeworlds.

Uitoto healers work not just to purge the corporeal traces of anti-social sentiments (envy, jealousy, anger), but also to undo the impacts of pharmaceuticals, alcohol, industrially produced foods, *basuco*, Roundup in the air and soil, mercury in the water[69]; to purge the social body of the substances of colonial occupation of ecology, territory, and subjectivity. Entangled with the matter of kin networks and plant spirit are an array of chemical traces each entailed by a history of the ongoing colonial dispossession of the relational and ecological basis of Uitoto livelihood and lifeworlds.

Through forms of condensation that recall Freud's insight into the symptom's capacity to hold together the poles of ambivalence, to carry and communicate, however obliquely, the impossible knowledge of what one's kin have endured, Uitoto plantwork produces offers what we might call an epistemology of dispersal: a mode of critical, practical knowledge that works against the dispersal of kin, re-knits disturbed relations, resists the abstraction of ancestral plants into commodity logics,[70] that retunes sensoria and refines the subtle discernment of conditions to an atmospheric register.

In the context of a regime of occupation, surveillance, and intervention that has rendered ecological, social, and affective landscapes equally suspicious, that has relied on what Sloterdijk calls "the terrorist use of latency itself,"[71] Uitoto cosmopoetic praxis marshals and adapts forms of traditional knowledge that are keyed to a diagnostic, synthetic, and even alchemical

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2002; Viveiros de Castro 2001, 1996.

69 Mercury contamination is one of the most toxic impacts of gold mining in the region.

70 Lukács 1971[1923]; Marx 1929[1867]. See also Chapters 2, 5.

71 Sloterdijk 2009:59.

apprehension of slow, covert, and world-ending violence, on scales ranging from subtle sensory disturbances to the close networks of kin bonds, from the dense ecologies of rainforest relations to the cosmological order. It does so through concentrations of *yagé* vines and tobacco leaves mixed with forest plants, of coca leaves and fruit ash, of chilis and detoxified manioc. These are tools that render the complexity and lethality of their circumstances not only perceptible, but also transformable.

2 Substantiating the Uitoto Kinbody in a World Undone

1.

In the tangle of the Heron River reserve's back corner, skirting the edge of a national park and slipping over the borders of *cocales* now vanished with the crops they had encircled, Jenaro abandons the path. The detour takes us off the path that winds between a dozen families' *chagras* to look in on a place where *yagé* is growing—uncultivated, this particular vine prompts a depth of reserve and deference beyond even the kind Jenaro shows the adopted vines he has planted on the edges of his wife's *chagra* and in secret places in the forest between his brothers' houses.

We walk for a while through uncut forest, stopping once to shave resin with the machete where a small wound in the bark of a *copal* tree has spilled out strongly perfumed jewels. Jenaro gathers this to burn in ceremony, as an offering and a way of abating the nausea that is a sign of powerful spirits acting on the body, unlike the odors of onion, menstrual blood, rum, or sex, *copal* pleases and soothes the deity. A vine that looks promising at a few paces turns out to be a deceptive double, an uncanny cousin that is bitter like *yagé* but not medicine. We find the one Jenaro has been thinking of: a snaking stroke of vegetal lightening, ascending from earth to heaven, bark rippling like muscular force. His body resonates in recognition of the plant ancestor toward which he organizes his sensorium and rhythms, whose sensations and sense-making have suffused his own to a point of saturated doubling. A kind of possession, in both senses—Jenaro describes himself as substantially identical with the divinity he serves, belonging to it and possessed of it, a grandson. But also possessed by it, in its grips. It moves in him, as his senses serve its preferences, and its sensitivities become his own. Jenaro's apprentices are scolded with

the displeasure of a stern grandfather, in both its botanical and human incarnations, as Jenaro's speech articulates the plant ancestor's judgments. Their punishment is a grip in the guts as the plant purges what it finds objectionable, and harangues in the dawning finale of ceremonies when Jenaro's creaking voice is partly the plant's and partly, again, his own.

"*El taita es yagé, y el yagé es Dios.*" "The healer is *yagé*, and *yagé* is God." The patriarchal authority of this divinity is at odds with the tender, infinitely recursive complementarity of other plants that organize Uitoto lives, moral sensoria, and aesthetic calibrations, especially those materializing Uitoto masculinity. The efficacies of cultivars central to the substantiation of Uitoto masculinity depend always on their mutual activation by their (usually wild and feminized) botanical partners—carefully cultivated, toasted, and powdered coca is catalyzed by ashes of wild grape to make *mambe*; fierce, fragile tobacco is cooked into a paste and mixed with the ash salts of wild palms to make *ambil.* The plants constitutive of Uitoto women's magics are equalizing in their infinitely expansive capacity. Those beginning as inedible (cyanide-laden manioc, mouth scorching chilies) are rendered through the force of women's sweetening and calming power into the media of kin-making that thrive on the pleasures of novelty and adoptive reach. The starch of sweet manioc drinks congeals into the bodies of babies who arrive as not entirely human, and who by constant feeding, like the alien and malodorous bodies of forest animals and strangers, are transformed into resonant, consubstantial kin. Across these transformations, plant substances transmit and enregister morally coded and gendered qualia. These are in turn read in and across the bodies of kinspersons, actively worked upon, and re-enregistered in the plants those persons tend.

Unlike the nourishing and curing plants that make up Uitoto quotidianity and the perpetual transformations of aging and curing, *yagé* is an elder at the far end of a life course, at the far edge of a lifeworld. His catalyst, his feminized partner, is another wild plant—"*la pinta*"—the agent that paints visions for its devotees while *yagé* scans and purges, connects and re-orders. His magic and curing power reside in the forest and the world of the dead, at the edge of human life. A healer of last resort, he is a pharmakon that takes its patients through their own deaths back into life.

Y*agé*'s incarnation and kin, the *yagecero* is often suspect in the human community, and this one, particularly so. Jenaro's own history of renderings and shifting embodiments includes saturations with *aguardiente* and its blind rages, with *basuco* and the inhumanity of *guerrilla* and military killing fields. *Aguardiente* helped him abscond from the intolerable incarnation of a body whose father was compelled to revisit the violence of white rubber traders on his own wife and children. Eventually the harsh cane alcohol left Jenaro torn to pieces after a bar brawl in the border town downriver. Pulled out of a ditch and stitched back together by FARC medics who found him ragged and unconscious, he was put to work processing coca paste in a forest laboratory. There, smoking *basuco* with his companions, he was folded into a kind of sociality of dissociation that he later recounted as another kind of exit from the human world.

Yagé was his father's plant, and after his father's death, an apprenticeship with Siona *Taitas* (master *yageceros*) in a neighbouring community was his path back into human responsibility and the possibility of curing. Now, he says *el remedio* lets him care for his family, lets him be vigilant for his community, lets him see with its fearsome powers of surveillance any

harm that might come their way. It lets him direct the forces of history—of occupation in the form of children spirited away to *guerrilla* encampments and *cocales*, of poison clouds of chemical defoliant, of land-grabbing colonists—in a way that no waking process can. *Yagé* lives at the edge of human kinship, but it brings him closer to a form of ethical humanity than the violence of the white world's substances has allowed him to.

Here, in the steam and chatter of the inhumanly crowded forest, Jenaro touches the vine's rough bark gently, speaks to it as with an elder. He opens the bark carefully with his machete's edge, eases a shaving into his palm and tastes it—*averiguando*, proving, substantiating. He mulls over timings with the fibers in his mouth—the rhythm of the ceremonial schedule, now intensified to twice a week in the face of a family crisis, the timing of the brewing process, and of the careful alignment of bodily and relational states required before that three-day process can begin. Sidereal and somatic timings are weighed together—when the moon will be dark for stronger visions, who among his patients is in the midst of other cycles of recalibration or potential injury, fasting or drinking alcohol, bathing with purifying herbs or menstruating. He spits out a mouthful of bitterness, and we rejoin the flooded path.

*

The path toward Morelio's garden sucks at our boots for another half hour, and we stop to rest under a rubber tree, its base fanning out into wide accommodating curves. The *syringa* reaches around us as we lean our fatigue into its cool embrace. Jenaro unfolds a packet of *panela* from his bag, and breaks off a mouthful at a time for each of us. The rich brown sugar melts on our tongues, and dissolves into laughter and relief as we lick sticky molasses from our palms.

"Is this the only food we brought?" he asks, knowing the answer is yes, and that the wrapper is empty. "How long do you think you could live on that, if you had to, alone here?" The question is a joke, but also a barbed reminder of my disorientation, that this forest is not where I live. Any sweetness in the moment melts away, the specter of hunger seeping in as the sugar dissolves. Around his question other hungers gather. Absently scraping the edge of his machete against the bark of the rubber tree, another kind of possession flickers in his gestures. Jenaro is just old enough to have witnessed Uitoto men scoring the bark of rubber trees at the waning end of the demand for wild rubber in the 1950s. His father was of the generation that clung to the borders of the living world by handfuls of *panela*, in the early days of the rubber bonanza, and the last days of those ancestors that now visit Jenaro in dreams and in ceremony, whose forest this is. The rubber tree is old enough to hold those memories, too. We alone are the living in this particular tangle, this particular territory of the dead.

*

For three decades at the beginning of the twentieth century, Uitoto rubber tappers relied on *panela* (coarse sugar) to outrun starvation as they raced against the new temporality of *endeuda* and *entregas*, debt and delivery, against a new kind of time that was made of quotas and rifles, lashes and stockades, against the galloping pace of a kind of death impossible to understand, a kind of death that spread as quickly as the fevers that stole entire *malocas,* a ravenous, insatiable death that devoured familiar time and tore apart the living matter of the cosmos. This new alien hunger starved all that it touched. It devoured the crops of women's gardens, and then it devoured women. It devoured the hunting night, and then hunted men in fevered daylight. It

devoured children, newborn and not quite yet, and then devoured their mothers with unbidden siblings. It undid the seasons of feasting and fertility, it undid the time of the Uitoto cosmos, the time measured and mattered in the body of a kinworld, until that body was starved and scarred and scattered beyond human recognition.

2.

Of the same generation as Jenaro, Juan Liberador was born to an indentured father in the midst of this ravaging hunger, the rubber bonanza through which Uitoto people first became entangled with the lethal mechanisms of extractive capitalism and its most violent colonial forms. Juan recalls the processing of raw latex with culinary detail: "you would cook the latex over the fire until it thickened, and then *se le hacía en un molde, cómo una panela*"—it was shaped in a mould, "just like sugar." The culinary parallel belies the depths of deprivation and hunger into which the system of rubber extraction drove Uitoto people and their extended kin.

Prevented by force from gardening or hunting, and by the impossible quotas of production demanded by Peruvian rubber station bosses and Afro-Barbadian overseers whom the company had contracted from Caribbean sugar plantations, they were compelled to live on the meager and outrageously overpriced market goods (such as tinned sardines and blocks of sugar) advanced to them by the company, each "payment" a further sentence. Contemporary Uitoto gardeners described the products of their labour as the accretion of their bodily substance in an external form, and in the realm of the Casa Arana, these metaphors took on a new visceral reality. In Iquitos, center of the north west Amazonian rubber trade, the cargos of cured latex

were nicknamed "*chorizos Putumayenses*"—"Putumayo sausages"—well-named, remarked Irish investigator Sir Roger Casement, for they "represented the entrails of a people".

Juan explains that where his father worked, each ball (*bulto*) of cured latex weighed some 50 kilos, and they would produce up to three or four *bultos* per quota period:

> "*Un kilo valía quatro pesos, y quatro pesos eran quatro pesos—mucha plata, cómo 40,000 pesos ($20)...*"*El patron…más te daba para que más traía. En crédito iban pagando...Es una esclavitud. La gente así se esclavizaba, porque de eso vivían*."
>
> "A kilo was worth four pesos [once it reached the market in Iquitos], and four pesos was four *pesos*—a lot of money, like 40,000 pesos (20USD) now. [A worker was given advances of goods, compelling them into ever deeper debt]...The boss…would give you more so that you would bring in more [rubber]. They paid in credit…That is a kind of slavery. So the people enslaved themselves, because they [had to live] from that."

Figure 11: "Sr. Estrella, a rubber merchant in Iquitos with cargo of rubber." 1908.
SOURCE: Archives of the Biblioteca Amazônica, Iquitos. Author reproduction (2009).

While some communities in the Putumayo river basin had suffered sporadic encounters with lusobrasilian slave traders beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, they had largely repelled Spanish and Portuguese colonisation for nearly four centuries. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Caquetá-Putumayo basin was "inhabited by a dense Indigenous population estimated at 100,000 persons." Among these were some 30,000 persons belonging to Uitoto dialect groups (including Murui Mɨnɨka, Nipode, and Búe speakers), along with communities of Miraña, Andoque, and Muinane speakers (some 10,000-15,000 respectively), and smaller communities of Ocaina, Nonunya, and Resigero speakers. The social world of the People of the Center was organized through networks of *malocas*, co-residential roundhouses of between one and two hundred patrilineal kin, and supported through swidden horticulture, forest gathering, hunting, and fishing.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Amazon basin was the center of global rubber production. Global demand for rubber was escalating as Europe and the US rapidly industrialized. Brazil had until then controlled access to Atlantic shipping routes through the ports of Pará, and both rubber production and the hallucinatory wealth it generated had concentrated in Manaos, the rubber capital of the Brazilian Amazon, whose elites sent their laundry to Paris. The opening of the Amazon River to navigation beyond Manaos, and the 1884 collapse of the market in quinine that had previously driven extractive interest and supported colonial expansion in the North West Amazon, both spurred a new frenzy for rubber extraction in the region. The Putumayo and Caquetá river system, whose affluents (Cara-Paraná and Igará-Paraná, and Cahuinarí rivers, respectively) were densely forested with highly productive rubber

trees, quickly became the focus of Colombian and Peruvian rubber traders who saw the region as also possessed of a vast unexploited labour force.

In 1902, a former itinerant hat salesman, the Peruvian Julio César Arana travelled up the Igara-Paraná river and associated himself with one of the number of Colombian-owned rubber operations already employing Indigenous labour, the rubber station at Indiana, near La Chorrera. A year later, in 1903, he founded with his brother the Casa Arana Hermanos, and quickly seized control by purchase or coercion of nearly all of the Colombian-owned rubber stations on the Putumayo. According to Eugène Robuchon, a French geographer and photographer, "contracted by the Casa Arana at the insistence of the government of Peru," the Casa Arana had within a year established or taken control of fifty rubber sections and their associated stations, along with an estimated 12,000 Indigenous labourers. In the first year of the company's activities, their primary means of recruitment had been a system of *endeuda* ("indebtment"), advancing merchandise to *malocas* and then extracting labour in exchange.

Another elder in the Heron River reserve, Don Sosimo, recalls the arrival of Peruvian rubber traders to his clan's *maloca* at Nocaimaní in the Caquetá river system around when he was "about seven or eight—*ya era grandecito*—I was already a little big." The strangers' descent on their roundhouse precipitated the death of all but a handful of his kin in a matter of weeks. "My aunt died of a fever, then her four sisters. Then my mother, missing her sisters, didn't want any more of life, and she followed them." When the *caucheros* threatened to burn down their *maloca*, Sosimo fled with his father and grandfather and other surviving kin, until they found temporary shelter in Carijona territory, living on wild fruits and game. Eventually, he is certain, the

Carijona alerted the Peruvian traders to their presence, and they were put to work collecting rubber, working furiously to meet the quotas set by traders for the *entrega*:

> "*Sabían a dónde nosotros nos habíamos ido…Llegaron con una y otra clase de cajita de cuchara, plato, cuchillo, hamaca, olla, ropa…Bueno lo repartieron allí, cuchara, espejo, peinete, pa' todo eso, cuando venía yo mirando, cojimos ropa, machetica…*
>
> *Sacabamos una arroba, dos arrobas según. Y se iban, por ese vuelto largo a Iquitos. Gastaban dos meses en ir y venir. De vuelta ya teníamos el otro cargo, el otro bloque de caucho.*"
>
> "The Carijona knew where we had fled to...and before long, the traders came with one and another type of cases of spoons, plates, knives, hammocks, pots, clothing...And well, they distributed it all there, a spoon, a mirror, a comb…Then I came to look, we took clothes, a little machete..."
>
> "We gathered one *arroba*, two *arrobas*, depending. And they went, on that long loop to Iquitos. They spent two months going and returning […] and on their return we had the next block of rubber ready."

Eventually, one of the traders, Don Tomás Torres, brought his son along. Sosimo and the son were caught in a thunder storm while out hunting, and the boy was killed by a lightening strike. Don Tomás left with the latest quota of rubber to deliver it to Iquitos and then return, "to bring back people. To kill us like they were doing in Chorrera."

La Chorrera, on the Caquetá river, was the center of the Casa Arana's régime of spectacular violence, though the company's methods of terror seized the entirety of the Putumayo-Caquetá basin. The company imposed impossible and arbitrary quotas on enslaved labourers. When these quotas were not met, labourers were punished with dismemberment and monstrous deaths. These included fatal lashing, burning over coals or with kerosene, imprisonment and starvation in stockades and cages, among other incomprehensible horrors. Spectacles of torture and the killing of kin (including elders and infants) were used to suppress rebellions, to force the exposure of families hiding in the forest, and to enshrine the murderous

sovereignty of white traders over the entirety of Uitoto territory.

The extremity of the Casa Arana's inhumanity quickly spurred rebellion among the People of the Center, and Robuchon notes that after 1903, "in the region, there was a true climate of war, following an uprising of Bora and Navaja Indians; panic had spread among all of the employees of that area and the work of rubber extraction was paralyzed." After that point, in 1903, "*correrías de indios,*" brutal slave raids by employees of the Casa Arana, became "the most expedient method of incorporating Indian labour power."

By 1908, the Casa Arana controlled 13,600 Indigenous labourers. The company's ferocious incorporation of Indigenous labour resulted in a swift increase in its exports of cured latex to Iquitos. Arana's production in the Putumayo increased forty-fold in its first six years (from 15,862 kilos in 1900 to 644,897 kilos in 1906, a total extraction over that period of 1,853,897 kilos). In his account of the company's abuses, Casement would later offer a calculation of the price of Putumayo rubber in Indigenous lives: "the Putumayo output of 4,000 tons of rubber [between 1902 and 1912] cost 30,000 lives."

Having eliminated their smaller, mostly Colombian, competitors, the Arana brothers sought to consolidate their monopoly in the region through recourse to English capital. In 1907, Julio César Arana traveled to London, and founded the Peruvian Amazon Company with a total capital investment of 1,000,000 pounds sterling. That same year, however, marked the beginning of the Company's exposure to public scrutiny. In December 1907, a young American engineer named Walter Hardenburg left a job in the construction of the Panama Canal, and was traveling by way of the Putumayo to the Río Madeira to join work on a new railroad. He and his friend

Perkins were at the Colombian rubber station *La Unión* when it was attacked by Arana's men. The two were taken captive by the Company, held for several weeks at a number of the Company's stations, and then sent as prisoners to Iquitos, until the U.S. intervened diplomatically to demand their release.

In 1909, the London paper *Truth* published "The Devil's Paradise: A Congo with British Owners," the first of Hardenburg's accounts of his captivity by the Casa Arana, and of the Company's atrocities. Hardenburg reports the Casa Arana's station bosses living in states of wild drunkenness and murderous intoxication with their inhuman power. They were served by young Indigenous boys (the "*muchachos de confianza*"), kept captive what his and other contemporary reports (and some historians) euphemistically call "harems" of "wives" including girls as young as ten, shot Indigenous labourers "for sport," and trained their dogs to tear apart the dead. The landscape of the rubber stations was littered with the bones of the dead and overwhelmed with the scent of decay.

The scale of the Company's monstrosity scandalised even *bona fide* colonial racists like C. Reginald Enock, who puzzled in his forward to a report of the atrocities that Indigenous labour was not even treated as well as livestock:

> "It might have been supposed that from economic reasons alone the exploiters of native labour would have endeavoured to foster and preserve it, *even if it were simply on the principle of feeding and stabling a horse* in order to use its powers to the utmost. But this is not the case. [...] In the persecuted districts of Latin America native labour is practically being hounded off the face of the earth."

Though Arana dismissed the accusations as Colombian propaganda, the possible implication of a British-owned company, and of British subjects in outrageous crimes, along with the pressure of abolitionist societies, led the British Foreign Office to commission an investigation by Sir Roger

Casement. Casement was then the British consul in Río de Janeiro, and had previously investigated the crimes of Belgian rubber companies in the Congo. Casement left England on July 23rd, 1910, and arrived in La Chorrera, heart of Arana's operations in the Igaráparaná river on September 22nd. After two months in the Casa Arana's territory, where he interviewed workers and overseers and witnessed firsthand the torture and killing of enslaved People of the Center, Casement reported that all that Hardenburg had claimed, and worse, were true.

In response to Hardenburg and Casement's reports, and to another volume of victim testimonies published by the Colombian Olarte Camacho, in March 1911 the Peruvian Supreme Court ordered a judicial commission headed by judge Rómulo Paredes to investigate the Peruvian Amazon Company. Paredes' conclusion was unequivocal: "IN THE PUTUMAYO INDIANS ARE KILLED BECAUSE THEY WORK". By that point, however, most of those responsible for the Company's worst atrocities had already fled the Putumayo.

Eventually, on November 6th, 1912, the British House of Commons installed a Parliamentary Committee to investigate the charges. Casement testified to Parliament on December 11th, and three months later, on March 19th, a judge ordered the liquidation of the Peruvian Amazon Co. Arana had arrived in London on March 4th, but avoided appearing before the Committee until April 9th. Following his testimony, the Committee declared Arana knowingly responsible, and British shareholders "negligently ignorant," of the all of the crimes documented in the Casement report. In the absence of their penal jurisdiction, however, and in spite of the liquidation of the firm's British shares, Arana returned to Iquitos and continued his Colombian operations with impunity.

Indeed, by 1913, Arana was one of the most influential rubber barons in a booming rubber town. Investigation into the Casa Arana was suppressed in Iquitos—judges were harassed, and Arana's brother-in-law, a high functionary in the Casa Arana, was named Vice-Mayor of Iquitos and President of the Chamber of Commerce. The city's elite dismissed the charges against Arana as "a 'Colombian intrigue' and a plot by Casement to destroy the regional economy, already impacted by the rising viability of Asian plantation rubber."

Seeking to maintain and expand control of the contested territory, the Peruvian state offered military reinforcement for the Aranas' control of the Putumayo-Caquetá basin. The question of national territory would drive some of the Company's most devastating actions against People of the Center. In 1917, a rebellion led by the Uitoto leader Yarocamena ("Lightening Stone Tree") was suppressed, in a massacre orchestrated by the Casa Arana's employees and the Peruvian Army.

A decade later, in 1928, the imminent ratification by the Peruvian government of the 1924 Salomón-Lozano treaty (granting Colombia rights to the territory North of the Putumayo, then under Arana's control) led the Casa Arana to forcibly displace thousands of People of the Center into Peruvian territory South of the Putumayo:

> "The Casa Arana initiated the forced displacement of the area's entire Indigenous population toward Peru. Andoques, Huitotos and Boras were obligated to abandon their homes and territories and move toward the meridian line of the Putumayo. Many families were decimated by epidemics and the precarious conditions of the new settlements."

This was the first of a series of displacements that intensified until 1932, when the territorial dispute led to outright war between Colombia and Peru:

> "The region's current Indigenous residents relate that shortly before the conflict (1932) the Peruvian troupes reached the Caquetá, and captured many of the Indians who tried to

> flee, among them the Nonuya, Muinane, and Andoque [...] The population displaced from the region of La Chorrera is estimated at 6,719[...]. In 1930 the immense region comprised between the Caquetá and Putumayo, to the East of the Caguán, was practically uninhabited. The population had been assassinated, deported, or had been forced to flee toward the Northern part of the territory. As though that were not enough, the numerous Indians taken to Peru were also decimated by hunger and fever."

Don Sosimo remembers the arrival of the border war. An elder that was with them took an herb, "*ñumaira*, that was used for dreaming…and dreamt: 'There is war, it's coming, there are enemies.' We had to leave again. We fled the rubber work". They escaped their Peruvian overseers, and later made their way back toward the new border, eventually settling near Puerto X, working for food and then wages of a few *centavos* a week, "cutting cedar, hunting for furs, and later the coca boom arrived."

3.

For Don Sosimo, the arrival of the Casa Arana to his *maloca* marked the end of one life and the beginning of another organized around labour in a succession of botanical extractive booms. The life histories of Uitoto people have been shaped by the tides of these economies, and by the particular sorceries of a foreign logic that turned kin into commodities (sending women and children to slave markets in Iquitos, turning ancestral plant-persons into empty placeholders of shareholder value, divine multiformity into weight and *pesos*. The history of this region—of Uitoto traditional territory, and of what became the Colombian Amazon—has unfolded as the mediation of a globalising commodity logic through extractive botanical economies, in cycles of bonanza and bust. These economies have consumed the substance of Indigenous labour and lifeworlds, through a logic that has devoured ecologies and cosmologies since it first arrived—

hunting dogs, rifles, and stock titles at its side—at the edges of the Uitoto world.

Hunted and sold, decimated and displaced, those People of the Center that survived the rubber bonanza, what Pineda calls "the rubber holocaust" in light of its genocidal scope and apocalyptic consequence, found they had been "orphaned".

Four of every five of their kinspersons were lost. According to contemporary and historians' estimates, some 80,000 People of the Center were killed in thirty years, 80% of the population in 1900. Beyond the scale of calculable demography (itself impossible to hold in intelligibility), the violence of the rubber system was the undoing of a world. The world of *malocas* as ceremonial and co-residential microcosms ordered under the protection and authority of heads of patrilines was fragmented and scattered. The *maloqueros*, curers and elders of the kingroup, were often the first to be killed in *correrías*, shot and torn apart in front of their kin. In the dismemberment of their bodies was enacted the dismantling of a system of embodied knowledge and curing power, of ancestral power and protection registered in the substance of elders' bodies and enfolding all of their kin and their territory.

This was the unmaking of a world of reciprocal feasting where time was ordered through the seasonal forest and riverine cycles of fat and fallow, and where those seasons were compelled by the will of *maloqueros*, owners of the dances that ordered animal and forest abundance and rendered human agency from the disordered substance of a social but inhuman world.

The forced displacement of entire communities, and the reconstitution of communities of escapees from the horrors of the rubber stations, represents the twentieth century's first mass displacement of People of Center, but not the last. Since the 1970s, the violence of narcotics

economies and ongoing armed conflict have increasingly displaced Uitoto people to urban centers and peri-urban settlements. At the same time, the designation of new reserves under Indigenous authority, and the restitution of some traditional lands has supported Uitoto efforts to reassemble, to recover language, ceremonial order and political authority. In 1938, the Colombian government purchased (via the Banco Agrícola Hipotecario) rights to the Casa Arana's land holdings for USD200,000. Those lands were designated in 1988 as the "Resguardo del Predio Putumayo," a reserve of 500,000 hectares that extends to the Peruvian border, including Puerto X.

This reserve, founded in 1995 and expanded in 2003, curves around an even newer national park. It is several hours down a tributary by canoe to the Putumayo and to Puerto X. The port was established as a military outpost in the Colombo-Peruvian border war of 1933, then became the site of a Catholic mission school and regional rubber market, and later a center in the regional drug trade. The reserve is carved by and curves with the Heron River, whose waters rise and fall with the cycles of rains. At this time of year, they have risen past the banks and flooded the paths that connect the village to a network of rainforest gardens and hunting grounds.

4.

Jenaro licks the crumbs of *panela* from its plastic wrapper, then calls to the dogs—*"Vamo' vamo*'!" The dogs rush ahead of us on the path, darting in and out of the wet underbrush, and the opening of Morelio's new garden comes into view. Our boots sink into the muck as we slip on the trunks that gardeners have half-submerged in the nearly impassable *chuquial* that was dry

forest path a few weeks ago.

Morelio's garden, along with a dozen others on this side of the reserve, are new, but the clearings they are planted in are, uncharacteristically, not. They are part of the reserve's efforts to comply with regional policies of "manual eradication" of illicit coca plantations. This policy is one of the less invasive faces of the US-driven "Plan Colombia," which has sought to reduce the import of cocaine into the US through largely military intervention in Colombia's highest producing regions, including fumigation with the herbicide glyphosate. This reserve's *cocales* have been replaced with gardens, part of a deliberate transition out of the narcotic economy that has left many other scars on the community, and an effort to retain territorial control against military surveillance and a spectral *guerrilla* occupation.

When we arrive, Morelio and Arnaldo are picking coca for *mambe* (a traditional use for which coca cultivation is legal). The delicate coca bushes froth pale against glossy manioc leaves, under broad arches of plantain. Arnaldo strips an entire branch in one gesture, leaving the bark shredded and the plant denuded. "*No he sembrado coca desde que salí de los cocales*," he says, "I haven't planted coca since I left the *cocales*." Older Uitoto men pick coca leaves reverently, careful not to drop them, or to pluck more than the plant can easily replace. Unlike those elders, Arnaldo is one of many in his generation who were taken as adolescents into the *guerrilla*'s illicit coca plantations as *raspachines* ("scrapers" or "pickers"). Clearing a coca plant of its leaves in a few rough passes, his gestures tell a history of compelled labour now settled bitterly into his body.

The bitterness of that history is not, in many Uitoto people's tellings, only a human one.

Coca is an ancestral person who takes the botanical form of slender branches and pale ovate leaves, but whose spirit owner, the Mother of Coca, is a tiny and fierce old woman—"*una mujer chiquitica,*" Selene describes her, "*así bajita,*" as small as a child—"who makes you work hard for your kin, warming your body and sweetening your heart." As an ancestor, she demands to be treated with respect and loving attention, and like her most forceful human kin, she is capable of protectiveness, and even revenge.

Juan has felt the lash of coca's punishments. Recruited by a narcotrafficker in the triple-border town of Leticia in the early 1980s, Juan smuggled coca paste and cocaine between Colombia and Peru for half a decade before landing in a jail in Iquitos (by then the regional center of the coca trade) for eight years. He explained, a cloud of *mambe* emanating from his mouth as he settled in with the dusk to the evening *mambeada*:

> "*Por la coca ha habido mucha muerte...mucho billete y también mucha muerte ...porque ya adulteraron la coca. Con químicas, con no sé que, pa'que valga mucho más, muchas químicas pa'que tenga otro valor.... Hay unos que la vuelven pasta, otros que la cristalizan, otros que la cocinan, otros que la inyectan por acá, y así vale más plata. Es más dulce, pero trae muchos crimines. Cuantos niños se crían sin padre? Cuantas niñas se crían sin madre?" ..."y así es la venganza de esto, de la coca, por el mal uso. De la misma madre de la coca... Mira si usted es la mamá, y siguen matando a sus hijos…dejó eso para que los Indigenas lo usen, pa'que mambeara…para ayudar los unos a los otros...y es por eso que hay mucha muerte.*"
>
> "Because of coca there has been a lot of death...a lot of cash and a also a lot of death...Because they have adulterated coca. With chemicals, I don't know what, so that it will be worth much more, a lot of chemicals so that it will have another value ... There are some that turn it into paste, others that crystalize it, others that cook it, other that inject it over there, and that way it's worth more money. It's sweeter, but it brings a lot of crimes. How many boys are being raised without fathers? How many girls are being raised without mothers?"..."And that is the vengeance of coca, for abuse. From the very mother of coca... Look, if you are the mother, and they keep killing your children...because she left that for Indigenous people to use, to *mambe*..., to help one another...and that's why there is so much death."

Figure 12: Mariano picking coca leaves for *mambe*.
SOURCE: Author photo (2009).

5.

In Uitoto talk and praxis, the substance of ancestral plants is the foundation of human kinship, consciousness, agency, and relationality. Plant substances comprise the matter of the body, and the commonality of bodily substance is the foundation of kinship. Plant-persons including tobacco, coca, manioc, and chilies are addressed as agents responsible for the genesis and ongoing curing of a moral cosmos. Human and beyond human kin relations based on shared substance constitute a world of distributed agency and shared consciousness, of continuous mutual susceptibility, and of radical openness to the actions, states, intentions, and work of others—a condition resonant with Sahlins' general definition of kinship as the "mutuality of being."

Ancestral plants are also the foundation of what European philosophy calls reflexive consciousness, of moral discernment, of affective and aesthetic attunements. They are also the medium of relationality with an animate cosmos. Uitoto bodies are figured as constellations of ecologically and cosmologically complex relationships, as agentive and sentient plant persons materialized in human form. Uitoto people describe their bodies as substantially composed of, and subjectively contiguous with the substance of sacred plants. These include manioc starch, chili paste, tobacco paste, coca powder, *yagé*, medicinal herbs, palm ashes, palm fruits, and a panoply of other wild and cultivated plants. Indeed, in some senses, Uitoto people's bodies appear in their descriptions (and in the ritual, medicinal, and quotidian organization of their somatic states) as microcosmic registers of entire rainforest ecologies. Conversely, the complexity of social, ecological, and cosmological relationships are mediated and regenerated

through the ever transforming substance of related bodies.

Here, the mutually mediating substantiations of plant and human subjectivities anchor and activate a system of curing knowledge that is, to borrow Londoño's phrase, "a moral project in perpetuity." This is true of the quotidian moral reckoning that others have so richly described across Indigenous Amazonian societies. The discernment, correction, and reproduction of properly human subjectivity through the care and cultivation of properly human substance represents in Uitoto communities, as it does across the Amazonianist literature, a Sisyphean project that occupies processes at every scale of quotidian and ritual life. The reproduction of moral human sociality (of a world of loving, convivial, mutually nourishing relations—the good life—arises from a seeming paradox: making properly cured human subjectivity means correctly, and continuously, embodying non-human agency in a human form, whose substance is and is not essentially distinctly human.

Substance in this system of understanding, then, is not simply a matter of matter. It is the foundation of possibilities for affective resonance and transformation, for "being affected" in the dynamic attunements that constitute moral and generative intersubjectivity. It is a question, an open and urgent problem of cosmological, ecological, social, and moral organization. And it is one that has grown only more complex and urgent over a century of rendering through the deanimating logics of reification that underwrite the articulating violences of war, market, and assimilation.

6.

If kinship is being "members of one another," the history of Uitoto colonization, from 1900 to present, must be understood as a history of dismemberments. Uitoto colonial history can be understood as a continuous process of fragmentation through the logics of a capitalist régime of value. As Uitoto people move through reticulated systems of colonial and capitalist occupation, including wage labour, industrial food systems, state schooling, language loss, etc., they reckon with the fragmenting effects on their relations, their consciousness, their sensoria, and on the substances that ground and connect each of these. Uitoto magical, practical, and political efforts in the stream of that history must conversely be understood as the work of reassembling kinworlds, intersubjective ecologies, and sentient cosmos through the volatile and vital mediations of plant substance.

Uitoto reckoning with the legacy and ongoing forces of extractive economies has been mediated through the perpetually fraught question of substance. It is fraught because it is, by its nature, a question: the constellations of substance that compose Uitoto kinbodies are perpetually susceptible, "chronically unstable." But as plant-as-human substances are rendered through commodity logics, the substantial grounding of moral intersubjectivity is made suspect and fragile in new ways.

The dispersal of kin groups—by forced displacement, urbanization, wage labour, intracommunity conflict, domestic violence, etc.—and their resettlement in urban centers makes the circulations necessary to the maintenance of substantial kin ties difficult. Those living away from their territories rely on circulations of plant substances with other Uitoto migrants, on

adaptable commodified forms, and on adoptions of whatever likely (or unlikely) substitutes are available. The transformation of the substantiality of Uitoto personhood—of plant substances and/as Uitoto persons—as it circulates through urban spaces, il/licit economies, and transnationally scaled markets, has consequences ranging from the absolutely pathogenic to the potentially revolutionary, and from the intimate to the cosmological.

However, this is not just a question of the commodification of labour and plants, already separately constituted as subjects and objects. Rather, it is an ongoing process of human persons as plant substance and plant persons as human substance being taken up in the violent rendering of a "new substantiality," that is, in a commodity logic that makes plant and human kin, consciousness and substance, appear as already and irreconcilably separate. Commodification here is not just a change in the "nature" or "substance" of objects, already constituted as such. It is a form of ontological violence whose essential operation is the disarticulation of subjectivity and objectivity.

Uitoto historical diagnoses illuminate something that critical theory also asks us to see, especially regarding the social, sensuous, and subjective consequences of the historical process of commodification. Commodification in Lukács' critique is not just a change in the nature or value of substance. Rather it transforms a totality of relations, acting on the mediations that constitute the subject, and the possibilities of intersubjective relations. This is an ontological change, in that it transforms the conditions from which emerges human subjective and intersubjective becoming. Just as the subject of labour is dehumanised through the alienation of labour in its commodity form, what come to appear as mere objects are likewise abstracted,

homogenised, devoid of qualities. The fragmentation of the "total personality" of the subject of labour, and of "those bonds that had bound individuals to a community":

> "...is typical of society as a whole in that this self-objectification, this transformation of a human function into a commodity reveals in all its starkness the dehumanised and dehumanising function of the commodity relation. [...] The rational objectification conceals above all the immediate—qualitative and material—character of things as things. When use-values appear universally as commodities they acquire a new objectivity, *a new substantiality* which destroys their original and authentic substantiality."

Commodification appears as more than simply a new form of accounting, or a new regime of exchange in Lukács' expansion of Marx's critique. Commodification is a transformative logic, a reorganization of a social totality, a remaking of the world that disarticulates a previously organic whole on multiple scales—from the social to the subjective. It is the unfolding of a logic of dismemberment.

In Lukács' account of the radical logical and historical transformations represented by the commodity form, commodification involves a change in the substance of the world; not merely a new way of valuing the objects that mediate social relations and subjectivities (by which we come to know ourselves and each other), but the loss of a seamless, consubstantial relationship with the world. The commodity form represents the emergence of an illusory objectivity (typified by Cartesian and Kantian metaphysics), where the subject appears to exist prior to and outside an object world available to, but not constitutive of, human understanding.

In Uitoto terms, commodification as a historical process similarly represents a pathological understanding of human subjectivity as separate from and abstracted out of a world of sensuous, vital and volatile intersubjectivity. The question of substantiating moral qualia takes on new shades and different urgency under conditions of urbanization and forced displacement,

as the substances of human-plant kinworlds are increasingly dispersed. The substantial grounding of those kinworlds becomes more tenuous (when, for instance, the plants that authorize the transmission of ancestral knowledge can not be grown or found in the city, when the only manioc you can feed your baby comes in industrial powdered form and is one more thing there is no money for), at the same time as it becomes, in the absence of other possible forms of consubstantializing care, the only way to calibrate somatic and affective resonance, to produce the sympathies of consubstantial incarnation among dispersed kin.

Figure 13: Herbs for sale in a medicine market, Bogotá.
SOURCE: Author photo (2014).

7.

Just as Uitoto people's work of substantiation is perpetual, and perpetually incomplete, so are the mediations of the commodity logic. This suggests that the practical and historical processes of commodification are as much a matter of determination as they are a source of breakdowns, failures, and possibility.

Uitoto people's reckoning with those processes is ongoing, difficult, and variable in terms of the severity of its consequences. Driven by necessity, some sell *mambe* and *ambil* to consumers ranging from *paisanos* (other People of the Center) living outside of their territory, to curious hippie aficionados, from devoted anthropologists, to snake oil entrepreneurs exporting Indigenous medicines to European markets.

For displaced and migrant Uitoto people living in urban and peri-urban centers, the project of rebuilding life in the city turns on solving a constantly emerging problem of substantiation. The weekly flights from La Chorrera and Araracuara to Bogotá are consequently packed with bundles of *mambe* and *ambil*, chili paste and *cassave*, live and prepared plants, and remedies that can't be found, grown, or replaced in the city. Even for those living in reserves, however, the same problem of substantiation is posed by the prevalence of industrial foods and medicines—e.g. the father who lamented, "how will my children learn to speak our language if they are always eating rice?" Experimental, adoptive, and adaptive, Uitoto *desplazados* test and stretch those possibilities, often in disagreement and as a matter of constant contestation.

Dimas, for instance, claims that unlike coca that has been adulterated as cocaine, *mambe* that is sold is inert: "*No sirve para curar...ni para dañar...El mambe que se vende está hecho*

para eso, así que sólo sirve para eso"—"It's useless for curing...and for sorcery"..."*mambe* that's sold is made for that purpose [to be sold], and that's all it's good for." He explains that *mambe* registers and works for the intention of its maker. If it's made with the intention of earning money, that is all it will do. He happily sells the occasional kilo of *mambe* in the Indigenous market in Leticia.

Nora is less persuaded of *mambe*'s neutrality in commodity form. Living *desplazada* in Bogotá, she supports her four children by selling *mambe* and *ambil* that her mother and aunt send her from their home reserve in the Caquetá. She attributes her chronic ill health, the headaches and fatigue that she and her children suffer, to the fact that she is selling coca to white people. In much the way that Uitoto *desplazados* often experience their grief over separation from human kin as physical pain, Nora feels coca acting back on her and her children as a consequence of the disarticulation of their extended kinbody. She is equally circumspect about the circulation of *ambil*, preferring to use only the tobacco paste that her mother sends her, conjured only for her. She considers the sale of *mambe* and *ambil* to be part of a larger shift in relations to the ancestral plants:

> *"Eso* [*de vender ambil y mambe*] *es de por ahora, de 2000 pa'ca.* […] *Antes el que hacía mambe era para mambear en la maloca, con los abuelos, los sabedores, todo eso, para educar a los niños, a los jóvenes, todo era eso. Ahora ya no. Ahora ya los jóvenes cojieron para mambear así, todos están locos. Por eso es que se desjuiciaron, ya no tienen juicio. Porque eso no es así. No que tuve sobrino? Sobrino mío mambeó a los 12 años. Por eso que está como loco. No tiene juicio. No quiere estudiar, nada. No tiene cabeza para nada. Solo piensa en locuras.*
>
> [*La gente blanca también se enloquece?*]
>
> *No."*
>
> "This thing of selling *ambil* and *mambe* is new, from 2000 up to now. Before, if one made *mambe* it was to *mambe* in the *maloca*, with the elders, the wise ones, all that, to educate

> children, young people, it was all that. Not now. Now the youth have taken to *mambe*ing like this [like a vice], they're all crazy. That's why they've lost their judgment, now they don't have judgment. Because that's not that way. Didn't I have a nephew? A nephew of mine *mambe*'ed at 12 years old [too young, and without ritual preparation]. That's why he's like a crazy person. He doesn't have judgment. He doesn't want to study, nothing. He doesn't have a head for anything. He only thinks crazy things.
>
> [Do white people also go crazy like that, if they use it just for pleasure?]
>
> No."

Some voice not only suspicion, but moral scandal at the commodification of sacred plants. Jenaro tells me that "selling *yagé* is like selling your mother"—a desecration and an unthinkable transformation of a sacred person. He distinguishes, however, between paying a *yagecero* to heal a patient with *yagé*—the main source of cash in his life—and selling either the substance unaccompanied, or the expert ritual and pharmacological knowledge surrounding it. He commensurates payment for curing with a tradition of patients offering game in exchange for a cure, figuring the cash he charges for ceremonies as a gift. He also finds some relief in what he considers the merely substantial perversion of *yagé* as it travels in international markets. Commiserating with his cousin, a fellow *yagecero*, over the international scale at which *yagé* has been commodified and homogenized (in pill form, for instance), he consoles them both with the fact that the patenters and pill-makers can't understand *yagé*'s substance as anything more than inanimate matter: "they have the plant, they have the recipe, but they will never have the spiritual part."

Figure 14: Digital scale and plantain leaves in a botanical medicine market, Bogotá.
SOURCE: Author photo (2014).

Describing conflicts in her home reserve that arose in the wake of one elder's collaboration with pharmaceutical bioprospectors—corporate researchers seeking to derive patentable medicines from sacred Uitoto plant medicines—my friend, the late Ocaina poet and painter Anastasia Candre, explained with impressive concision the violence of reification entailed in the commodification of sacred plants: "*Toman una vida y lo vuelven una cosa.*"—"They take a *life* and turn it into a *thing*."

The commodification of Uitoto plants is more than a question of value extraction and the alienation of labour and land, of "intellectual property" theft and environmental devastation (though it is certainly all of those things, in often heinous forms). It also represents the transformation of a social world of ontological, ecological, and affective complexity mediated through the substance of sacred plants, into a world of disarticulated relations, radically altered efficacies, and narrowed intersubjectivity.

8.

Contemporary Uitoto plant work is in some ways alchemical, in that it seeks to reanimate the vital latencies of substances that have been made to appear inert, to restore the subjectivity of plant persons mistakenly and violently rendered as objects, and as such, to recover the possibility of moral intersubjectivity beyond the human. It is the work of constituting magic against the "new substantiality" of the commodity logic and in the presence of a pathogenic history.

Against suspicion and skepticism, Uitoto people also locate the possibilities of futures and of cured relationality, of emergent forms of life made out of conditions of occupation and

forced displacement, in the plantwork that reconstitutes kinbodies dispersed in time and space.

Don Efraín was displaced from his reserve in the Caquetá after being threatened by FARC forces. He lived for a while in a reserve on the triple border near Leticia, and apprenticed with elders there, recording hundreds of plant cures in notebooks. In Bogotá, he lives at the very edge of a peri-urban settlement of *desplazados*, with two of his daughters and their families. Far from the elders with whom he studied, and from the plants that enable the cures he has archived, he turned his energies to weaving baskets from *chambira* palm fibers, sent by kin in his reserve and hand-spun by his wife, and strips of industrial plastic packaging that he collects in the streets of their neighbourhood.

Another ingenious experimenter, Travel has been actively adapting the forms of manioc she can access in her neighbourhood on the outskirts of Bogotá. She gleans discarded *yuca* ("white people's manioc") from the refuse piles outside green markets to ferment in her apartment and make *cassave, omai,* and *caguana* (manioc cakes, chili paste, and manioc drinks) for her children and grandchildren living with her, and for the other displaced *paisanas* she welcomes into her crowded apartment.

Denaya's experiments are animated by the same magic of adoption. She buys industrially produced manioc starch from a butcher to make *caguana* for her family, and to share with other *desplazadas* who meet for weekly mutual aid meetings. She also is responsible for providing *caguana* to a weekly *mambeadero* (ritual coca circle, for traditional education and healing) hosted every week by the Uitoto *cabildo* (council) in Bogotá.

Candido and his brother are both traditional healers who were displaced to Bogotá after

they were targeted by the *guerrilla* for their community organizing work in their home reserve. Rather than making *ambil* (tobacco paste) as they learned to in their home communities, from the green leaves of tobacco plants whose seeds have been transmitted patrilineally, stirred without rest over embers for two days, and from vegetable salts rendered from wild palm roots, they have experimented with making *ambil* from the cheap cigars that are for sale in every Bogotano corner shop. They stew these slowly over an electric burner to make the paste, and then mix it with vegetable salts that they render from lawn clippings or coconut husks which they are allowed to collect and burn in the city's botanical garden. The rendering process has been a source of contention with the botanical garden, because the grass smokes very heavily when burned, filling the whole garden with smoke. People in the garden's scientific direction complained that the smoke was "concentrating in their offices."

The resulting tarry paste is also problematic. "Does it work for curing?" I asked, a bit astonished with the extent of substitutions in play.. "It works...but look, it's like a copy. It's like that food that they're selling over there on the street —" he pointed at a street vendor's cart where possibly the world's saddest *empanadas* languished, greasy and rapidly aging. "It keeps you from starving, but it's not the same; that's how it is, it doesn't let your spirit die of hunger, but it doesn't feed you, it's not the same. It has another flavour, it makes you drunk very quickly, it doesn't let you concentrate well."

The ambivalences and hopes bundled in Candido's experimentations point to the urgency and limitations of questions of moral substantiation for displaced Uitoto persons, and for a Uitoto world entangled with the perverse objectivity of commodity logics. Uitoto logics of substance

depend on the reciprocal embodiment of plant and human kinspersons, on relations of ongoing mutual care, and on forms of intersubjective porosity and sympathy that define the horizon of moral intersubjectivity. Beyond that horizon lie illness and inhumanity, and the anti-social and dehumanizing forces typified in the forms of ongoing violence that have defined the colonial process in Uitoto territory since the beginning of the twentieth century.

Those logics frame certain impossibilities and inevitable failures. They also, however, represent the grounds of vital reworkings of the historical forces that have sought to dehumanize and dismember Uitoto kinworlds for over a century. The work of remaking the assemblage is insurmountable, perpetual. Contemporary Uitoto plantwork is the work of magic in history. It is the active, creative work of formulating the magics adequate to the scale of the forces of transformation with which they are contending. Those magics, always aimed at the engendering of a world of moral intersubjectivity, are gendered, volatile, and fallible. Therein lies their potency and their potential.

3 Song of the Chili Mother

I. My name is Travel

Travel has many names[72]—one from her mother, one that her grandfather gave her during one of her first curing ceremonies, one that she uses to translate herself to white people, one that has stuck to her paradoxically as it commemorates her mobility. "My name is Travel, though my proper name belongs to my clan, to the palms that our clan shares it with."

We are sitting in Travel's kitchen in Bosa, a precarious neighbourhood in the far west of Bogotá. The afternoon sun is gleaming on kitchen tiles marbled like a cloudy sky and concrete walls painted blue. Travel's smile is as full of gaps as her eyes are full of light, and her nose crinkles between her wide tattooed eyebrows as she laughs. Her apartment is full of children, and its windows are open onto a corner where buses bluster loudly past every few minutes. Below the apartment, on the ground floor, is a motorcycle repair shop on the ground floor that blasts raggaetón so loudly the speakers buzz. And yet, the afternoon feels peaceful.

Travel's apartment is a space of abundance—a store of rice sits atop the refrigerator, a basin of plantains ripens on the kitchen floor, and a bin of soaking manioc ferments in the small area where clean clothes are hanging. Travel's apartment smells like a rainforest home, the rich scent of fermenting manioc, of chilis cooked into pungent paste, of pineapples boiled to make *caguana* (manioc drink), a trace of sweet coca powder. When we were first becoming friends, she brought me chili paste she had made at home with crunchy ants sent from her home territory, which her sister-in-law knew how to find in the garden when they were the right size. She said

72 "Travel" is a pseudonym that plays on one of my collaborators' many nicknames, anonymized here to protect her.

she knew, laughing, that I had just come back from Putumayo, craving proper *omai* (chili paste) with *dɨrɨkiñɨ* (spicy lemongrass ants), but that she only had black ants to make it with. This afternoon, we eat fried fish with *omai*, and fresh *cassave*, our bellies full of "proper food" and hearts full of laughter. This is Travel's magic—to fill those around her with her joy and warmth and to banish the anxiety and hunger and suffering that risk settling into migrants' bones with the cold, clinging to their clothes and hair with dust and exhaust as they navigate the city.

Travel lives in motion. Her magic is the achievement of rhythms rather than emplacements,[73] regular passageways rather than fixed places. Her two-room apartment is a passageway held open by her success in establishing rhythms of work and income for rent, of reciprocities for food and clothes. She holds open a space in the world for her children, conjuring for them the magic of repetition, of reproducibility. Days repeat into a pattern. Adapted and imported foods reproduce relational and aesthetic possibilities easily lost in transit. Through her flow histories of hunger, birth pains, terror and grief. She gathers these in and transforms them into warm liveliness for those whom she fosters. She lives far from the garden world where she was born, but she mobilizes the magic of the Chili Mother, *Eiño Urukɨ Uiñua*, (the Mother who Cares for Humanity), or the *chagrera*—the Uitoto woman who cultivates, who turns pain into medicine and bitter into sweet.[74]

Through the passageway of her apartment moves a mobile and extended kin network that includes Travel and her two teenaged daughters, her adult son, his wife, their six year old son and baby girl, and two young boys that Travel's kinswoman in her home territory has sent to her

73 Chu 2006.
74 McLachlan 2011a.

so that they can study. The children have all just come home from school, the two youngest bringing containers of school lunch—pale, foreign foods like stewed peas and plain rice. Without comment, in one continuous gesture, she takes the container, puts it in her fridge for purposes other than lunch, and passes them plates of fish and *cassave*, urges them to drink more *caguana*.

Travel's nephew often stays with her, and she is also temporarily housing a young woman whose parents she knew from a coca plantation in Puerto Z. The young woman's face is an asymmetrical moon: youth and serenity on the left, a contortion of acid scars on the right that draw her eye and mouth downward--comedy and tragedy as she smiles at me. Her eyes are on her baby who sucks her fingers and eats mashed manioc beside us. When she was no bigger than her baby is now, she was with her parents in their laboratory.[75] While her parents worked at processing coca leaves into paste, she pulled a pail of sulfuric acid down onto herself, she confides, hair covering the part of her face that is its own kind of map of the coca trade, an archive of the history of Putumayo in scar tissue. She came to Bogotá displaced from Puerto Z only six weeks ago, alone with her baby, and found a temporary home with Travel. Her voice is thick and rough, her lower lip juts out in a gesture somewhere between defiance and resignation that echoes those of the women much older than her who sell paramilitary beef, boiled NGO chickens, and wild game fried in USAID shortening on the streets of Putumayo port towns.

For all the intimacies they share, Travel sends her guest to the other room to eat lunch with the children so that we can talk. Travel's husky gut-deep laughter puts the two of us at ease. She refills our glasses already sticky with *caguana* and flashes me a gummy smile. "Let's see, go

75 A coca processing installation in the forest where industrial chemicals are used to extract cocaine from coca leaves.

ahead asking and I'll go telling, or how?—of course, to whom does my life matter, right Amy?"

Figure 15: A Uitoto woman's *chagra*, and forest beyond.
SOURCE: Author photo (2009).

1. *I was born in the garden*

Travel starts from the beginning:

> I was born in Chorrera Amazonas. We are ten siblings, I'm the third to last—almost the baby. My father is Ocaina, my mother is Murui, and I understand *Minika, Búe, Muinane*

—even English!

I was raised and born in the garden. There, like in that epoch hospitals and health posts didn't exist. There, one is born in whatever place the pains come, and the babies arrive quickly! Know why? Now babies aren't like before, before we used to diet a lot! One couldn't eat, for example, *picalón* [a fish with sharp spines], anything that sticks on its way out, nor sticky things, nor, let's say, could one be without work. We worked normally, and may the pains grab you! Normal, lifting heavy things, normal.

Birth for us is like a game, my grandmother would say, we would say, one feels the pains and out! One has that energy and one doesn't suffer.

We use nettle leaves—our proper nettle, different from the one they cured your fever with in Putumayo—in water. You mash it, you move it with your hand and it gives a phlegm, and of that you take one cup all at once. And the nettle flower, you conjure it and place it over the belly, the hips, and then five or ten minutes later the baby is born.

We deliver our babies practically alone. It's funny, no? One is in a meeting in the *maloca* (round house), and a lady will slip out, and a little while later the baby is crying. *Que rico que nazca así!* How pleasurable that a baby should be born that way! In contrast, in the hospital, you lay down, I don't know...but like that, *working*, the baby is born and take it!

Shall I tell you a story? My nephew was born in the middle of the forest, and there wasn't anything to cut the umbilical cord with. You know what they cut it with? The axe! They went out for a stroll and didn't have a machete, they only had the axe, so with the axe they cut his umbilical cord.

Paiko [her oldest son] was born in Chorrera, in a salt lick (his father liked to

hunt), that one *yes* was born in the jungle. The other girl was born at home, me alone with my mother. The other boy was born in the garden, I remember, with my mother, in the garden planting manioc. In that time when one burns a new garden, we were planting, and there he was born, in that epoch, in February. They say men are the births that hurt most, because they are more rebellious. In contrast, we women are more controlled. That girl didn't make me suffer at all.

I was born in the garden, at 4:00 in the afternoon—just in the nick of time![76]

2. ***At least***

I left Chorrera thirty years ago. I met me a colonist husband, I got married, and I got out. It was in the time that the coca was recently arrived there [the narcotics economy, early 1980s]. They went buying up [coca] leaves, and I met him and I got married and left. They arrived in a merchant boat, with his father, among the first to arrive. We didn't even know what coca was! Well, mambeamos (we ate powdered coca), the elders, but there is where it began to damage what is Indigenous. Before that we lived a tranquil life, a normal life.

That's how I came to Putumayo. They started to make laboratories. And they paid well! [...] I worked with them, they hired me to cook. And I met him, and I liked him because I wanted to get out of there!

We got married and went to Puerto X. It was a little town, and arriving there, they killed him, and I was left with four kids. There they killed him in Puerto X they killed him.

The guerrilla.

Because we arrived there and bought a farm to plant coca, and he didn't have money yet

76 I.e. at the end of the day when people return home to bathe and eat, just before dusk falls and the mosquitoes swarm.

to pay the "vaccine,"[77] and for that they killed him. Just above on Heron River, (where you were), and what happens there, who is going to know about it?

We were in the farm, I remember we were weeding, and there were eight days until the first harvest of coca. We were talking, and Paiko the baby stayed in the laboratory. He was just little. I went back to him, and my husband said, 'Let's go because a boat is coming and we have to buy supplies.'

I had gathered vines for weaving. I was carrying a mountain of fibers on my shoulder, he was ahead of me, I was in the middle, and Paiko behind. We climbed a hill, when I felt the shots, I mean, and I didn't know what had happened.

I lost myself, like one becomes shaken, and when I looked, he had already fallen! And that one from fear came running behind me, and I stood there, what was I going to do? And by the time I gained my senses, the forest was full of that people [the guerrilla].

I kept going, with Paiko running, and I ran.

Ay Amy, I tell you that that day, I left home in my jeans, well and fully dressed, and look I arrived at the house in nothing but my panties from the despair or I don't know what. When did I take off my clothes? From running so much, or the vines pulled it off, or that despair, I arrived in my bra, from that despair that one saw that they were following one, I arrived in a bra and panties. And we were coming, I said 'Run, if they kill me they kill me but run' and we ran. When we got to the house I screamed to the kids to 'Get in the boat because they killed your father and there they're coming behind me to kill me' and we got in the boat and from despair capsized the boat, I mean, from despair, and there we went, in the middle of the river, and a motorboat passed, and from there they took us to Puerto

77 "*La vacuna*"("the vaccine") is money extorted by the *guerrilla* and the cartels for protection.

X.

He stayed there in the forest.

The next day the police arrived and they took him, they buried him in Puerto X, in the cemetery, so he remained well buried. At least.

That's how life passed.

3. *After nine months*

From there, I came to Puerto Z, I worked, I met some men and also the father of my daughters. I didn't know anyone in Puerto Z, nobody, nobody. I worked in a farm close to Puerto Z. The kids didn't come, I came alone, they stayed with an aunt in Puerto X. After a year I saved and I left to bring the kids back. I bought my house that I have in Puerto Z. I worked in a farm as a cook, but they paid well. They were also *cocaleros*. And that's how I got out, I met the girls' father, and he gave me money to bring the other kids and I brought them, and then we didn't live in the farm and we bought the little house and lived in Puerto Z. Paiko stayed in Puerto X then because he was bigger.

I joined the *cabildo*, there was a Uitoto council there, and people had gardens. But when the military started the fumigations[78], then the gardens didn't give anything. The plantains died, the manioc used to grow loaded, like this, giant tubers, but then they shriveled. People couldn't eat from the gardens. The only thing that grew well was the coca![79] Because it's very potent.

My daughters were born in Puerto Z. I had to go out walking at night, it was far from

78 Fumigations with glyphosate in order to eradicate coca plantations in the area.

79 In other words, the very plant being targeted for eradication was the only one not only to survive, but to thrive under fumigation.

Puerto Z. Lina wasn't born normally, they did a cesarean, she got too fat in the womb. I tried to deliver her alone but I couldn't. She was like four, five kilos, oh but she was fat Amy, here her wrists were all doubled, but what a girl for being fat! I had to go out because she was crowning and she couldn't come out. She was very big, what pain. But nevertheless I walked, normal.

A truck came past, you know those big ones, and one never knows, because you know who drives those.[80] But those *paracos* [paramilitaries] took me and left me in front of the hospital, and as soon as I arrived they did the cesarean because she was already crowning, you could see the little crown of her head.

The other one I also had by cesarean, but I took her home, healthy, and kept working normally. With the operation and everything, but nothing hurt. We went to gather *cananguchо* [palm fruits, in the forest], their father had cut them earlier and they were maturing. I carried like a *bulto* [bushel] of those, and with that two-day old cesarean and it didn't open.

What happens is that when they do a cesarean like that, you have to conjure hot water, gather plantain leaf, you put it in the hearth very early in the morning before everyone is up, and place it in the direction of the cesarean, like roasted. You drink that water, and the wound won't open, won't get infected, won't even hurt. Passing the leaf over the wound, where they sewed you, two or three times upward, and that is the remedy so that it won't hurt you at all.

Before, when we didn't have hammocks, one went to the garden, made a little hole, like a little canal, and there one placed plantain leaves, extended in that little canal, and there you left the baby and went to work. There the babies cared for themselves alone in a hole

80 Paramilitaries.

—but how? You left them in a leaf and went, and nothing bothered them!

I raised them there in Puerto Z until 2006 when the paramilitaries killed the girls' brother and I had to displace myself. They took the boy and hid him. Almost a year they had him, like nine months. After nine months he was going to fly and they killed him. That's why we don't know where he is. I denounced that, I had an inconvenience, and I had to displace myself, and I came to Bogotá.

I wanted to find my son, I thought he was alive, but they killed him, and we never saw him.

We came to Bogotá and now we are here.

Figure 16: A Uitoto elder feeds a cooking fire in a meeting space borrowed for a Uitoto women's mutual aid group, Bogotá.
SOURCE: Author photo (2014).

4. *The only good thing*

Now they are here. The city hurts her bones from cold, she says. The only good thing is that at Corabastos, a market plaza, the vendors will give you a little fruit, a couple of potatoes if they know you. Some leave cartons with damaged vegetables on the sidewalk for those who don't have money and can leave their pride in exchange for a bit of onion or manioc.

Uitoto people in Bogotá often complain of the bodily suffering they feel in the city—not

just hunger and cold, but longing, beyond craving to an ache for the "proper"[81] foods, for fish and fermented bitter manioc cakes (*cassave*), warm manioc drinks (*caguana),* for monkey meat and chili sauce, for lemony ants and roasted cayman. Travel is resourceful, a master of transforming the bitter circumstances life has given her, and ferments gleaned or gifted manioc to make *cassave*, acquires tapioca starch from a butcher to make *caguana*, sells these to other cravers and makes sure her grandson eats chili paste from as early an age as possible.

Travel counts among her blessings the health of her children, the cartons outside Corabastos, and an evangelical church that employed her for two years making empanadas, from 6:00 in the morning until 2:00 the next, seven days a week, for 6,000 pesos (USD3) a day and occasionally some groceries. A lady from the church rented her a room for the five of them for 150,000 pesos (USD75) a month.

Travel tried to leave that job, but was turned away by another prospect after traveling three hours in the city, when they realized her children were very small. “They thought the girls were bigger and that they could work in many things.”

Better still was a white homeopath who hired her as a domestic servant, for USD12 a day, with breakfast and lunch and groceries. The work included cleaning the house, preparing lunch, and in the afternoons, packing drugs. “The doctor fabricated pharmaceuticals at home, plant based, from coca—he made coca cookies, spirulina pills, also *ambil* [Uitoto tobacco paste], all of that. He had been in Leticia, in Km 11, where you lived, Amy, and he learned, he spoke M~~i~~niki~~,~~

81 I translate as "proper" what Uitoto people refer to as "*comida propia*" or "*conocimiento propio*," with a double connotation of moral or aesthetic correctness—the things that one should eat, that one should know—and also proprietariness—the things that belong to Uitoto people collectively and distinctively if not exclusively.

and he also learned to manage *yagé*, and he set up a consultation in Germany. Sometimes up to seventy Germans came, and they went off to Cota. I helped, cleaned up after the ceremonies." Cleaning up the ceremonial space littered with bodily expulsions co-mingled with spiritual poisons that follow a *yagé* ceremony is typically the role of a ritual expert, one carefully protected against the possibility of absorbing others' disembodied evils and becoming ill. Travel tells me she never became ill, however, "I was special for that, just me."

The homeopath went to Germany, with his Uitoto medicines packed into pills by Travel, and was never heard from. "He helped me a lot, but he never came back."

5. ***Many lives, many livelinesses***

Travel is a mover. She is a keen organizer, and wherever she is, the room is full of laughter and sparks between people who are often shy and traveling with many ghosts. Every time we meet, she is arriving from a different sector of the city, doing odd jobs, selling her weavings and hand-painted dresses, delivering curious white friends to Uitoto healers who know how to mend marriages, cure infertility, and banish bad luck. She also brings Uitoto friends, other *paisanos*, to the same healers to diagnose their dreams, to cure fright, to sweeten away the kind of grief that gnaws at the hearts of those who have lost their children, their husbands, their gardens, their territory, the feeling of being properly and humanly bodied.

She asks me to meet her at underpasses, at odd intersections, in front of churches, in a shoe market where her friend sells candies, behind a foam mattress shop where another friend lives. A foot shorter than even her youngest child, she moves through the city in black plastic

shoes, a black jumper with hot pink stripes down the sleeves, a pink t-shirt with nonsense English printed on it, her gait formed by the weight on her younger spine of tump line baskets and babies. Small and in constant motion, strong far beyond her size, glimmering black in her winding path through Bogotá's streets, she is a mover like those beings that dismantle and circulate the forest a few leaf-cuttings at a time, a gatherer, making and remaking life at a scale only visible from the ground. She makes her life through constant work, she makes a life for her children through constant care and high spirits. But many lives, many livelinesses, are linked through her, fed by her circulations, her attentions, her connections.

II. Song of the Chili Mother

1. Her base, her power, is in chili.

Many people seek out Cantalicio for his talent in curing the illnesses that remain invisible to hospitals and clinics—s*usto* (fright) and *malestar* (ill-being), nightmares and nauseas, bones that won't set right and babies that won't sleep. Chronic, subtle misalignments of being exceed the diagnostic vocabulary of state medical services. So too the root causes and lingering effects of violence in the overlapping zones of drug trade, war, and witchcraft. These find no register in clinical discourse, leading patients to Cantalicio. The ad hoc waiting area that is his grand-daughter's living room in a downtown apartment is an intersection for unlikely company. A lieutenant in the army who sought out magical plants from Travel in hopes of patching up his marriage has decided to escalate treatment, requests an audience with the *abuelo*. A Uitoto woman whose husband is hospitalized in Bogotá with what might be stomach cancer travels two

hours on foot every morning for conjured herb infusions and milk, the only things her husband can keep down. One morning she is accompanied by a white *campesino* (peasant) couple from the upper Putumayo. The woman seems shy but tells me unprompted that she has fifteen children, all born at home, and that her husband refused to let her use the plants she knew could control her fertility. Her husband has thick nervous fingers and a face that looks at rest like he is crying. He was arrested while trafficking coca out of Putumayo—the only way left to make money, he says—and the police beat him so badly that he was left with a permanent limp and several broken ribs. He hopes Cantalicio's touch will fix the one that refuses to heal.

Born to survivors of the rubber trade, in the Caquetá River region, Cantalicio was cured from a young age to be a leader and healer. His grandfather took him into the forest at the age of five to begin a seven-year formation immersed in the plant and spirit world, and at seventeen he became the leader of the community that, as he says, are like his children.

Cantalicio's eyes are kind and quick, and his gentleness and sense of humour bely the seriousness of the medicine he manages and the dangers that his work holds for him. He walks like a man who does not trust his own feet to meet the ground, as if they are tentative acquaintances, not yet at home with one another. His body is a re-assemblage of skills and certainties, only partly recovered from a paralysis that seized him eight years ago while he was living for a time in Bogotá. He was hospitalized for months, each day further from the human world. His body became stiff as wood, while his consciousness was wandering, moving through this world—above the city, over the mountains, into the rainforest where he watched over his community—and through the other worlds. While his body was dying, his spirit hunted the

cause.

His remarkable return from such an illness, he says, is due to his wife's life-giving strength and sweetness. These kept him tied to this world, drew him back to the shared body of their family, back into the chaos of Bogotá, and gave him a path out of illness. She fed him *caguana* (sweet manioc drink) and *casaramá* (fermented manioc paste) every day, giving back his life by the spoonful.

They returned after several months to their community but Cantalicio suffered. He could not walk, he couldn't work as he wanted. "I was bored of life," he said, "I thought—I will just die." Then half-asleep in his hammock in the *maloca*,[82] he heard an ancestor woman speak into his ear, naming the plant that would cure him. She was the spirit owner of that plant, a sweet-leafed herb that grew near his house, and that cures poisons from snakebites and spirit attacks.

Cantalicio dreamed his cure, and with it, his own diagnosis: he had been the object of envy, and a rival had sent spirit poison to kill him. He became drunk with *ambil* and concentrated on the poison he had received, turned it into an animal, made it dawn,[83] and sent it back to his rival. With time, he says, the proof came to light: his rival became sick and died of his own venom. In the morning, Cantalicio asked his wife to gather the dream plant and boil it. He drank his cure, and felt the sweet lightness in his body. His pain and stiffness left, and his body took back its human form, regained the powers his ancestors and elders had registered in it.

82 Uitoto thatched round house, center of the community and microcosm of the universe. Also, a maternal body.

83 "Dawning" refers to the dimension of curing with predatory tobacco magic where the ultimate pathogenic source of an illness or problem is made to reveal itself as the animal from which it originated, so that it can be hunted and the illness thereby relieved. (See e.g. Londoño 2012). "Making dawn" also refers generally to the magical/ practical process whereby one's intentions-as-speech are materialized in the world.

His power to heal was restored in his own restoration, enabled by the sweetening generosity of his wife, and of his female ancestor, the mother of his dream plant.

Cantalicio is my friend's grandfather, and he has decided to be mine, too. He has replied to my question, "how is healing in the city possible?," by offering a map of the Uitoto cosmos archived on brown paper and in an ongoing botanical reorganization of my body as a register of proprietary knowledge. This reorganization began with a kind of induced androgyny. He conjured tobacco paste, and told me:

> "You know the woman's part, the work of the garden, of giving birth and curing children, the work of manioc and chilis and sweet herbs. Now you will learn the part of the father, the work of curing and hunting and protection. *Now you will be a man and a woman in one person who is a woman*. You will be like this: embracing both sides, one arm around manioc, one arm around tobacco."

The next day I woke up vomiting and with trembling legs. I stumbled through the waking city. Belching black exhaust from buses mixed with smoke from the charcoal of *arepa*[84] stands. I emerged from the bus into a hustling knockoff market amid the rubble of municipal neglect. Across the street, a pharmacy selling generic and copycat pharmaceuticals over the counter was just opening. Vendors were frying pork rinds and plantains, and laying out rhinestone-encrusted sneakers on plastic cargo bags. Speakers blared promotions for stretch pants and baby clothes. A man whose two legs and one arm had been amputated lay on cardboard on the sidewalk with a cup tied around his neck, hoping. The crowd saw him only enough not to step on him.

The apartment was above a shop selling industrial foam by the meter, and behind another

84 Grilled cornmeal cakes.

shop selling discount spandex underwear for men. In his grand-daughter's kitchen, between fish thawing in the sink and rice porridge for the baby bubbling on the stove, Cantalicio explained that my illness was an effect of exposure to proprietary knowledge without proper preparation. "*Es que hemos tocado cosas propias, y te tenemos que preparar bien*." ("It's that we've touched proprietary things, and we have to prepare you well."). He conjured sweet herbs in water, and *ambil* (tobacco paste) for our work, and a mixture of basil water and *aguas floridas*, with a prescription to bathe with them at 4:00 am. But before all this, he conjured a plate of *casaramá* (fermented manioc paste, the basis of chili paste), sent by his wife on the weekly flight from Chorrera, and told me to rub it into my gums, to fill my mouth with it, to wait until my nausea passed along with any lingering evil influence. The manioc paste, medium and icon of his wife's cycles of garden work in their territory, was the primary substance that would tune our embodiments to one another and inure me against the potency of men's plants and the proprietary knowledge they mediated and substantiated.

After a month of sitting side by side in his grandson's room, tracing the origins of Uitoto plant medicine and patrilineal curing power, he tells me that we've only learned one half of the foundation—the songs of tobacco, the source of masculine agency and curing power. “The man has the power of tobacco and it is to manage the universe, the seven worlds that there are in the tradition, and it is the man who has to dominate. He cares for all of this environment, all of nature, and it’s a very big part, a big task, and it’s dangerous the man’s part."

But then he turned to the other half, to the origin of feminine curing power, and to the work of the Chili Mother:

"And now, this, this is the woman's part. We see this work with this view in our family homes—what do they live from? what is the their thought? what is the knowledge that they know in life that they have received, the counsels, the prayers, the recommendations? The right of the woman is unique, is very big, because she is the mother of everything. She cares for everything. Only the man acquires (*consigue*), and she arranges and fixes it (*arregla*). The woman keeps it, cares for it. Because of this, she is *Eiño Komuiya Buinaño,* the Mother of Creation, the Mother of Life, the Mother of Healing, the Mother of Good Counsel, the Mother of Good Orientation, and the Mother of Abundance. Because that heart that a mother has is a heart of life, of happiness, of softness, of calm, she makes all of the ideas, the thoughts that arrive to a woman, she cultivates and motivates them with a sweet heart. With a heart of patience, humility, a heart of sharing. Look, this is a very heavy part for a woman. What person must have this patience? But a mother has it.

Sometimes perhaps men don't recognize this part in a woman, we don't value her, sometimes we lose her. Sometimes we make her less. Therefor, there is the downfall of a woman. There it is that she feels sad, she feels anxious, sometimes she feels like abandoned. That now the man doesn't love her because of all her work, to serve, to direct a thing; the man does it with bad willingness, sometimes with strong words, and all of this goes affecting the heart, the heart of the Mother of Sweet Manioc. Therefore in any case a man must understand the plan of a

> woman, the path of a woman, the right of a woman. Because, look, the two, not only the man cares for the home. The woman cares for the home, cares for her husband, and the husband cares for her. There they say, the father cares for the children and the mother cares for the children. Therefor why do fathers and mothers give counsel to their son and to their daughter? So that they will grow with that thought.
>
> *Her base, her power, is in chili."*

We are mapping the Uitoto spirit world, and he draws a line down the center—dividing two moments in the becoming of the Chili Mother, in the distilling of feminine power that is the complementary foundation of the cosmos and of human capacity. Each space in this map is a mythico-temporal location and also an ontological one. We are mapping the time when the world was made, but laminated onto that chronotope is an ethico-ontological map of illness and correct being. The formation of the Chili Mother charts the movement of female agency and relationality through doubt and desire into calm and abundance. The movement draws into parallel the chronotopes[85] of cosmogony, ontogeny, and recovery—the path of human life moves through a series of co-becomings with plants-as-spirit-beings, and revisits this path in the diagnosis and redirection of illness.

> "On this side is the conjuring to rid all bad desires, all bad intentions, for example crimes, robberies, corruptions, envy, pride, vanity, et cetera… This is conjured in chili, when disobedience, laziness, vice arrive, those bad aspects that arrive in the home or in the community, one picks chilis and conjures this. Then the chilis are

85 Bakhtin 1981.

placed on top of coals and tobacco, and the smoke must be absorbed. In that moment of absorbing, it cures, throwing out like a cold from the nose, and a while later, the person is clean, the mind, the heart, the person are healthy, and from that moment the person now follows the good path. Now the path of life."

Figure 17: Women in a *chagra* resting in the shade.
SOURCE: Author photo (2009).

2. Song of the Mother

"The song says[86]:

Here first the Mother is fire, like very hot chilis, one cannot eat much because one will whimper!

Because of this, one mustn't fight with (*torrear*, like a bull fight) a woman, because if one provokes a woman like that, she'll get very tough (*se emberraca)* and nobody can withstand that, she can even eat her husband, she can eat anyone.

Therefore it's one part, the Mother flattens or steps downward. This is not ours and nobody can live in that heart.

Above now the Mother converts this part into a good part, into a part of the good heart, the heart of affection, the heart of love, the heart of happiness; one finds there a life that is very tranquil, humble, calm."

3. The Mother of Formation, of Creation, of Caring for Humanity

In Cantalicio's telling, the Mother originates in a world of shadows—forest without people, without society, full of darkness. Here she is full of doubts and anxiety and fear.

"Passing through, she overcomes and enters a world of great powers, animal powers that govern the waters (octopus), the rivers (boa), the forest (jaguar) the air (eagle). These are great and dangerous powers.

Passing through, she overcomes and enters a world of dancing,

86 This passage is exegesis explicating the song, which we recorded separately.

drunkenness, full of people, desires, envies. Here she is full of desires, this is not a space of life.

Passing through, she overcomes and enters a world where she is seated. There she finds charcoal. There she plants chilis, but they are fire chilis, too hot to eat. Now she is becoming *Finora Rigño*, the Mother of Formation. She is beginning to cure.

Passing through, she overcomes and enters another space, where there are two sides. Now she is the Mother of Chili, of the proper chili. On one side, this is the world *Bebene Komuya Jira*, where there is the air of creation, the word of creation, and the conjuring of a healthy life. To this side she becomes *Eiño Komuiya Buinaiño*, Mother of Creation. To the other side, this space is the world *Bebene Jira Jifiji Ie*, where there is the conjuring of chilis to rid all bad desires, bad intentions. To this side she is the *Eiño Uruki Uiñua*, the Mother who Cares for Humanity.

From the world below, we are not yet in the world of human life. The Mother and Father of the ancient world, travel up through the seven worlds....This is healing, this is the care of the home, of the environment, of the universe."

1. A Journey Through the Seven Worlds

In the narrative that Cantalicio inherited and shared here, in the origin of the world, and of human life, there are seven worlds:

Joyaniko: The world of animals

Buinaiko: The world of water and aquatic beings

Aiñiraiko: The world of great powers (Cantalicio tells me this is a world of conflict, predation, where there is no society, just "*pura guerrilla,*" "pure insurgency")

Jamadaiko: The world of gold. (Cantalicio tells me this is the world we are in, for instance, in Bogotá, where everyone lives from money and greed.)

Bururaiko: The world of darkness and dusk and bad omens

Amenaiko: The world of hunger

Majaiko: The world of spiritual powers, where we live, where human life is cured.

The origin of plant medicine, of healing, and also of all illness, is in the movement between these seven worlds. Every illness and affliction of human life is born in one of these worlds. And every cure also resides in that world. The work of the healer is to locate the origin of a person's illness, to find its root in the worlds below, and to find its cure in that world. Healing is a migration between worlds, as is illness. The healer travels to where his patient is mistakenly dwelling, and overcomes the dangers and powers that are afflicting the person. Curing is the work of

overcoming—again, as did the first healer ancestor—the powers of those worlds of illness, and arriving anew in the world of human life.

The healer ancestors were seven brothers, each of whom managed a sacred plant. Each worked to travel through the seven worlds and arrive, with curing power, in the world of human life.

> "The first intoxicated himself with *yagé*, and went to the first world, *Joyaniko*: the world of animals. There he stayed, living in a *maloca* with the spirits of that place.
>
> The second intoxicated himself with *kɨtobe*, and went to the second world, *Buinaiko*: the world of water and aquatic beings. There he stayed, living in a *maloca* with the spirits of that place.
>
> The third intoxicated himself with *emɨrei*, and went to the third world *Aiñɨraiko*: the world of great powers. There he stayed, living in a *maloca* with the spirits of that place.
>
> The fourth intoxicated himself with *viirola*, and went to the fourth world, *Jamadaiko*: the world of gold. There he stayed, living in a *maloca* with the spirits of that place.
>
> The fifth intoxicated himself with *marimari*, and went to the fifth world, *Bururaiko*: the world of darkness and dusk and bad omens. There he stayed, living in a *maloca* with the spirits of that place.
>
> The sixth intoxicated himself with *noserei*, and went to the sixth world,

Amenaiko: the world of hunger. There he stayed, living in a *maloca* with the spirits of that place.

The seventh intoxicated himself with tobacco, and went to each of the worlds, from the bottom of creation to the top, one after another, in each world dominating the ills and evils of each space, until he arrived again in the seventh world, *Majaiko*: the world of spiritual powers. This is the world where we live, where human life is properly cured. Here he is the Grandfather Buinaima, the Father of Tobacco, the Father of Healing and of human spiritual community."

2. Uitoto Persons as Interspecies Assemblages

Uitoto people talk about their own bodies, their children, and their most human capacities (for reflection, moral judgment, connection, love, and memory) as effects of the working of plant beings in the media of their bodies. The plants that are their most constant companions,[87] including tobacco, coca, manioc, and chilis, are cultivated in rainforest gardens along with a panoply of medicinal herbs, fruits, and fibers. They exist in lively relations to Uitoto cultivators not simply as food crops or instrumental medicines, but as ancestors, adoptive kin, and divine allies.

In Uitoto accounts and practice, plants fix moral human being—they allow for the production of a species location,[88] a set of capacities, a materialization of divine creation—and of

87 C.f. Haraway 2008.

88 C.f. Amazonian lit on "perspectivism" or "cosmological deixis", Viveiros de Castro 1998, Kohn 2006.

that fixing as a perpetual process[89] of "mattering forth".[90]

Figure 18: Plants outside a tin house in a settlement of *desplazados*, Bogotá.
SOURCE: Author photo (2014).

89 C.f. Londoño 2003 on perpetuity, Santos-Granero 2000 on the Sysiphian task of Amazonian sociality, Overing & Passes et al 2000 on sociality as achievement and embodied production.

90 Butler 1993.

3. Capital

For persons who understand themselves as lively assemblages of divine plant elements, what does it mean to live in a place where those plants cannot live? This is the situation of many Uitoto people living in Bogotá.

Uitoto people living in Bogotá have found themselves in the cold high altitude city for diverse reasons, but many of them are driven by experiences of violence against themselves or family members, including death threats or murders of their kinsfolk in deliberate acts of displacement by *guerrilla*, paramilitary, and narcotrafficking actors. They are also increasingly driven out of their territory and into urban and periurban settlements by circumstances of environmental toxicity. These are the result, for instance, of indiscriminate military fumigation with glyphosate of areas where drug crops are suspected to thrive, of the poisoning of waterways with mercury by illegal gold mining operations, and of the occupation of traditional territory by coca plantations and processing laboratories. Uitoto migrants are also driven by economic crisis —what they experience as the impossibility of caring properly for their families, of meeting basic conditions of livelihood—and, at the same time that proprietary systems of curing and education are eroded, the experience of abandonment by state services including education and health care. In all cases, Uitoto migrants are motivated by forces and circumstances that foreclose the possibility of reproducing Uitoto forms of life in their home territory.

This chapter argues that Uitoto concepts of the person as interspecies assemblage, as an achieved and ongoing co-production, conditions particular vulnerabilities under conditions of displacement.[91] At the same time, narratives regarding illness and healing as cosmological

91 This Uitoto conception of personhood is established in detail in Ch. 1.

migration are deployed by Uitoto migrants in their work to recover lively connectivities and integral forms of being in the world, and to experiment with possibilities for cultural, social, epistemological, and biological reproduction in urban and migratory space.

Drawing on a cosmogonic myth narrative of the Journey Through the Seven Worlds that recounts the origins of illness and healing, migrants' biographical and experimental narratives construct the body as territory (and vice versa), illness as ontological displacement, and healing as a form of cosmological migration.

4. Migratory Subjects, Mobile Assemblages

Travel and migration to the city, for many Uitoto people, entails a kind of dismemberment—a breakdown of their composite selves through the loss of kin and companion species that constitute the shared substance of their bodies, the grounds of their capacities for human being, as well as the roots of their well-being, self-understandings, and possibility for cultivating futures.

The loss of kin takes many forms, and is both a cause and result of migration into the city. Uitoto migrants are often fleeing armed actors who have threatened or killed migrants' family members, and who have often threatened migrants' lives. Even for migrants who have relocated for access to education or health services, however, the loss of kin connections is a source of suffering and ill-being. In Uitoto people's accounts, to live far from one's kin is to be without essential parts of oneself, and painfully so.

But for Uitoto people, migration—whether for reasons of forced displacement, economic

motivation, or relocation for study or medical care—also includes the loss of plants that are understood as essential components of human being. We could think of them as Haraway's "companion species,"[92] or within Uitoto discourse, as kin, as ancestors, as animating spirits that produce and use human bodies as media.[93] Among the losses that Uitoto people recount in moving to the city is a loss of the potentiality, potency, and agency that can only be afforded by intimate, ongoing, moral relations with key plant beings .

This loss is recounted in terms of bodily craving and suffering, and of crises of knowledge transmission and reproduction. It is a significant dimension of Uitoto experiences of living in the city, of their understandings of migration, and of the ethical, political, and ontological horizons that bound their worlds in motion.

5. Ontological Drift: territory, embodiment, and migration from the human

A Uitoto friend, Davíd, told me that my asking about "migration" made no sense to him and other Uitoto people, because "migration is a one-way movement," while Uitoto trajectories of displacement usually imply entering a new state of mobility rather than resettlement. He elaborated, "even though I am in Bogotá, I'm in my territory. As a Uitoto person, the territory is part of my body [pinching his arm], my body has been cured [made, produced], it's made of tobacco, coca, manioc, and I travel with that power [of those plants]." In this sense "territory" is an embodied condition, an ontological location, rather than a spatio-geographical one.

Similarly, Alejandro, a Uitoto healer and displaced political leader gestures, when I ask

92 Haraway 2008.
93 This last is Judith Farquhar's phrase (personal communication).

him about how it is to arrive in Bogotá, at his bag where he carries coca and tobacco at all times, "*está difícil a veces, pero ando con mi poder*"—"it's hard at times, but I travel with my power".

The origins of illness, healing, and human ontological location appear in Uitoto cosmogonic myth narrative as the emergence of human life, along with the knowledge necessary to sustain it, as rooted in migratory process. In a cosmos where human subjectivity is attributed to a broad ecology of differently embodied selves (including animal, plant, and spirit beings),[94] the perpetual work of holding open a moral and human perspective is figured (in ritual, myth narrative, and quotidian discourse) as a struggle to remain in a human ontological location, in a moral human embodiment, in a moral human spacetime, and against the risk of what we could call "ontological drift," a forced or unwitting migration into an immoral subjectivity, a space of illness or evil, or into an inhuman embodiment. In this sense, Uitoto narrative, ritual, and quotidian practices of care for kin and self can be understood as framed against a migratory landscape that is not bound to the borders of Indigenous territory, of the nation state, or even of the visible earth.

The migratory dimensions of contemporary Uitoto subjectivities have also emerged from a confluence of historical forces that have driven Uitoto communities out of their traditional territories, and into new rainforest and urban settlements over the past century. Beginning with the arrival of the colonial and commercial violence of the early 20th century rubber trade,[95] through their entanglement in trans-national cash economies, drug trades, and armed conflict, Uitoto peoples' colonial history is a history of migration.

94 Details of this cosmology appear in Ch. 1. C.f. Viveiros de Castro 1998; Londoño 2005; Kohn 2007; Vilaça 2005.

95 C.f. Echeverri 1997; Pineda 2000, 1985; Taussig 1987.

However, this history is not as simple as the uprooting of an autochthonous and traditional way by the mobility of capital and urbanizing modernity. Rather, it is an ongoing and violently asymmetrical reorganization of the rhythms and pathways of Uitoto mobilities. This reorganization is visible at scales as intimate as Uitoto women's daily routes between home and garden, when they abandon gardens that have become *guerrilla* territory. It is visible at scales as vast as the imaginable cosmos when Uitoto shamans recruit spirit allies against the planetary transformation of climate and toxicities by industrial capital.[96]

A Uitoto person in migration is an assemblage in migration. The movement of one person puts an entire network of kin and plants, ecologies and exchange networks, in motion. Plants, migration, and territory are multiply entangled.

Yován came as a young man to Bogotá on a full scholarship to the National University, was converted to militant Maoism and marijuana on his leftist university campus, then was eventually marginalized by his comrades as his relatives at home started a parallel education for him in the *mambeadero*, the men's coca circle—an education that was cut short when the *guerrilla* shut down all access to their community and he could not return.

Many Uitoto women came of age through garden work, and in many cases, were conceived and born among the plants in their mothers' gardens. Their migration stories, however, feature an almost total separation from the plantwork that was the horizon of their lives before coming to Bogotá and a relocation into gendered domains to which they did not have access before moving to the city, especially through the circulation of coca and tobacco substances. Their migrations are also gendered, often driven not only by political violence, but also by male

96 C.f. Masco 2015, 2010, 2004.

alcohol abuse, the risks of narcotics work, and domestic violence in their home communities.

The framework for understanding Uitoto mobilities has to include the kinds of movement in which Uitoto subjects engage and to which they are vulnerable in the quotidianity of rainforest lives (including the daily movements between house and rainforest garden, hunting grounds, riverine spaces, urban settlements and markets, etc.), and a sense of the ways in which the condition of being a Uitoto person is a result of regular, collective work by kin to fix a subject in a human ontological location.

The Uitoto cosmos is composed of a multi-layered world, including six original worlds below the one in which we live, which are the origins of both human sociality and well-being, and of the illnesses and anti-social forces that threaten those. Illness is an effect of ontological drift, a movement or displacement from the space of human relations by malignant animal spirits acting outside of their proper territory.

Healing then is a spatio-corporeal practice that relies on the healer's ability to correct the ontological locations of patients and their pathogenic predators. Illness originates in a location among the seven worlds of the first creation, each dominated by plant and animal powers that are both the cause and cure of any given condition. As such, curing is a process of cosmo-spatial diagnosis and ontological relocation through medicinal plants. Those plants are active and activated through their medicinal preparations (as infusions to be drunk or absorbed by the skin; as pastes and poultices; as ash and powder). Each of these preparations bears not only the substance of plant tissues or rendered essences but also what are understood to be materialized residues of curing speech and songs. These songs both animate the curing agency of medicinal

preparations, and are animated by them. That is, medicinal preparations are media for the curing speech that renders them effective, at the same time that curing speech is understood to be the voice of medicinal plants resonating through the body of the healer. Furthermore, the object of curing—the patients' body, behaviour, state of mind—are *also* accretions of plant substance and spirit in a human form, and so curing from one perspective appears to be a recursion of plant potencies tangled in time and human embodiments.

What this suggests is that for Uitoto people, migration is not simply a question of spatial relocation or displacement, but a process that implies risks of ontological dislocation that can be managed through adaptations of the plant-based practices that Uitoto people use to direct the un/making of persons from conception through their proper formation, from illness through recovery, and finally through death.

Figure 19: Botanical and magical preparations (advertised as proprietary of "Indians of the Putumayo," in a market, Bogotá.
SOURCE: Author photo (2014).

6. Adaptation & adoption in urban plant medicine

The possibilities for adaptation of plant-based curing knowledge into urban and migratory spaces are enabled and limited by the migratory nature of curing. The mobility of moral Uitoto subjectivity as migratory holds open a relationship to plant circulations that flow through a network of kin households on the scale of reserve settlement, or through cargo planes and overland buses, traveling with kin and package delivery services, on the scale of trans/national displacements. Plant medicines and expertise circulate from traditional territory into the city, between gardens and households hundreds of miles apart, into foreign markets and market logics, and into laboratory and academic sites.

At the same time, the territorial foundations of proprietary knowledge are often regarded as grounding curing efficacies and moral subjectivities in particular locations and ecologies. Just as subtle and chronic illnesses are often brought to traditional healers, intractable life-threatening conditions are often regarded by Uitoto migrants as only curable by *abuelos*, and—more importantly—inside traditional territory. Uitoto migrant families raise resources for costly flights to send a kinsperson to the territory in hopes of curing cancers, intractable hemorrhaging, epilepsy, blindness, as well as addiction and "vice". In their accounts, the efficacy of those treatments rests in the plants, proprietary knowledge, and spiritual force that remain rooted in their territory, and that are weakened by transit into the territories of other Indigenous peoples.[97]

The adaptations and adoptions of medicinal plants available to Uitoto healers in the capital turn along qualitative axes of commensuration,[98] and on ongoing experimentation by

97 This includes, for them, Bogotá, which is recognized at least among several Indigenous organizations as the Indigenous territory of the Muisca.

98 Choy 2011; Espeland & Stevens 1998.

healers into the mimetic efficacies of these foreign plants for curing with proprietary knowledge. In aggregate, this ongoing experimentation represents an emergent "knowledge ecology"[99] in the city—the formation of new networks of expertise, entanglements of objects with habits of perception, practice, and somatic literacy, between Uitoto healers and their companion plants and actors and sites as diverse as the laboratories of a municipal botanical garden, national research institutes, pan-Indigenous organizations, street vendors, occult practitioners, and night markets.

When I ask about how curing in the city is possible, how one can obtains the necessary plants and conjures territorial powers, Juan tells me that along with other Uitoto elders and healers, including his brother and uncle, they are engaged in a process of experimentation to find effective alternatives in the city—that their learning how to live in the city hinges on experimental adoptions of new plants into the ethnopharmakos, adaptations of known plants in other forms, reworkings of related species and varieties. He explains the breadth and extent of tobacco's varietal diversity and geographical range, noting that the variety cultivated in Uitoto territory is just one among many. He is certain that there must be versions in every territory capable of standing in, if only in highly suspect form, for proper tobacco.

> "*Pero hay que haberlo. Hay que haber formas de [adaptar nuestros cultivos] al clima acá. La yuca no da, la yuca de nosotros, la coca no da, el tobacco no da. Hay que buscar el camino de la transformación.*"
>
> "But there has to be one," he insists, "there has to be a version that we can use here. There *have* to be ways to adapt our cultigens to the climate here. Manioc doesn't grow—*our* manioc—coca doesn't grow, tobacco doesn't grow. We have to search for the path of transformation."[100]

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99 Lévy 1997.

100 This claim echoes narratives from actors in the city's pan-Indigenous movements that frequently commensurate the plants that were traditionally markers of ethnic difference—we're *all* people of tobacco, etc.; and so every region has its version of the same essential substances.

For all his optimism, though, those experiments are not always satisfying. He describes the way he and his brother have learned to make *mambe* and *ambil*, the key substances of Uitoto masculine agency[101] from available materials.

They buy coca leaves from nearby Indigenous groups, but the varieties they grow are not sweet enough, make one dizzy rather than concentrated, dissolve too quickly in the mouth. They mix toasted coca leaves with *yarumo* [cecropia] ash obtained from the city's botanical garden, which is often not in good condition.

He tells me:

> La coca aquí es "*salvaje.*" *Moo Buinaima fue creando y apartiendo—esta envolata, esta tiene demasiado anastesia, hasta que creó la propia—la peruana como dicen, aunque no sé porque la llaman así porque es propia de acá. Acá mambeamos esa ["salvaje"], porque hay mucho negocio. O algunos venden mitad y mitad, mitad peruana y mitad salvaje*
> The coca here is "savage"/"wild". *Moo Buinaima* [the creator deity and curing ancestor, the Grandfather of Tobacco] went creating and distributing [different cocas, among different peoples and species]—this one [the "savage/wild" one available in Bogotá] confuses you, this one has too much anesthetic, until he created the proper one—the "Peruvian" one as they say, although I don't know why because it's proper to here... Here we use the "savage/wild" one, because there's a lot of business [sales of coca]. Or some sell half and half, half Peruvian and half "savage/wild".

The difficulty of obtaining or producing adequate medicines puts a material constraint on the production of persons in their proper life course, including the formation of young people as future leaders, healers, or even parents, as it limits the possibilities of reproduction of traditional knowledge for curing, moral formation, cosmological reproduction and the care of humanity

101 Coca powder (*mambe*) and tobacco paste (*ambil*) are consumed together, and form a gender complementary, ancestral pair of agentive substances, understood as the foundation of powers of speech, reasoning, curing, and good sociality.

through the microcosms of household and community. In Bogotá, Juan says, it's hard to converse well, to instruct or learn well:

> "*Porque cómo uno no tiene chagra, toca comprar mambe y ambil, y muchas veces él que quiere aprender no tiene con que comprar, así que no puede traer su mambe. Y uno tampoco puede pedirle que llegue con mambe y no tener el suyo. Uno debería tener del suyo a ofrecer y el otro también para compartir.*"
>
> "Because, as one doesn't have a garden, one has to buy coca powder and tobacco paste, and often the person who wants to learn doesn't have money to buy them, and so he can't bring his coca powder [to the elder who would teach him]. And neither can one ask him to arrive with coca powder and not have one's own [to reciprocate]. One should have one's own to offer and the other too, to share."

Uitoto people interact with the vine that forms the basis of *yagé*,[102] as a divine ancestor, as kin to the other sacred plants that include tobacco and coca. But unlike those plants which are consumed daily and by most Uitoto men and some women, the powerful entheogenic purgative *yagé* is managed by specialists and "greatly respected" by Uitoto people, used to treat only intractable illnesses and conditions of serious spiritual harm or attack.

In the self-accounts of *yagé* healers and community leaders who "manage"[103] coca and tobacco, territory appears as the space "controlled" or "cared for" by a divine plant agency that is mediated through the body of a healer/leader; or by a healer/leader acting through the agency of magical plant substances. A healer/leader consumes magical plants, uses speech and ritual curing techniques (including prayer songs, dreams, concentrations) and sometimes hunting, to establish a space of moral, physical, and ecological well-being (banishing illness, anti-social feelings, etc.) as a foundation of his political leadership and care for his community in the role of spiritual

102 A.k.a. *ayahuasca*, *Banisteriopsis caapi,* brewed with companion plants that catalyze its visionary powers.

103 Work with, cure with, diet for.

father. In describing their home territories to me, healer/leaders often defined their territory by the radius of their care: "*tengo todo este territorio controlado, cuidado*"—"I have this whole territory controlled, cared for."

Those who work with *yagé* have a particular relationship to space and territory, in that the work they carry out in visions often begins with diagnostic travel in animal form through the spaces of human and other worlds, to examine what influences are at work, the location and movements of important spirits and ancestors.[104] In this sense, *yagé* curing begins with a form of diagnostic travel and ontological migration. *Yagé* curing can be carried out over vast distances, and healers travel in visions, projecting their spirits and perceptions into distant places on earth, in space, in other realms of the cosmos.

In Uitoto territory, as in other parts of the Colombian Amazon, in particular the Putumayo, *yagé* has also been an important engine of political organization and mobilization for territorial control—against the *guerrilla*, paramilitaries, narcotraffickers, and both against and alongside state control and recognition in the form of territorial rights. Political movements and community organization to establish territorial control have been driven by *yagé* healers, and in their accounts, by *yagé* itself—the "plant itself" here understood as more than a sinew of woody vine gnarling through the rainforest, as also an ancestor, a master healer, and in this guise, as a political leader.

Antonio tells me that *yagé* protected him and directed him in his work to maintain territorial control for his community in the Putumayo. A *yagé* vision drove him to begin working as a leader, and *yagé* protected him against multiple death threats from *guerrilla* and paramilitary

104 See Ch. 1.

actors who wanted to take control of his community's territory. "*El yagé me ha protegido arto.*" ("*Yagé* has protected me a lot.")

Yagé politics are also of the territory, of protection of the territory, of "Territorio Propio" as a land rights concern. They concern the territory as a moral landscape, a space of reproduction and a condition of the proper reproducibility of people, plants, fish, birds, of the forest as a system of relations that requires a moral system of management and accord, of traditional knowledge and ethical praxis. They construct the territory as the world as the creator made it—abundant, balanced, logical, intelligible, speakable, curable—and work to undo its improper becomings, forced by fumigation, by military occupation, by mining, by helicopter surveillance overhead, by capitalism and nationalism and extractivism, where these forces are parallel to, and condensed into, the ontological threats of pathogenic spirits.[105]

The plants are the tools of politics. They are tools for the formation of new persons inside the territory, who will love it, cure it, and care for it. They are the tools of pettier politics, too, to out-leverage rivals, to undercut their authority, to challenge their braggadocio, their swaggering talk *without language, without proper planting, without proper diets*. Without proper relations between humans, plants, and spirits, the politics are just talk, without territorial roots and without material or intergenerational force.

At a more intimate scale, *yagé* also demands spatial organization along gendered lines that are in effect an aesthetic and political ordering of the world. *Yagé* workers are mutually dangerous to menstruating women, and women living in the radius of *yagé* (vines, preparations,

105 Cantalicio tells me that one of the original worlds of creation has "no order, no society—it's *pure guerrilla*".

human embodiments) are charged with maintaining a strict regulation of their own spatio-temporal and corporeal practices. Contact with menstruating women is lethally dangerous during *yagé* ceremonies. During menstruation, any women in a *yagé* healer's household must maintain spatial, and especially tactile, isolation, observing restrictions in diet, contact, movement, bathing, and work. At the end of each cycle, she should bathe alone at the edge of the household clearing in a brew of magical plants before reentering the collective rhythms of the household. Traveling with *yagé*, the difficulties of managing menstrual taboos in motion are exponentially trickier.

Traveling overland to Putumayo with *yagé* healers, in microbuses and river boats, a five-gallon pail of "the remedy"(brewed *yagé*) was wrapped in plastic burlap and stowed with all other luggage, vulnerable to contact with substances and traces inimical to its powers and tastes. *Yagé,* and its human embodiment in the healer, are damaged by and potentially mutually lethal to menstruating women, and our travels included improvised measures to maintain a safe distance between my menstruating self and the medicine and men with whom I was travelling. The remedy would need to be buried for three days to help it recover from the trip. I could not pass them anything, touch food they would eat, sit where they might sit. The sensory legibility, or conversely, invisibility of *yagé* marked a botanical border as we travelled—the remedy was undetectable to our companions until we arrived in the Putumayo, when stranded halfway, we rented rooms in a house where the owner asks, "*de dónde están llegando ustedes? Están oliendo a puro remedio!"* ("where are you coming from? you three are smelling of pure remedy!").

In the healers' reserve, we recorded extensive interviews with families who described

participation in *yagé* ceremonies as central to their work for ecological recovery and Indigenous territorial rights. Among these were parents who choose to temper their children's education in state schools with regular participation in *yagé* ceremonies. *Yagé* is a key vector among regional Indigenous political leaders, and is often credited for the success of anti-fumigation and territorial repossession campaigns. Those healers/leaders are also engaged in contentious internal struggles over the use and sale of *yagé* and traditional knowledge, a set of tensions emerging from the intersection of forced migration and economic necessity with the local organization of genealogies of knowledge, expertise, and authority. Healers who sell *yagé* to outsiders were criticized as "*vendiendo su madre*"(selling their mothers), and dismissed as having been "*coronados en la ciudad*"(crowned in the city), whereas "*la fuerza del Taita está en la selva*"(the real force of a healer is in the forest).

In reserves, among leaders who understand their curing practices as inseparable from their work to recover and maintain territorial rights, a healer's power was often described as rooted in place. In those accounts, a place is more than a mappable area; it is composed of plants (the ecologies of rainforest and gardens), themselves comprising networks of gendered relations. The medicine itself is made of gender complementary companions, the masculine vine of *yagé*, the feminine catalysts: the forest plants that are the illuminators, the protectors, the calmers of nausea, the brightener of visions, the banisher of maladies.

A rare wayward Spanish tourist arrived one day at the healer's house where I was living, sweaty and flustered from clambering over log bridges and through mucky, boot-sucking, half-flooded forest paths. After she left, the healer commented to me:

"Esa gringa tenía un olor fuerte, no te diste cuenta? Así era ustéd cuando vinó. Pero ahora está cogiendo el olor de una propia mujer de la selva. Ahora está llegando al territorio." (*"*That gringa had a *strong* smell, didn't you notice? That's how you were when you came here. But now you're catching the smell of a proper woman of the rainforest. Now you're arriving in the territory.")

My scent indexed for him my arrival in the territory—not my arrival, months prior, in the small muddy port, or my travel up the river and the trails, or my work in their gardens and taking on nicknames—my arrival as a member of the territory, was marked by a change in bodily qualia, indexing an effect of my coresidents' work on my body using plants (in baths, infusions, ceremonial healing, etc.) to make me arrive.

Concluding our journey through the seven worlds, and the beginning of my education with him, Cantalicio records an explication of how the work of a Uitoto healer is no longer to be bound to his household, his community, or his territory. The work is now planetary—a demand made by the transformation of the global climate, of toxicity and illness at a planetary scale, of the damage to human hearts and understanding wrought by capitalism as pathogenic anti-sociality.

The work of Uitoto medicine, for him, is to convert all of these ills into a moral human subjectivity at the planetary level:

> "to convert this part [of illness, envy, greed] into a good part, into a part of the good heart, the heart of affection, the heart of love, the heart of happiness. One finds there a life that is very tranquil, humble, calm. And there is no rage, there is no rancor, there is no envy, there is no hatred, there is nothing. Because of this above, now it is said that now we live with the white man, we arrange and repair what is ours and we also now think of arranging and repairing the part of the whites."

For Cantalicio, being a healer in the city, as in his territory, means curing illnesses that arise not only from sources that can be diagnosed and addressed in cosmogonic myth time. It also means turning diagnostic and curative powers that he narrates as both ancestral and belonging to an originary chronotope[106] to a critical and intersubjective praxis in the historical present. His diagnostic work and his curing practice alike look to relational origins in every sense. They seek the sources of illness in the intersubjective worlds of a patient's household, kinworld, ecology, and territory. And that scalar, complex view is one in which the historical conditions of colonization, occupation, extraction and armed conflict are at work in and on the bodies of his patients, along with curing and pathogenic spirit beings, chemical toxins, and existential disruptions. In his own telling, his curing work sees the sources of illness in historical forces and in the disruptive wake of the white world. His curing work, of necessity, requires the transformation of the white world--defined by the pathogenic forces of capitalism, militarism, and industrial extraction.

106 Bakhtin 1981.

5 "A kind of magic that is no longer in the world"

Death is not the only way we are unmade in this world. It is not even the most irreversible. People are taken apart in all the ways that they are made to begin with, as vulnerable to undoing as the tissues—of love, memory, sympathy—that bind them to one another.

Figure 20: *Mambe* packaged in kilo bags, from a facebook post advertising to other *paisanos*. SOURCE: Author screenshot (2018).

1. The assemblage is not right

We have been working for hours, and Cantalicio is in full stride. He pauses, hands clasped in his lap, and leans back, draws a deep breath through his nose, considering the next part of the myth

we are mapping. His cheeks are half-full of *mambe*[107], the tip of his finger is smudged with *ambil*[108]. We are in the shared bubble of rich concentration afforded by the plants of dialogue. *Mambe* has sweetened Cantalicio's heart and thoughts, the plant spirit's desire for generative talk and reciprocal work suffuses his body. Since I am a woman, we do not share *mambe*, but we reach regularly for our jars of *ambil*. The reflective intensity of tobacco paste stays all other appetites, cools the nervous system, settles the atmosphere around us like rain might—clearing the dust of distraction and noise.

Cantalicio reaches for the *mambe* jar, eyes focused on the cosmological map we are drawing. A plastic spoon rasps the last gritty traces of *mambe* from the bottom of the jar.

The jar is empty. The bubble is burst.

We spend an hour calling *paisanos* (other Uitoto people) that might have *mambe* to sell. *Iñede—no hay*—there is none. Finally, we reach Cacho who says he and his brother Yohan have some to sell— 40,000 pesos per kilo, from a cousin in the Caquetá—but Maribel, who has joined the search, warns her *abuelo* away from it. "*Abuelo, ellos son de otro pensamiento*,"—"they are of a different thought." We try the elder Isandro several times, but he doesn't answer. "Of course, he's at school teaching until 3:00." Travel picks up on the third call. She is selling—30,000 per kilo—but she's at Colferias, in a state sponsored sale of Indigenous handicrafts, exhibiting baskets and jewelry made by the *Mujeres Ahorradoras* (Women Who Save, a micro-finance program which some of the Cabildo women have joined). If we can come, she says, she'll also sell us *ambil*, "from Putumayo, from the territory." Cantalicio asks me if we can get to her, and I

107 *Mambe* is powdered toasted coca leaf mixed with cecropia ash.
108 *Ambil* is tobacco paste mixed with vegetable salts.

help him down the three flights of stairs and into the street where we find a cab amid the crush of mid-day traffic. We're on our way to Travel when Isandro calls back. "Don Isandro, would you have any *mambe* for the *abuelo*?" "Of course—I'll wait for you here in my workshop." "How much are you selling for?" "Didn't you tell me it was for the *abuelo*? One doesn't charge for that."

Two hours later, we arrive at Isandro's studio, above a restaurant in a street otherwise filled with car stereo shops, empty bottles, empty-bellied dogs, the understory of Bogotá's poor neighbourhoods. The afternoon has turned grey and heavy as concrete. Fluorescent lights shine on red tiles and the restaurant's plastic tables. In the entrance, a glass case of empanadas glows laconically. The pastries slump in their oil slick, resigned as the waiter inside to the fate of the unappetizing.

The studio is the rearmost room in a rambling apartment. A young woman and her friend are in another part of the apartment, but invisible to us. Narrow windows along the room's outside wall let in the afternoon's fading light. Carved wooden figures in various stages of completion rest on a table, carving tools crowd the floor. On a small table at the front of the room are bottles of aromatic waters, *ambil* and *mambe*, along with blue plastic cups, a jar of Nescafé, another of sugar. Radiant under the window sits an enormous tobacco plant, broad leaves unfurled, patiently observing our arrival.

The room is comfortable, a work-space suffused with the enveloping atmosphere of accreted concentration. It is Isandro's *pied à terre*, a space in the city where he can come between his home in a new settlement on a peripheral ridge of the city's south that is still practically

campo, and his work at a high school closer to the center. It doubles as a studio and a consult, a place for the fashioning of figures from wood and refashioning of patients through traditional medicine.

With a few gestures, the space becomes a *mambeadero*, a coca circle, as the two elders share *mambe*, and we all share *ambil*, and they fall into a cadence of dialogue that is warm, convivial, unhurried. The elders are talking about their own apprenticeships, one with his father and the other with his grandfather, both beginning in early childhood. Their incorporation of traditional healing knowledge is grounded in a deep ecological sensitivity, to intricate and lively relations, and to the seasonal and lifetime arcs of their variability, to their entanglement with and implications for mutable human natures, to their pathological and therapeutic impacts on human bodies and senses—and has been substantiated in their bodies through a lifetime of enactments and attunements that translate the vitalities, qualities, and capacities of plant beings into the matter of their own persons.

They are masterful assemblages, corporeal archives of their ancestors' skill in reproducing vital knowledge—knowledge that is manifest in the shape of their limbs, the keenness of their senses, the coolness of their judgement, the generosity of their hearts, the vitality of their plantings, the happy health of their kin and patients, the joy of their households, the depth of their myth memories, and the efficacy of their medicine.

The conversation turns to encounters in their childhoods with conjurers whose powers even now seem inconceivable to them. Isandro tells us of an old *brujo* (sorcerer) who came to stay in his family's home when he was a small child. The *brujo* kept to himself, awake late into

the night, singing quietly in a corner of the house. "One night, I saw him working there, and in the palm of his hand he held lightning, a miniature storm."

Cantalicio nods in recognition. "*Mi abuela era de esos antiguos, que sabían*." "My grandmother was one of those elders who *knew*." He recalls a story that seems to unsettle him still.

> "One day she took me with her to the garden. I was very young, mischievous, disobedient. She turned to me and said, 'now you'll see something!' Standing there in front of me, she lifted the basket off her head and set it on the ground. Then she took herself apart—took off her head, like this, took off two legs, like this, an arm, like this, and put the pieces in her basket."

2. How We Come Apart

Uitoto persons are made in matter familiar, from the soil of forest gardens and water of sweet rivers, from the salt of fathers' desires and the tarry force of mothers' wombs.[109] They are dreamed into being, called into matter, named into place, and sung into time. They are held in the sway of maternal architecture, held in wombs that are also hammocks, held in houses that are also wombs. They are mattered forth of semen and blood, of milk and tobacco, of sweet manioc starch that transmutes gardentime into humantime, as gardens transpose humantime into cosmotime.[110]

The fabricated nature of Amazonian persons has been a matter of lively accounting in the

109 C.f. Echeverri (2000) on salt and sexual education.
110 See Ch. 1.

ethnographic literature since the 1970s.[111] Together, these accounts reflect a broadly Amazonian reflexivity about the reiterative, relational, material and meaningful work required to make persons, and thereby render a moral human perspective in the world. What does this mean? That, to paraphrase de Beauvoir's famous phrase, persons are "not born but made;"[112] but beyond this, that they are made, in and over time, through deliberate and accretive action, through their own actions, but primarily by those of their kin (including human and non-human agents), and that their making is a matter of utter contingency.

These accounts dovetail interestingly with Butlerian accounts of the making and mattering of persons.[113] In her account, persons are made, and made intelligible, through the ongoing assimilation and deployment of socially available aesthetic and semiotic forms (discursive, gestural, corporeal). There are echoes in Butler's reiterative subject of the Freudian subject who establishes the perimeters of a desiring self through repetition.[114] Peircean semiotics offer a similar insistence on the reiterative quality of the social signs through which human perception, logic and communicative subjectivity are rendered.[115] The approximation of a social norm, (in another semiotic register, what we might think of as the ongoing successful embodiment of a genre, a register, or a set of "legisigns,"[116] qualities that have become

111 See e.g. Candre & Echeverri 1996; Conklin 2001; Da Matta et al 1979; Gow 1991; Kohn 2007; Londoño 2012, 2005, 2004; McCallum 2001; McLachlan 2011; Nieto Moreno 2006; Overing & Passes et al 2001; Taylor 1996; Vilaça 2002; Viveiros de Castro 2001, 1996; Walker 2013.
112 de Beauvoir 1952.
113 Butler 1993.
114 Freud 1961[1920].
115 Peirce 1940.
116 Peirce 1940.

meaningfully nameable and recognizable in a standardized form),[117] is what renders us not only "normal", but, crucially "intelligible."[118] Key to Butler's conception of the person as made and mattered, however, is not simply a concept of performativity—that we become the persons we enact and are recognized as enacting in a given field of available social forms. (That more straightforward concept is given to us by Goffman[119], and the zeitgeist of urbanizing, industrializing America, and semiotically, by Austin's theory of "doing things with words"[120]). Rather, the element of contingency at the heart of Butler's performative self is what makes it radical in a way that takes us beyond a critique of essential or congenital selfhood. Butler reminds us that who we are, the persons we enflesh, are never fully congealed; rather they require continuous work that is both social and rigorous, even if it is not conscious, and that is as contingent as it constrained.

Central to this approach to subject formation is an insistence on the contingency and temporal fragility of any achievement of intelligible, viable, personhood. The ever-present possibility of failure does not simply undermine the viability, or authenticity, of a subject, however; it also creates openings for fruitful slippages, citations near the norm that offer the possibility of its displacement. The contingency at the heart of the subject in Butler's view is also the heart of its generative potential.

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117 C.f. e.g. Silverstein on genre; Irvine & Gal (2000) on recursivity. Recognizable types of speakers are produced through the deployment of a sign system. Each use reinscribes the compass of the sign's indexical reach, which we could read, with a Butlerian mode of limited optimism, as offering a possibility of displacement (while simultaneously delimiting the scope of "intelligibility" in intersubjective dynamics.) C.f. Bakhtin (1981) on double voicing, displacement, irony.

118 Butler 1993.

119 Goffman 1981.

120 Austin [1955]1975.

Inhuman possibilities

Uitoto persons are made, and made against a world of inhuman possibilities.[121] They must be made expertly, thoughtfully, without haste. Like all life, all of the world's movements, in Uitoto accounts, persons swell and ripen in time and must be guided and patiently watched by those who will claim them as kin. That what is being made will become, or remain, human is not something to be taken for granted.[122]

In these accounts, conception is a process that is continuous with the formation and maturation of a person, rather than a singular and determinate event. Many Uitoto people described consulting with their elders and shamans for assistance in preventing or preparing for conception through the use of song-infused tobaccos, medicinal herb baths, and other bodily treatments. The formation of a new person is a process that begins prior to conception and continues long after birth. At each point, (and arguably, throughout the life course), the moral human perspective anchored in a kinsperson's body is susceptible to perversion by the anti-social influences of animal spirits.[123]

For Uitoto people, these perverse possibilities include a form of society that devours its

121 Unlike the "infelicity" of a failed Austinian performative, the possibilities of failure in this world are ontological (rather than social or semiotic). In contrast to the risk of the abject in Butler, failed or incorrectly substantiated personhoods in the Uitoto world are intelligible along a horizon of animality and monstrosity.

122 C.f. Londoño 2005; Uzendoski 2005; Vilaça 2002, 2005. C.f. also Stasch (2009), in a Melanesian context.

123 C.f. Londoño (2005:22) on animal or spurious tobaccos as constitutive of im/moral or in/human subjectivities. See also (2005: 71) on healing as the reversal of animal sabotage of human bodies:

The speech of healing: “usually involved the use of tobacco paste and coca, understood in the first place to be the source and power of knowledge, and then to be predators that transformed the vile substances affecting the sick and placed them again in the animals that had originated them.”

own humanity, that feeds on the destruction of others' humanness, that negates reciprocity, equality, and generous empathy. Along with the animalistic and chimeric potentials of improper making, they identify these anti-social possibilities with colonial and capitalist lifeworlds.

Making as undoing

Uitoto persons are made through desire,[124] through the realization of cosmogonic forces materialized in their own bodies — bodies that are extended iterations of a millennial utterance, the naming forth by the Creator of one body that is human, that engenders itself through delicate and vibrant networks of myriad life forms to its point of perfectibility in reasoning human flesh. The river of human life, the milky stream of consciousness made matter, the dancing line of ancestors winds its way through cosmogonic timespace[125] into humantime, bodytime, cycling seasonal ripening time. The bodying of a baby is a node and a naming of one moment in four dimensional timespace. Reproduction depends on an opening of the maternal body that is dangerous but also generative. Beyond pregnancy, they experience their bodies as susceptible to the qualities of other entities regulated by cycles of ripening and drying. (Occasionally, as the full moon rose over her house garden, Luz would jump up from her hammock and wave her hips at its glowing face, singing "*Luna! dáme tu gordura!*"—"Moon! give me your fatness!") Uitoto women described the ritual protections, diets, and avoidances that are necessary to guard against their susceptibility to pathogenic animal spirits, influences that threaten the humanity of mother and child alike. The intergenerational river of human being swells through each belly, each rise

124 C.f. Butler 2005; Freud 1961[1920].
125 I borrow Munn's term with apologies for the liberties I'm taking with it (2007[1986]).

and release of the waters, the same ebb that floods the forest, fattens fish and fruits, swell tubers and game. It is part of the same lunar and seasonal flows that dry river banks, heal wounds, allow new growth to take root, clear the nocturnal vision of healing plants, and suture together tissues in bodies of all kinds.

The bodies of gardens and fruit trees are approached with the same sense of susceptibility. Operations that open a body, including planting a garden, surgery, any kind of incision, should be carried out during the new moon, so that the tissues will heal properly, growing with the moon. Seeds planted under a full moon, by contrast, will rot and die, as it wanes. The state of the moon also affects the qualities of visions, and thus the calibration of companion herbs in *yagé* brews. Y*agé* healers' bodies are masterfully susceptible, and *yageceros* assiduously calibrate their ceremonial work to the timing of lunar and ambient cycles. The seasonal swelling of rivers during rainy and dry seasons orchestrates changes throughout the ecological tissue of forests and gardens. Rain water and water from a flooded river are sometimes used as medicines to help women conceive. Luz's daughter explained to me, for instance, that her infertility had been cured by drinking rain water collected as it ran off leaves in the garden.

These entanglements guide but also vitalize Uitoto plantwork and the care and making of bodies in quotidian and ceremonial registers, which work through the careful opening of states of substance in order to realign it with social, ecological and cosmological orders. Coming to matter depends on a continuous making, reiteration. It also depends on undoings, unmakings, and on remakings in the face of violent disruptions. Indeed, the reproduction of human bodies, as well

as that of forest ecologies and cosmos, depend on openness to kinds of undoing.

"We are undone by each other"

Resonant with Uitoto sensitivities to the profound ways we are drawn into subjectivity through forms of intersubjective undoing, Butler reflects on the twin undoings (of love and loss) that compose and recompose us into shared worlds:

> "Let's face it. We're undone by each other. And if we're not, we're missing something. If this seems so clearly the case with grief, it is only because it was already the case with desire. One does not always stay intact. It may be that one wants to, or does, but it may also be that despite one's best efforts, one is undone, in the face of the other, by the touch, by the scent, by the feel, by the prospect of the touch, by the memory of the feel. And so when we speak about MY sexuality or MY gender, as we do (and as we must), we mean something complicated by it. *Neither of these is precisely a possession, but both are to be understood as modes of being dispossessed, ways of being for another, or, indeed, by virtue of another.*"[126]

She is speaking here of the knots of gendered desire and erotic subjectivity. But the dialectic and reiterative quality of coming into and out of form through profound sensory and loving openness to another also characterizes Uitoto orientations and attachments to the complex array of others that constitute their persons, kinbodies, ecological assemblages, and worlds.

A sense of constitutive undoing arguably threads across otherwise disjunctive conceptions of subjectification. Psychoanalytic approaches offer an image of desire as constituting the subject as it undoes its boundedness.[127] A dialectic approach conceives of the subject as fundamentally constituted through the other's recognition, through its being drawn into an intersubjective dynamic.[128] In many other ways divergent, semiotic theories of subject

126 Butler 2005:19.
127 Butler 2005; Freud 1961[1920]; Irigaray 1984, 1993; Kristeva 1991[1989], 1980[1969].
128 Hegel 2018[1807]; Irigaray 1984, 1993; Kristeva 1991[1989], 1980[1969]; Malabou & Butler 2011.

formation nevertheless offer images of the subject as made through its objectification or dissolution in discourse, through the assumption of language. As Bakhtin had it "the ideological becoming of a human being [...] is the process of selectively assimilating the words of others"[129] or in Vološinov's words, "individuals [...] enter the stream of verbal communication, [and] only in this stream does their consciousness first begin to operate."[130] Discursively, reflexively, and deictically, the subject is made by taking on the skin of the other, standing in the location of another's Other.[131]

To be a person in the Uitoto world is to be kin to someone whose being encompasses and is encompassed by your own.[132] Uitoto personhood is deictic— cosmologically,[133] yes, but the ways Uitoto people represent this fact suggests we push beyond the marvel of seeing oneself reflected in an animal other[134] and consider the greater wonder of finding one's being anchored outside oneself at all.[135]

To become a person in a Uitoto cosmos is not to plant a flag and declare one's bordered sovereignty in one's native tongue. It is to be a migrant: to enter the world of another, to find another's words on one's tongue, to be held in the gaze and the sway of another, to seek asylum and mercy in the law of the other.

For all their resonance with Western philosophical conceptions of intersubjective

129 Bakhtin 1981:341.
130 Vološinov 1973[1929]:81.
131 Silverstein 1976; Hastings & Manning 2004; C.f. Viveiros de Castro 1998; Londoño 2005.
132 C.f. Sloterdijk 2011.
133 Cf. Viveiros de Castro 1998.
134 Cf. Viveiros de Castro 1998, Arhem 1996.
135 C.f. Sloterdijk 2011; Walker 2013.

becoming, Uitoto subjectivity is particular in both its modes of constitution and in the scope of its constitutive openings. To become a Uitoto person is not only to cede to the constitutive undoings of human intersubjective becoming, but to be ontologically cosmopolitan. To become human is to become worthy to hold within oneself the milky stream of human consciousness, to take in the substance of others and proliferate it, to incorporate and matter forth a moral reasoning node in the dense fluid space of the cosmos; to gather, and be gathered, into form. But, crucially, that substance, that substantiated stream of affect and consciousness, is not in itself human. It is, rather, fundamentally botanical and divine.

Gender and species

For Butler, the reiterative work of mattering renders a gendered person. Across the Amazonian literature, and in Uitoto accounts, the reiterative work of person making implies a rendering of gendered human form and agency from among the limits of gendered intelligibility, but also crucially within the limits of species as moral subjectivity. Indeed, the making and mattering of Uitoto persons is not limited to a project of legibly embodying gendered norms, but of navigating a multi-dimensional set of inter-species qua moral capacities. Conversely, the "abject," potentially failed mattering of Uitoto subjectivity turns on species lines: the improperly bodied, unrecognizable, is named as animal or chimeric.[136]

Uitoto kinship and dismemberments of capital

136 See Ch. 6 on shapeshifters and animal pregnancies.

If to be kin is to be "members of each other,"[137] a capitalist labour regime, along with its individuating political corollaries, requires a deep dismemberment.[138] For Uitoto people, this is not simply a question of productive or economic transformation, or of the (in)adequate representation of interests. It is a transmutation of the nature of human connection, co-being, and embodiment. To be kin in a Uitoto world is to be "members of each other" as a matter of flesh, affect, and mutual susceptibility across pathological and therapeutic channels. It is to be registered in the body of others, to be a joint body, and to be a body not bound by the perimeter of skin but rather bound to the vitality and qualities of a world of kinbeings, including spirits (ancestors, allies, authorities), animals (ontogenetic siblings), and wild and cultivated plants (ancestors and adoptive children).

The logic of the commodity by contrast is one of dismemberment.[139] From the perspective of Uitoto critiques, variously lived and articulated, the commodity form engenders a way of life that transmutates labour into capital (a familiar kind of magic to us) and capital not only into the forms of dispossession that classical Marxian critique highlights, but also a fractally repeating[140] mode of dismemberment—of qualities, bodies, kingroups, ecologies, and the forms of consciousness that thread through these to hold together a cosmos.[141]

137 Sahlins 2013.
138 See Ch. 2.
139 See Ch. 2.
140 Irvine & Gal 2000.
141 See Ch. 2.

3. "I lived to see..."

Borders

Many borders contour Uitoto lives: territorial, national, cosmological, and ontological. The border between life and death is an accustomed crossing, as porous and contentious as any other. Uitoto people often described to me experiences of death and return to life. These are stories of travel into and return from the world of the dead, caused by temporary departures from their bodies due to illness, fever, toxicity, violence, and some visionary medicines. Luz told me, "*una vez me morí*" ("one time I died") from a fever, and saw in her wandering state her own body laying like "dirty clothing," in her bed. Antonio told me that his father regularly attacked his mother in a blind rage. One time, he said, his father punched him so hard in the abdomen that "he died," and saw his own body laying unconscious in the dust outside the house. Alfonso assured me that "death is sweet," a truth he knew from dying from toxicity, after mixing pain killers with *mambe,* and being resuscitated by his wife's force-feeding him sugar water.[142]

Sacred and visionary plants and their spirit owners are by turns border patrol and smugglers on the border between life and death. Amid the violence of bonanzas and wars, those plants are not only ancestral guides across a firmly marked line; they are at the center of conflicts that have destabilized the ontological border zone, and left many to wander there.

Uitoto understandings of illness and its healing both turn on conceptions of the body as an affective assemblage whose materiality, capacities, and vitality are susceptible to the bodies of others, and to the qualities of environment, food, rituals substances, and spirit influences.

142 See McLachlan 2011a.

Myriad plants are used to assemble, to dislocate (in cases of sorcery), and to relocate the person's spirit in its human body, within that body's proper relations.[143] Sacred plants are used to make available to the senses the spirits that animate those plants, that travel in the human world, and that haunt human relations.

Within Uitoto logics, sacred plants (including tobacco, coca, manioc, yagé, etc) give sensual capacity, consciousness, and passage to persons as they move between these spaces. But other logics claim control over the border, making sacred plants gateways to death and disassembly as objects of colonial and capitalist desire. The colonial history of Uitoto territory is an epic of the radical disarticulation and dismemberment of Uitoto bodies, as persons, and as kin groups, ecologies and natures. From the late twentieth century rubber trade through the violence of the coca economy and the war that swirls around it, to contemporary biopiracy extractions, Uitoto people have experienced white interest in their lives and lively relations as a pathology of radical dismemberments.

Coca and monsters of the market

The violence surrounding the illicit trade in coca has, in many terrible ways, defined the history of Colombian politics since the mid twentieth century (most intensely from the 1970s forward).

Cocaine as a substance represents for Uitoto people a monstrous remaking of the nature of a sacred ancestor plant. The extraction of cocaine from coca leaves, using toxic industrial chemicals, and utterly precarious labour, is a perverse dismemberment that echoes outward through the violent dismemberments of coca workers' bodies, kin groups, ecologies, and human

143 C.f. Ch. 4, on healing and ontological migration.

sociality.[144] War has spawned techno-monsters of the coca trade: uncanny beings who prey on Uitoto persons in the forest, at the edge of gardens; who tear apart their bodies, render their fat, extract their components that can be rendered into cash. In Uitoto territory under para/military and insurgent occupation, armed actors are treated as animalistic former-humans, "*gente de monte*"("forest people")[145]. They also appear in Uitoto rumour and cautionary tales, as an elite class of transnational shape-shifting monsters, master converters of cash into fat, beautiful bodies, multilingual hyper-mobile chimeras, animal beings in human skin, human beings in animal skin.

A century of violence surrounding the extraction of value from Indigenous plants, labour, and lands has reshaped Uitoto territory into a landscape of dismemberments.

4. "In utter dismemberment"

After eighteen hours traveling by bus from the Andes, winding down through the valley of Sibundoy, through sleeping *campesino* towns, we wind our way toward the Putumayo, the lowlands, toward the morning, warm and humid. Our fellow passengers are cramped, trying to sleep with children and cargo on their laps. The radio in the bus plays vallenato music, lilting accordions, mixed with prayers and PSAs warning revelers to be careful with their Christmas fireworks—"last year Lucho lost his hand!" laments a mother. We stop once for coffee and bread, and once for transfers. Along the road to Puerto Z, the rainforest has been consumed for cattle that graze in dusty pastures and declare paramilitary control. Jenaro remarks that the

144 C.f. Ch.2.
145 Tobón Ocampo 2008.

presence of cattle "has dried up the whole territory."

The bus leaves us in front of Puerto Z's public square. Searing mid-morning sunlight is temporarily blinding, shocks skin and lungs accustomed to cool and arid Bogotá. The town center is a sensory overload. Aguila beer logos and women's "operated" bodies in bikinis are splayed across banners advertising billiard halls and bars. Accordion music blasts into the street, harshly distorted by overloaded speakers.

Motorcycles roar past the town square, past a mule cart, all ribs and loose bolts. At first glance, the square looks like any Colombian town's central plaza. As my eyes adjust, it is a dead simulacrum. In place of shady trees are broad stumps and palms dried to silver. Flower beds, grassy lawns, all are dead and dry.

Across the plaza, vendors sell Christmas handicrafts in front of the church—handmade fireworks, made of papier-maché filled with explosive powder. Tables display colourful bombs that appear to have already exploded, leaving a pile of dismembered parts in their wake. The fireworks are carefully painted effigies. Feet in black boots, their laces neatly tied. Pink hands with rosy fingernails, fine black hairs, and watches on their wrists. Men's heads in a selection of coloured berets (customers can choose their enemies). Some of the heads chew cigars, grimacing at their fate through black beards.

Puerto Z is a port town, and has been a key point in the extraction of value from the Putumayo into the highlands and toward the capital. It is a nexus of so much of the violence that has reshaped the territory.[146] Founded in 1912 as a Capuchin mission, it became a center for the missionization of the Putumayo's Indigenous people. It was a center of the Colombo-Peruvian

146 Ramirez 2011; Taussig 1987.

border conflict in the 1930s. In the 1970s, it became a key point in the traffic of cocaine (and base components) from plantations and laboratories hidden in the forest, or across the border with Peru, toward urban distribution centers (Villavicencio, Medellín, and Bogotá), and then international markets.

Puerto Z has also received many *desplazados*. It is a point of transit for refugees of the armed conflict, a place where some try their luck in the bonanza economy, a step into cash economies, or a place to hide while they make claims to state victim relief programs in order to be resettled elsewhere in the country. It has also been the site of terrible paramilitary massacres, and in 2014 remained a center of fumigation initiatives in the region.[147]

We are in the canoe, traveling back from town on the Putumayo river, up Heron River to the reserve. The day is beautiful, shimmering. The sun dances in the murk of the winding river, green parrots and white herons glide through the lace of the canopy, looping over the river, following channels and airways more subtle than ours, so relatively direct and two-dimensional in comparison.

Jenaro chooses this moment to tell me about his life in the insurgency. The stories are dangerous, and maybe telling them here, midstream, on the river where he has spent most of his life, where his family settled in the aftermath of indenture, and which he ritually protects, makes them less volatile.[148]

147 Since the signing of the peace accord with the FARC, the Colombian state has continued to weigh and announce the resumption of fumigation initiatives in coca growing regions, including Putumayo.

148 C.f. Pineda 1985; Taussig 1987. Uitoto linguistic ideologies involve the risk that naming something risks or invites materializing it, and this includes the naming and narration of historical and traumatic violence.

"In those days, I was very lost—I was living drunk, smoking *basuco*, living in the port [Puerto X], fighting over women. People were saying they were coming to do *limpieza social* ["social cleansing"], killing anyone they found in the streets, who were using vices, drug addicts." One night, a knife fight over a woman left him cut to pieces and left for dead in the forest outside of town. "When I woke up, I saw that I was in a camp in the forest. They had stitched up my face, see here"—he traces a scar the length of his cheek—my arm, my belly." The *guerrilla* had found him bleeding to death and stitched and bandaged all his wounds. Rescued and captive by the same token, he stayed for eight years, cut off from his family.

He was set to work in the *cocales* (coca plantations). "One day, they took us into a *cocal*, into a place in the middle. There was a bundle of heavy plastic. They told us to bury it. It was a body that had been there for days, in pieces. We buried it, but one couldn't endure the smell of it. I didn't eat for three days after that."

Jenaro eventually fled, in the wake of an army attack on their camp. Along with two companions, he fled the chaos of the attack, and hid in the forest for fifteen days. "We ate crackers and powdered milk, all we had in our bagS. We couldn't light a fire." Eventually, when the camp was silent, they snuck back. "There were bodies everywhere, the camp was torn apart." After he escaped, he hid in the forest for four more years, hunting and only seeing family in the reserve, afraid to go to town lest he be killed as a deserter. [149]

The FARC have largely lost control of the territory around Puerto X, driven out by

149 Has he changed his name, as I have changed it further? His wife's first husband was shot for selling information to the guerrilla and the paramilitaries (which side shot him?). The money she received as state victim's relief was turned into a tin roof that clamors like gin fire whenever it rains. He asks about her in her home port. No one knows her name. (He does not, either, it seems.)

counter-insurgency in the form of military assaults, paramilitary terror, aerial surveillance, continuous radio propaganda, and programs to end the industrial cultivation of coca. These last have included aerial fumigation with glyphosate, and crop-substitution partnerships with local Indigenous and peasant communities.[150]

The community of the Heron River reserve have taken part in a program, co-directed by the state and an NGO, to transform their numerous coca plantations into swidden gardens, and in several cases, pasture that they rent to white *colonos* cattle.

Those families who have converted their *cocales* collaborated with me to record histories of their gardens. One evening, after a long day trekking the half-flooded forest paths that connect her family's gardens with the nearest neighbours, nine-year old Vanessa and I were sipping *aguapanela* by candlelight and killing mosquitos as they landed on each other's arms. The house was a raised platform with a roof, used during the most labour intensive seasons, when the family left their house in the community to burn and plant new gardens nearby. Vanessa is dramatic and intense, telling me about a neighbour that was suspected of stealing in the community. She froze suddenly—"what was that?!"— ears perked and staring into the dark. "Hm! the dogs." "What did you think it was?," I asked. "Well…someone who lives there, in the garden." Serious as only a nine-year-old with a ghost story can be, she confided she had seen him one night as she was sitting on the edge of their raised house, just after dusk. He rise from the center of the garden, and walked toward the house. " I saw a strange man, *allí!*—just there!—coming this way. And then…!" she clapped, "there wasn't *anyone*." I asked her parents about it, and her mother laughed my question away. A neighbour, though, is very serious. "That is an

150 See Ch. 2.

Indian who couldn't pay his debt. They shot him there in the *cocal*, and now he's haunting the new houses."[151]

On a bus with Jenaro, in the "giant animal that is Bogotá," we're going to the place he is staying after spending an afternoon in the San Vitorino markets buying shoes and supplies for family at home in their reserve. He has earned the money holding *yagé* ceremonies for white people from Bogotá at a festival on an ashram outside the city, and with white acquaintances in the city: a teacher who is falling into depression and feels *yagé* will help him find his lost purpose, a European traveller who aspires to be a shaman and hold ceremonies herself in Sweden, a woman along with her teenage daughter and her toddler son who, she discloses, has been sexually abused in their neighbourhood. The baby is not given *yagé* during the ceremony, but in the middle of the night begins vomiting, having breastfed from his mother. Jenaro also holds ceremonies for family members who live in the city's peripheral settlements, and for the kin of other healers, including the ailing wife of his former apprentice, and these configurations all entail ceremonies with particular atmospheres and affective tenors.

Just west of the center, on a main road that leads to a market plaza where medicinal herbs are piled in stalls, the bus is full, rocking queasily and bumping through clouds of black exhaust and a lunar landscape of potholes. Jenaro watches the street rattle by. Women lean in doorways that open onto stairways, pinched passages up to their apartments. Industrial refrigerator units

151 Vanessa's ghost was a victim of another system of *endeuda* that has characterized much of the illicit coca economy, where Indigenous cultivators are compelled by force to produce coca, and to secure advances to fund production, and like this unlucky planter, killed when they are unable to repay their debts (Pineda 2001).

gleam metallic in the shops below. A mural of glacial blues promises the icy refreshment of efficient refrigeration. Bare legs in four-inch heels shiver in the high altitude chill. "I've cured women like that in Puerto Z," Jenaro notes. "Their bodies were so saturated [*cargados*]. Horrible things people do to them, ask them to do. It takes a lot of work" (to draw out pathogenic energies).[152] [153] (And yet other paisanos describe his curing white patients for cash as a version of the same work--as "prostituting" a kinsperson.)

Trauma, fragmentation, and displacement

The space of post-trauma is one of fragmented over-saturation. The senses overwhelm themselves. The narrative threads, the ability to reliably string together causal and eventful sequences, to feel oneself as a series of repetitions adding up to a life, as being composed—these all fray.[154] Trauma is a disruption of a certain kind of repetition (the rhythms constitutive of a life) by another one (the compulsive, uninvited interruption of the present by a fragmented and magnified past).[155] The space of post-trauma is holographic, at once fractured and fractal. The scene of trauma becomes an image that repeats metonymically in fragmented pieces of itself, fragments of a scene that have been coded by the body as signs of the scene as an overwhelming

152 C.f. Informants sometimes compared the commodification of ancestral plants or ancestral knowledge to prostitution or other unacceptable alienations of kin relations, for instance: "Selling *yagé* is like selling your mother."

153 Those critiques were particularly fraught in circumstances where kinswomen might have been engaging in transactional sex for money or drugs. In some cases, those practices were subsumed as among the illnesses and "vices" that might lead a woman's kin to bring her into ceremony, or might be revealed in a healer's diagnostic/ moral critiques in the wake of a ceremony's revelations.

154 Van Alphen 1999; Van der Kolk 2014; Berlant 2001.

155 Freud 1943[1917]; Berlant 2001.

whole. Like a holograph, the scene retains its integrity even as it is split into smaller and smaller pieces. Trauma renders the body a holographic medium of a scene that exceeds it capacity to bear the image. It smashes the integrity of the self's timespace, while it itself is uncrackable.[156] In the Freudian model, the symptom is a displacement (of energy, cathected into a bodily register of an uneventalizable experience.)[157] At another scale, the phenomenology of the symptom is a displacement in timespace, as the invasion by flashbacks, a slipping between worlds or spatiotemporal[158] locations. Writing from within this condition conveys it in language of travel between worlds (soul travel or ontological drift in Uitoto terms), as the profound unsettling of temporality, the disjunctive interpermeability of frames of experience, and in forms as subtle as the confusion of tense. (Freud's archetypal hysteric, Elizabeth von R., looks down and sees the dress she was wearing one year prior.[159])

Displacements characterize in replicating ways the traumas of colonization to Uitoto communities. Trauma is itself a state of repeating, involuntary displacements. In post-traumatic

156 If the Freudian symptom is akin to an oversaturated photographic plate (Freud 1943[1920]:152), a compression of exposures in the body of the photographic medium, Uitoto bodies mediate and are mediating in ways that are also compressions of exposure. My friend Blanca was horrified to find that photographs I had taken of her children at her request didn't frame their entire, whole, bodies--"*Los mochó!*"--"You amputated them!". Uitoto people refer, also, to their bodies as retaining the exposures of grief and care, terror and delight, in substantial forms that determine the body as an image in a perspectival universe, and that return as highly charged images in the forms of dreams and visions. Requests for photographic souvenirs are of a kind with elicitations of substantially enduring kin ties, and occasionally stolen or regretted photographs carry the charge of contagion and the dangers of unwanted lingering susceptibilities. My adoptive mother was very alarmed that a notoriously untrustworthy visitor had stolen a photo of me from her house--an act she later narrated as foreshadowing his alleged theft of a child from a hospital on the border.

157 Freud 1943[1920].

158 Temporospatial or chronotopic (c.f. Bakhtin 1981; Munn 2007[1986]).

159 Breuer 1966[1895].

terms, the condition of slipping, involuntarily, through holes in time, of tripping into the wrong moment--the traumatic timespace, non-eventalized, furiously recurrent--by cues in the nervous system, in the senses, in the body as (it is in the) world. This resonates with the imagery of soul travel, the condition of becoming lost in the wrong world, in need of return with the help of a shaman and the ancestors to regain one's location in a stream of relation.

In Uitoto treatments of this volatility, the condition of post-traumatic irresolution is folded in to a realm of vision work and shamanic praxis. Apprenticeship involves a cultivation, in some senses, of the susceptibilities that define post-traumatic subjectivity, including timespace mobility, an aesthetic lability that is figured as opening passages between worlds. In his general study of shamanism, Vitebsky notes the frequency of motifs of dismemberment and reassemblage in the rites of passage that instill shamanic authority.[160] He notes, also, that shamanic practices commonly render as therapeutic skill what has begun as symptomatic affliction. In a post-traumatic space, healing relies on a capacity to reintegrate, to absorb traumatic overwhelm through the tissues and nervous system of the body, to integrate an incomprehensible breach into narrative, to stabilize the time-traveling worm-holes of memory and sensory recall, to regain an ability to choose which timespace, and when, in effect, to migrate at will. In the spaces of Uitoto shamanic healing, the volatility of energetic and affective connections that haunts the post-traumatic space makes it a minefield, but also a space where the tools of shamanic healing, of therapeutic unmaking and collective reassembly, are distinctively tuned.

160 Vitebsky 2001.

5. Magic of reassembly

> "But the life of spirit is not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it. *It wins its truth only when, in utter dismemberment, it finds itself.* It is this power, not as something positive, which closes its eyes to the negative as when we say of something that it is nothing or is false, and then having done with it, turn away and pass on to something else; on the contrary, Spirit is this power only by looking the negative in the face, and tarrying with it. *This tarrying with the negative is the magical power that converts it into being*."[161]

"In utter dismemberment": we marvel for a moment at Cantalicio's *abuela*'s capacity for self-destruction. Is she as undone as that? Could a person unmake themselves just like that, as swiftly and expertly as she might have ticked apart a cluster of manioc roots with the tip of her machete?

Cantalicio licks *ambil* from his finger, offers the jar to Isandro.

"Then my grandmother took out an arm, like this, two legs, like this, and then her head, like this—and put herself back together. Then she took up her basket and followed her path out of the garden."

Both men laugh nervously, hesitate.

"*¿Que será? ¿una ilusión óptica*?"

"*¿Que será*?*…De esa mágia ya no hay en el mundo*."

"What could it be?" Isandro wonders, "an optical illusion?"

"What could it be?" Cantalicio echoes, smiling and also perplexed. "Of that kind of magic that is no longer in the world."

For two elders who keep lively the arts of magical affectivity, whose lives have been shaped equally by the magic of formation by kin and the world-shattering violence of war, whose

161 Hegel 2018[1807]:19.

work as healers turns on the navigation of multiple in/visible worlds, how is this the magic that they no longer find?

This is the magic they lament and marvel at: the magic of reassembly.

The magic of disassembly is lively, certainly. It is endemic to the efficacy of both state force and insurgency,[162] of markets and landmines, and of the forces that have disarticulated Uitoto communities at the joints of land, language, kinship ties, and memory for over a century. But the power to reassemble one's components, one's constituent parts, is that a magic that lives?

Contemplating the ingenuity of Uitoto migrants, who reassemble kin networks across infrastructures of displacement, who remake wounded and disassembled (social) bodies from adapted elements, who nurture new assemblages and new (political) assemblies—the answer is *yes*.

We find in Hegel's words an echo of Uitoto conjurers, insisting that "the magical power that converts [Spirit] into being" is "the life that endures [death] and maintains itself in it." Living in a way that encompasses death (that which isn't), that dances in the places where we come apart, makes lively and generative the openings that would otherwise undo us utterly.

Uitoto history of the twentieth century is a story of rendering: of being rent apart, and of rendering bitter dismemberment into a new foundation for world-making, for cosmopoesis.

Uitoto kin-making practices (and patterns of Uitoto ethnogenesis in the wake of the rubber holocaust[163]) turn on a dual logic—by turns patrilineal and ontologically exclusive, and affinal, horizontal and generously adoptive—that offers a foundation for a lushly generative capacity for

162 C.f. Taussig 1997.
163 See Echeverri 1997; Pineda 1985, 2000.

reassembly. Horizontal and adoptive kinship logics open a space for ontological play at the very boundaries of kin and kind.

Uitoto garden magic is inherently a magic of assembly. The conjurers of gardens are playful migrants in the borders of life and death—growing poisons as staples, living side by side with toxic and predatory companions. There, in their stories and skills, lives the feminine magic of adoption, of nurture, of uncanny and transformative identifications, of reassembly.

There is the path out of dismemberment, into potent and potential futures.

6 Making it dawn

1.

In our final ceremony before I left the Heron River reserve, in the curing hour around midnight, Jenaro drew breath deeply, focused all of his desire for how we would continue to be related, and blew it in a stream of smoke over the crown of my head. I was seated, arms wrapped around my knees, between his legs, in the very small space of attendance to the patient. *Icariando*, his breath pulsed into a stream of song, directed into my back. Reverberating as a stream of colour as it entered my body, as a stream of images (landscapes, objects, microscopic vistas of the interior of my body), his voice was rough and distorted by the recent loss of two teeth. (He had had these pulled by a dentist in the Puerto X, without anaesthetic in keeping with his diet against pharmaceuticals). His voice intensified in focus until it took form, materializing inside my right rib cage as a stone.

Two days later, in the already warm dawn light, we prepared to set out in the canoe that would let me meet a cargo flight to the nearest place with a road leading to the capital, packed with anonymized bundles of freight as potently charged and unseeable as fetishes, and around these, two tightly packed ranks of *cocaleros*, including one tattooed boy, traveling with his father, who turned the contents of his stomach over to gravity and let them land on our shoes. The rest of us held tight all we were carrying out with us. Jenaro reminded me of all he had settled in me. "I have bound certain things in your body. Only I can take them out." Together with his brothers and mother, he admonished me, "If you love us, you will take care of your body." He did not mean that I should "take care of myself" because they would worry, in the way

that we often plead to our loved ones before a separation. He meant that our bodies had, through ceremony, become open to one another as a mutual settlement,[164] in a formation that I might not be trusted to protect, by the fault of femininity if nothing else. Just as his brother's alcohol abuse opened them collectively to degradations and spirit attack by rivals, my departure was a dangerous opening of a formation of mutual substance. I was traveling alone, but they had bundled away parts of themselves next to my bones, tied profound wishes and secret power in my flesh. He meant that he intended me to carry them out of the territory, that my neglect would erode them all.

And yet I was the one that crumbled. Arriving in Bogotá, my senses were alien; or, I was alien in the world of the city. The air smelled corrupt, the food in my neighbourhood tasted like bleach. I sensed that I was newly and differently foreign to my neighbours. I felt too open, and also unable to absorb my surroundings. Jenaro surveilled my dreams, calling me and telling me things that he had seen about my life. My house was troubled with sounds in the night. Snapping in the corner. A hiss. Restless and profoundly unsettled I abandoned sleep, walked all day, aware of a twang like a bite under my ribs.

A friend called a Kamentsa shaman, from another part of the Putumayo, to purge the house. He brushed me with bundled herbs and feathers, reacted as to an electric shock on the right side. "Who were you with, *niña*?".

Travel received me in her home. She fed me *caguana* and asked me, gingerly, about the place I had been for the past couple of months. It was the place where her first husband, the *paisa*, was killed, the first place from which she was displaced. I told her about how it might

164 Mazzarella 2017.

have been different since she left, about the military occupation, the absence of young women. "*¿Y no te enfermaste*?", "and you didn't get sick?" she asked, concerned about living conditions in the reserve, untreated water and malaria. I told her about a ten-day fever, and tried to reach for a name for the sickness that I had carried back with me. The present, tense, perforated by the past. "I can't sleep," I ventured, "that man wants something."

A week later, Travel has taken me to our friend's apartment where her grandfather is staying. Cantalicio, traveler between the Seven Worlds, asks me and hears me in even fewer words than passed between Travel and I. "*Ya entendí, ya, ya...*". "I've understood, now, I know..." Days pass as Cantalicio waits for the weekly flight from the Caquetá, for a packet of nettles that is traveling with a cousin from his reserve. With the right plants in hand, Cantalicio begins the work by reassuring me that I am a daughter to him, that the things unsettling my home, making it impossible to be at home in my body, will be untied. We share tobacco paste, and he fills his cheeks with coca powder. As it moistens, allowing him to breathe, he draws mouthfuls of tobacco smoke and passes them forcefully over me. At the same time, he holds the nettles, fine and ferocious, in his bare hands, absorbing their stings until his arms tremble, and then brushes them over my skin. The nettles shiver over my shoulders and arms, across my back and my chest. As he crosses under my right collarbone, he is jolted, exhales "Ha....", works to draw out the energetic anchoring that other one had set in me. A white heat gathers amid the blistering force of the nettling—that stone in my chest doesn't like to be touched.

He asked me about it later, already knowing that he had picked up something foreign, something at once archived and activated in my body. Legible, sensible, through the same plants

that had set it there, it was also out of reach because its maker's agency came from other plants (*yagé*) and was in that way foreign, of another world. It was in and out of his reach. He worked to make me kin, to extend our resonance through tobacco and manioc pastes, through a reordering of our bodies through affection and teaching, through the gentle, laughing reciprocities that make Uitoto kinbodies. Felicity in all its senses. But that stone remains out of reach, restless. Anchored and unsettling. The name for it remains out of my grasp, for months and months, its radiation working through my time, boring holes that slip out of this world and land always in that place. It burns holes in my sleep, in my accounting, in my tongue. It is unnamable now still and has wormed through this text, as well.[165]

2.

Uitoto people and plants have lived through a century of intersecting forms of violence that have worked relentlessly to undo their relations to each other, to land and ecology, and to ancestors and futures. Together they have worked to dismember the kin bonds that constitute a relational world of vital and mutual susceptibility. Colonial attention to plant life in modes of extraction and extermination has mediated the history of violent occupation of Uitoto territory and ecologies. Conversely, forms of plantwork that constitute kin relations with and through plants are among Uitoto people's key sources of strength and recovery in the wake and in the midst of

165 This text is knowledge registered in, projected through my body as a settlement of the relations that compose the Uitoto kinworlds in which I was generously, violently, ambivalently, abundantly enfolded. I include the intimacy of those encounters here—of shamans working on and through my body in ceremony—because I was not (could not be) privy to the intimacy of others' encounters, and where I was, am not at liberty to name or record them. They also mark the text symptomatically, and so I gesture at them here as a way of drawing that symptomaticity into focus. Not to explain so much as to exhume.

world-unmaking violence. These include rainforest cultivation and gathering, the circulation of sacred cultivars as food and medicine between kin even across the distances of displacement, and the adaptation and adoption of new plant kin among Uitoto *desplazados* in urban spaces. Plants have mediated the colonial undoing of Uitoto worlds, and plants continue to mediate Uitoto people's work of reassembly and cosmopoesis.

In Uitoto world-making praxis, plants animate historical and cosmological processes alike in the register of kinship. Here, kinship is coextensive with cosmos, and both are conceived as world-making assemblies of affectively resonant, mutually embodied common substance. Through the history of colonization and occupation of Uitoto territory, and into the precarity of urban *desplazados'* lives, questions of kinship as substance with and through plants remain vital. For Uitoto communities in and out of their territory, the work of kinmaking and world-making through plants is the foundation of a shared ethics of *generation*: of care and proliferation of human and non-human kin; of the substantiation of the powers of generation as gendered dialectic; of generation as the work of recomposing a world dismembered by colonial violence.

Here, I follow Uitoto healers, leaders, and plantworkers' claims scaling their kinwork to the cosmological and planetary,[166] and seek what a Uitoto ethics of relation with and through plants can offer for a moment of planetary *degeneration*, of the unmaking of kinships beyond the human at an unprecedented scale and pace. I use the concept of degeneration here to draw together several senses of world-unmaking that converge in contemporary Uitoto landscapes, and that constitute the defining political, economic, and ecological formations of our historical moment at the planetary scale.

166 C.f. Masco 2015.

By "degeneration" I mean, on one hand, a moment defined by the loss of generations of non-human beings. This includes the planetary loss of species in a moment of mass death and extinction. In the Uitoto context, the disappearance of non-human others, in the form of plant and animal kin, and in the erasure of ancestral landscapes (ecologies that embody ancestral powers and kin relations) also represents a loss of generations as a loss of ancestral kin. The poisoning of those landscapes, and of the bodies with which they are consubstantial, is also responsible for a degeneration toward the future, for the loss of future kin as both human and ecological reproductive capacities are harmed.[167]

By degeneration I mean, also, a breakdown and co-optation of powers of generation as gendered dialectic, of our powers to substantiate ever more extensive kinworlds.[168] In Uitoto accounts, and in our collective reality, the loss of non-human kin is also the undoing of the power to reproduce a world.[169]

And finally, in an inversion related to a project of genealogical unsettling,[170] I mean also to invoke an image of degeneration as the undoing of what passes as legitimate reproduction in liberal and settler genealogy, as an espousal of the "degenerate," the injured and transformed, the "unnatural" or the altered.[171] To the extent that some contemporary (white, Western, liberal,

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167 That poisoning is happening in Uitoto territory, through persistent chemical pollutants including glyphosate used in both military and agro-industrial projects of extermination, and through heavy metals including mercury that are used in unregulated and illegal gold mining operations.

168 Including in the form of anti-migrant politics.

169 I use power here in a sense akin to Irigaray's *puissance*, potency and potential (which she contrasts to *pouvoir,* power to force, to enact.)

170 See below.

171 Cf. Tsing on "ruins" and "blasted landscapes"(2016), and Haraway on "trouble" (2016). Cf. also Murphy's "alterlife":

"Alterlife names life already altered, which is also life open to alteration. It indexes collectivities of life

techno-scientific, etc) projects of conservation-oriented environmental politics reproduce and are driven by an understanding of our historical moment as the Anthropocene, and specifically as a post-lapsarian fall from nature, as the moment when human agency began to act on otherwise intact natures, they leave open a politics of purity, organized in relation to pristine natures worth attending to, and wasted ones demanding either technoscientific solutions or purging.[172] [173]

Here, "degeneration" stands for both a diagnosis—the moment we are in is one of a rapidly contracting kinworld, and for colonized people, this moment has been a long one—and for an opening from within the legacies of injury toward which we might orient an ethics beyond the human. An ethics of queer, illegitimate, time-shifting kin-making. One capable of reclaiming the kin erased or disavowed in colonial, patriarchal, and liberal genealogies. One capable of sustaining the kin now emerging into a world of degeneration.[174]

At a moment when our kinships beyond the human are collapsing at a planetary scale,[175] Uitoto techniques of kinmaking enact an ethics of relation to the more than human that unsettles untenable genealogies and lethal reproductions in favour of a tending toward generation as a

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recomposed by the molecular productions of capitalism in our own pasts and the pasts of our ancestors, as well as into the future. It is a figure of life entangled within community, ecological, colonial, racial, gendered, military, and infrastructural histories that have profoundly shaped the susceptibilities and potentials of future life. Alterlife is a figuration of chemical exposures that attempts to be as much about figuring life and responsibilities beyond the individualized body as it is about acknowledging extensive chemical relations."(2017:497)

172 C.f. Murphy 2017; Tuck 2009; Kosek 2006, Ch 2.

173 Cf. McKay on Nazi soil science (2011:42-69).

174 Cf. Bird Rose 2012.

175 See e.g. a report by the UN's Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (6 May 2019):

"The average abundance of native species in most major land-based habitats has fallen by at least 20%, mostly since 1900. More than 40% of amphibian species, almost 33% of reef-forming corals and more than a third of all marine mammals are threatened. The picture is less clear for insect species, but available evidence supports a tentative estimate of 10% being threatened. At least 680 vertebrate species had been driven to extinction since the 16th century and more than 9% of all domesticated breeds of mammals used for food and agriculture had become extinct by 2016, with at least 1,000 more breeds still threatened."

continuously open question. Those techniques constitute a kinmaking and cosmopoetic botanical praxis, one that models an ethics of kinmaking beyond the human that is ever more urgently necessary.

3.

The Uitoto cosmos is made of complementary gendered potencies, unfolding dialectically in and as time. This is borne out in cosmogonic myth,[176] as well as in ethnobotanical praxis (where the efficacies of plants are narrated as gendered reciprocity), and in the spatio-temporal organization of households. Masculine and feminine subjectivities are attributed to the effects of plant substance, as matters of ritual action (bodily and discursive, where these are understood as the same), and quotidian care (including "diets," attending to proscriptions on sensuous exposure to objects and beings whose qualities are misgendering, morally degenerative, or contrary to the formation being registered in the body)[177]. That said, the capacity for resonance, for affectivity, is generated where these meet. Where the consubstantiation of kin ties animates the capacity to act on and to be acted on, the generative difference is gender. Or, gender is what differences make generation possible.[178]

In this view, where the action between gendered and gendering (also, engendered and engendering) substance is the grounds for mutual affectivity, Uitoto kinship can be understood as alterity that has been rendered resonant. Uitoto kinship is the ongoing, mutual transformation of

176 See Chs 3 and 4.
177 Doña Leocadia, for instance, remembered her mother preventing her and her sisters from touching and playing with reeds as they approached puberty because their nipples would take on the plant's spindly length.
178 Cf. Lagrou 2007; McCallum 2001; Strathern 1988.

radical difference of subjectivity-as-substance that has been rendered sympathetic through transformative mixing and reciprocity in time. Kinship is the realm of praxis where generation, the dialectics of mutual (un)making, is ordered through and in the body, through and in memory, through and in futurity, through and in the cultivation of capacities for resonant, mutual, intersubjective affectivity.

Gender here, then, can be understood as the generative entanglement, mutual dissolution ,and reconstitution of the difference of substance. And conversely, gender is the difference that makes possible intersubjective potency and generation. But it is so in two senses: first, in that it is gender (as a perpetual, dialectical transformation) that makes generation possible; second, in that the way the generative dissolution and reconstitution of life-giving and subjectifying forces is captured in this system is as gender. It is a thorough-going organizational principle, as the name for the places where cosmopoetic force meets its limit and becomes its other; as ordering cosmological principle, but not in the sense of a static demarcation or settled balance—rather, as the horizon between mutually generating and mutually destroying forces. Gender is the name for the difference that makes the world.[179]

In Uitoto accounts, gender as a constellation of qualities registered in and across persons (including non-human ones), is not only made,[180] but endlessly remakeable, a matter of endless making in relation.[181] It appears as both structurally (symbolically, semiotically, ritually, discursively, gesturally, botanically) stable, enregistered as *genre*,[182] and at the same time

179 Cf. Sahlins 2013; McLachlan 2011b.
180 Cf. de Beauvoir 1952; Butler 1993
181 Cf. Conklin 2001; Lagrou 2007; Londoño 2012, 2004; McCallum 2001; Overing & Passes 2000; Seeger et al 1979; Vilaça 2005.
182 I use genre here in the semiotic sense of an accreted form, a recognizable set of signs, as

subjectively mutable, iterative and iterable and therefor unstable, open to slippage.[183]

Gender is settled in the body, with whatever degree of volatility, through mediations of plantwork and the agency of plant substance.[184] In this sense, kinship, as an organization of gendered potency (something akin to Irigaray's "*puissance*"[185]), is settled in the body. The body itself is a settlement. Here I am drawing on Mazzarella's concept of a settlement as "mark[ing] a moment of encounter [...] and the consequent attempt to resolve an unstable yet seductive relation of ambivalence."[186] In Mazzarella's framing, a settlement has the volatility of a symptom. It is a provisional resolution of energies whose ambivalence ensures their eventual unsettlement. While he offers the term as a means to characterize conceptual movements in the history of anthropological and critical theory, I take it up here as a way of thinking about formations of kinship and shared substance in Uitoto worlds—those formations that come to matter as body,

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well as in the double sense it holds in French of both gender and species. Cf. Irigaray on the "*genre humain*" as both human species and male type:

> "Gender is confused with species. Gender becomes the human race, human nature, etc., as defined from within patriarchal culture. Gender thus defined corresponds to a race of men (*un peuple d'hommes*) who refuse, whether consciously or not, the possibility of another gender: the female. All that is left is the human race/gender (*le genre humain*) for which the only real value of sex is to reproduce the species. From this point of view, gender is always subservient to kinship"(1993[1987:3).

183 Though less so than, say, species. Shapeshifters into animal form retain their gender.

184 Cf. Candre & Echeverri 1996; Echeverri 2000; Londoño 2012.

185 Gillian Gill translates Irigaray's distinction between *pouvoir* and *puissance* as distinct versions of "power," where the first appears as agentive, masculine power to act, and *puissance* figures a feminine power to engender. While I would not challenge that choice, I use Irigaray's *puissance* here, in relation to the term "potency," to characterize a mode of power in the world, or world-making power, that turns on the capacity to engender, to bring into being, and that does so by potentiating or activating what is potential in a given formation or substance. "Potency" here also evokes the pharmakon quality of Uitoto powers for healing and engendering; the fact, much addressed in their accounts, that plant medicines, the spirits that they mediate, and human powers to "make dawn," to manifest the actions of those spirits in the world, are as ambivalently powerful as the healers that manage them. (See Irigaray 1993[1987].)

186 Mazzarella 2017:10.

ecology,[187] and cosmos—as historically sedimenting, as foreclosures, and, crucially, in keeping with the logic of the symptom, as a temporary if recalcitrant fixing of always volatile energies. Uitoto bodies, Uitoto kinbodies, at intimate and cosmic scales, call for perpetual care because they are possessed of this volatile double quality. Kinship in the Uitoto context, as a condition of mutual bodily susceptibility, is both archive and activation. Both of these are mediated through sedimentations of divine botanical potencies ("*puissances*"), gendered and engendering. Gender is perhaps a way for naming that doubled, dialectical volatility: for the finding of form that also makes possible its undoing in the mattering forth of new formations.

If the Uitoto person is a gathering of generative social forces, a precarious formation of the kinworld, an ever-shifting nexus of relations composed in and of the body, this conception finds its own kin in psychoanalytic and performative theories of the gendered subject. In both classical psychoanalysis and its critiques,[188] the subject is a formation of, in, and in relation to the body—to the kinbody in fact, as an extended and dynamic corporeity. Similarly, in performative theories of the iterative making of subjectivity, the gendered person emerges as an accretion of signs in and through the body.[189] To note this kinship is not to ignore the radical specificity of Amazonian theories of the person (which have been broadly translated in a robust ethnographic literature since the 1980s.)[190] What Amazonian people presume is a subject, a body, a kin

187 Uitoto forms of "nature knowing"(Kohn 2005) resonate with historical ecological framings, which allow us to see apparently non-human spaces also as "settlements," that is as accretive, historical, and even collaborative. In Uitoto renderings the non-human world is also subject to making an re-making—by human and non-human actors—as a dialectically and only ever temporarily settled exchanges of volitional configurations. Ecologies in that sense are also matters of substantiations of kinship (cf. Rival 1998).

188 Freud 1943[1917]; Irigaray 1993:7-22.

189 Butler 1993.

190 See e.g. Conklin 2001; Lagrou 2007; Londoño 2012, 2004; McCallum 2001; Overing &

formation are radically open, and ontologically extensive. As is the precarity they imagine is the default condition of personhood, a precarity calling for continuous work of ontological and moral production and adjustment. The stability of the kinbody as a settlement, and as a matrix for the subject, is not granted but Sisyphean. The Uitoto person—as kin and cosmos substantiated—is a perpetual slippage, an ever present opening in the present.[191] It is one from which pathology and dislocation arise.[192] But it is also the one through which collective and sublime trans-formations emerge.[193]

Uitoto healing is a question of activating the ontological movement that is already presumed in any social configuration in and as a body. It is not a matter of fixing absolutely, but of traveling right. Of getting deeper into the right world. Deeper into the kinworlds where good is multiplied—into the bodily formations most generative, most resonant, most capable of attuning to and amplifying the world of good.

As a form of praxis with a cosmopoetic and ethical end, Uitoto curing finds echoes in phenomenological ethics, articulated through and in relation to the body of the other, such as the Levinasian face,[194] or the Irigaryan sex,[195] where the ethical is grounded in the fact of the subject's embodiment, and in relation to the susceptibilities of the embodied Other.[196] In the Uitoto context, however, those ethical ends begin from a point of distributed corporeity.[197] The

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Passes 2000; Seeger et al 1979; Vilaça 2005; Viveiros de Castro 1998.

191 Cf. Benjamin 1940; Butler 1993; Derrida 1976.

192 See Ch. 4.

193 Like the symptom.

194 Levinas 1985.

195 Irigaray 1984, 1993[1987].

196 Cf. also Malabou & Butler (2011), a reading of Hegel's "Lordship and Bondage" that suggests a relation of surrogacy.

197 Cf. Povinelli's "carnality" (2006).

ethical call then is not a calling forth of the subject out of its individuality (or its self interest) by the fragile embodiment of the other (as with Levinas' "do not kill me"[198]). The ethical begins from a prior ground of inter-subjectivity beyond the human whose consequences and risks are other. As such it is oriented toward a horizon of perpetual alignment of care for the state and quality and boundaries of a collective attunement.[199]

As the person is a microcosm of the kinworld, and the kinworld is nothing short of a cosmos, the ethics of curing praxis through quotidian and ritual plantwork, represents the work of composing and regenerating a cosmos. Uitoto plantwork is a perpetual labour of ethical cosmopoesis. It is, as Londoño, has it "a moral project in perpetuity,"[200] a Sisyphean labour to hold a world together in our bodies, to hold together a world in our bodies, to hold a world in our bodies together. In the Uitoto context, to become consubstantial with the ancestors is the basis of the powers of generation.[201] Generation here is both the potential and the effect—the capacity and the form, the *genre* and the engendered. The tools of kinmaking and kin-counting (equally of disavowal and undoing) are generative of worlds, worlds which they sustain at the expense of others which they similarly eclipse. Kinwork is cosmopoetic, inherently, and that cosmopoesis necessarily involves negotiating the bounds of ethical relationality in and as time.

198 Levinas 1985.

199 The mode of attunement in the Uitoto context can be understood as a form of praxis with and through plants, as a practiced reorganization of the sensorium that includes modes of divinatory, intrasubjective, and diagnostic receptivity. These echo states apprehended for instance in concepts like Barker's "voluntary negativity"(1916) or in the cultivation of a capacity to "be affected" as Favret-Saada describes it in rural France (2015). C.f. also Pandolfo 2018.

200 Londoño 2004; cf. Santos-Granero 2000.

201 C.f. Sahlins' (2013) "stranger kingship," and McLachlan (2011a) "stranger kinship"—the powers of life and death, of generation and its failure, reside in the potency of beings outside of the human. C.f. also Irigaray's (1993) distinction between power and potency ("*pouvoir*" and "*puissance*"), as an approach to gendered dialectic of generativity.

4.

Allowing Uitoto kinmaking magic the maximal scale in which it is often articulated, I want to consider here the ethical and cosmopoetic potencies of a practice that begins with kinship as a question, rather than a structure, as the making open to claims of reciprocity, of entanglement, of affectivity. To make someone kin is to open a world to them, to fold them in to the tissues of affective binding, of mutual susceptibility and desire. To be made kin is to be opened and closed at the same time. To be opened, as a subject, to the desires and deliberations of a world of others, to the softenings of both injury and love; and to be closed in to an intersubjective dynamic, a fold, bound within a world sustained through mutual work and projection.

Here I mean projection in the psychoanalytic sense of being folded into the desires and intersubjective legacies of a kinship-as-psychic structure, of one's enfolding as organized by a history of desires and injuries.[202] But I also mean projection in the temporal sense: of being transported through claims of shared genealogy, folded in to a collective history, one's capacities and obligations accounted for in retrospective relation (even if and as these relations are being conjured in the present), and projected into formations whose shapes and potentials entail or foreclose particular futures. "Will you remember us? Will you come back to us? Will we see your children?" "Will you bring us wealth? Will you bring us suffering? Will you realize the wishes we have made through your body?". Finally, in the Uitoto context, kinship is also bound up with projection as a practice of soul travel. Shamanic curing, quotidian dreamwork, and non-expert divination practices rely on visions of and visitations by ancestors and future kin in multi-modal forms (in direct appearance or address in dreams or in ceremonial visions, for instance,

202 Freud 1961[1920].

but also in the timing of climatic events such as heavy rains or lightening strikes).

A long-standing truism in Amazonian studies,[203] the question of an opening to alterity as the organizing principle of social life is the form of Amazonian difference that has been taken up most widely as general anthropological theory, from "cosmological perspectivism"[204] through the "ontological turn." But models of Amazonian difference (the difference of Amazonian societies, the Amazonian social organization of difference) have most often been figured through models of masculine kinworlds, where relations of alterity are figured as reciprocally predatory,[205] as vertical, ontologically and morally hierarchical structures of masculine reproduction through violence or predation, to the exclusion of Amazonian women's kinmaking practices, and frequently without consideration for the dialectical articulation of differences of both species and gender.

In those models, gender is often subordinated to species difference. Men, prey, and gods order a cosmos of mutual, and mutually regenerative, predation.[206] Or species difference is simply a transformation of a gendered kinship logic. Women are structurally parallel to prey as equally determined by affinity.[207] [208] These models (from the uptake of cosmological perspectivism through the "ontological turn") turn on the difference of species as a difference of form, but not of ontological kind. In that sense, species is not an engendering difference. In fact, the image of a cosmos of male animals in hierarchical and mutually consumptive/predatory

203 E.g. Lévi-Strauss' characterization of a generalized Amerindian "opening to the other"(1995: 17).
204 Viveiros de Castro 1998.
205 E.g. Viveiros de Castro, 1996, 1998; Århem 2001.
206 E.g. Viveiros de Castro, 1996, 1998; Århem 2001
207 E.g. A.C. Taylor 2001.
208 Important exceptions to this include Rival 1998; Miller 2019, 2018.

relation is an image of non-differentiation, where all difference is the same difference—that of species (i.e. form as body as ontological perspective). In Uitoto exegesis, ritual forms, and quotidian praxis, the difference that engenders the world, where alterity is absolute (at a limit of intelligibility, at a limit of desire, at a limit of fecundity for those reasons), is that of gender. Gender is the difference that engenders.[209]

5.

Uitoto people's accounts of the making and loss of kin reveal the generativity of relations with non-human beings as kin relations, as well as the profound ambivalences that animate both human and non-human kinships.

The traumas of displacement and of the break-up of households often included, in the narratives that Uitoto women shared with me, the pain of losing ecologies and landscapes in which their kin ties and subjectivities were grounded and substantiated, including cosmogonic sites in the landscapes of traditional territory, and their gardens. Being forced to leave their homes, or to flee abusive partners, was often narrated as a physically painful and disordering loss of plant kin—of the beings (as cultivars, medicines, and ancestral plants) that sustained them and held a way of being open to them through their lives in gardens and in forest spaces.

Their histories of bringing and carrying life into the world include adoptive relations with plants, wild animals,[210] and human strangers. But Uitoto women's stories of their kinmaking lives

209 In that sense, to reverse Irigaray, the difference of species is already a difference of gender, of genre.

210 For instance, the jaguar kitten that Luz breastfed along with her own infant son "until it grew teeth, obviously."

also include experiences at the limit of kinship, at the limit of what can be held in a kinbody. Their stories of incorporation and loss, of coming into and out of connection, are marked by twin questions, of what we love and cannot carry, and what we carry and cannot love. Those stories turn around the marks, injuries and charges they carry in spite of the harm or pain they are bound up with. They also turn around the intimate and missing ones who can't be taken along, who have left or have been left behind: partners, parents, gardens, worlds. Experiences of the twin undoings of desire and grief[211] appear in Uitoto women's accounts of their histories of displacement, separation, and abuse. They are recorded and referred to in their bodies, as well—as scars, the memory of lost pregnancies and lingering illnesses. But they are also—individually and collectively—narrated in a genre of uncanny reproductions. This genre include stories of seduction, abduction, and impregnation by non-human beings (including shape-shifting river dolphins, spirit masters, and serpents) whose difference undo the humanity of their prey-as-lovers. They map the limits of a world of bodily mutability and mutual susceptibility, where the processes of what Tagliani translates as "fecundation"[212] is an interspecies one, but also bounded by gendered and moral difference. Importantly, Uitoto stories about the limit of kinship are about the limit of relation, not of similarity. They are marked by unlivable differences of sociality (as body/form), and as such, mark the limits of ethical relationality. But difference itself is the foundation of cosmopoetic engendering and social regeneration.

In general models of Amazonian perspectivism,[213] the subject is determined by the form of the body. Londoño intervenes to insist those forms are morally unequal, if ontologically and

211 Butler 2005.
212 Tagliani 1992.
213 Viveiros de Castro 1998.

perspectivally reciprocal.[214] But the Uitoto body and embodied subjectivity are accretions of plant substance as divine agency. The perversity of animals (including those who appear in the guise of the colonist) is a manifestation of the corruption through moral transgression of their proprietary tobacco.[215] Monstrous kinships with animals and shape-shifting spirits, therefor, mark the limits of kinship through plants, and at the same time, mark the fact that plant agencies animate even the furthest limits of the social-as-kinworld.

The forest and riverine creatures capable of impregnating women represent the limits of affinity, of the incorporability of alterity. These beastly kinships figure the forms of difference, the edges of inhuman relationality to which women are susceptible, and that women are able to carry to a point. Kinship with and through shape-shifters, through the mutability of species, illuminates further the extent to which gender is the difference of cosmological engendering. In Uitoto accounts, shape-shifters change bodily (species) form, but retain the difference of gender. Gender is stable across species transformations, across transformations of kind, of ontology.[216]

The spaces and moments in which Uitoto friends and kin recounted brushes with uncanny lovers and false kin were complexly entwined with their tellings of the pain and confusion of intimate violence, of the ontological transformation of their partners through substances including alcohol and *basuco*[217] into beings they no longer recognized as fully human because they no longer treated their kin as a human being would. The were among the forms of telling

214 Londoño 2005.
215 Londoño 2005.
216 Reproduction is potentiated across lines of species because the generative difference is that of gender. And human reproduction is potentiated through the incorporation of divine plant substances—the incorporation of a radical difference of species with a continuous dialectic of gendered potency/ difference.
217 An industrial cocaine byproduct.

that made it possible to articulate the unraveling of kin relations through disappearance and displacement, the distances of territory and death, and also the breakdown of intimate relations.[218]

Women whose lives were bound up with the social ambivalences of being the wives of shamans told me stories of hunters happening upon men like their husbands in the forest, and seeing them slip into their jaguar skins and prowling for human prey. They also traced the scars on their bodies left by their husbands in moments of drunken fury. Other women told me of the pain of abandonment, of sexual assault and coerced reproduction, confiding their injuries in the refuge of their forest gardens or apartment kitchens, or through coded anxieties about their daughters' safety.

Women's stories of the experience—witnessed, whispered, or feared—of impregnation by an animal other were also stories of the return to humanity through the body. Animal pregnancies are aborted, through ritual and plantwork, with the intervention of healers or kinpersons. As a genre, these stories are about the limits of relation, but as reinscriptions of the limit of the human and of the kinworld-as-cosmos, they are also narrative forms of cosmopoetic adjustment. They are a path back into the right world.

6.

In the ethnological literature, interspecies seductions are quickly assimilated to structural analyses, where kinship is a matter of categories, and where differences of species and of gender

218 Without direct naming, which in Uitoto semiotic ideology risks "making dawn," i.e., materializing the thing named.

are assimilated as a single difference, and that difference amounts (simply, variously) to affinity. Frequently, femaleness and animality are (tellingly) assimilated to the same structural position of difference from the social. Women are prey are affines are women.[219]

The ethnological literature customarily presumes the perspective of a male ego in the structural analyses of Amazonian kinships. In the images these produce, women are structurally and ontological de-humanized. One could argue that this is a matter of faithful translation: that the identification of women with animality is present in the data, is faithful to Amazonian worlds. However, this elides the difference of women's own tellings, of their self-representations in ritual, ecological, and narrative forms, and the complexity of any abstracted translation of a cultural order's articulation with the lived, historical, and often violent articulation of gender relations in contemporary Amazonian communities.[220]

What if we presumed that women are the ego of a kinship structure (even in exogamous patrilocal orders)? And rather than a matter of equations or geometry (unconscious or otherwise), we took kinship as complexly lived and creatively narrated? What if we centered women's accounts of the capacities and limitations of their own bodies and kinmaking powers, and approached those narratives (rather than as myths) as tellings like any other, that is, as partial, strategic, creative, told in contexts that they also engender?[221] As belonging to genres of telling, genres of embodiment, of relation and reflection? What if we took on the Uitoto assertion that the body and the telling made each other, were both performative, collective, creative, and

219 Cf. Århem 1996; Taylor 2000, 2001.

220 Furthermore, the uptake of those models for theorizing political and ethical difference as social theory in general risks reproducing a misogynist bias in the cultural framework of Western theory, and projects it onto/as an idealized site of political—or ontological—difference.

221 Bakhtin 1981; Briggs 1996; Ochs & Capps 1996; Wortham 2001.

contextual? Stories, like the bodies and embodied experiences they communicate, are both archive and activation. What if we approached those narratives as sensuous, affectively charged accountings in time, in history, in context, of the ambivalences of relating to non-human and inhuman sites and sources of power, including, or expressed as, the powers of cosmological generation? And aren't our accountings of reproductive and erotic power, the powers to act in and through the bodies of others, necessarily bound up with reflections on the limits of world-making power?

Stories of animal pregnancies offer images of monstrous, ontologically and ethically destabilizing difference. They are images of the limits of what Uitoto women can bear, of what can be borne, in gendered relation, in the extension of the kinbody. Of what can be carried and of what can be loved. In some cases, they are ciphers for the monstrous limits of colonial genealogy, desire, and incorporation. In others, they mark the limits of the dehumanizing, undoing force of violence *within* relations of gendered desire and kinmaking. They echo the alienation of assault or injury at the hands of the men in their lives. They offer a way of speaking about the volatility of love and kin relations in a context of conflict that is pervasive and destabilizing at all scales of the social world.[222] They echo the monstrous engenderings of forced

222 Those destabilizations include the presence of armed actors, but they also include the entanglements of il/licit cash economies, narco-trafficking, alcohol use, and post-traumatic legacies, all of which impact Uitoto people and kingroups in distinctly gendered ways.

reproduction that are part of a collective history of capture by colonial others.[223] [224] [225] [226]

As a genre for talking about the limits of what can be borne in relation and through the body, these stories push us to ask: What of the kin ties that falter, that wither, that are forgotten? That we neglect or cannot bear to carry any further? That we must, for our own continued living, begin to live without?[227] And what of the futures we fail to deliver to those for whom we are meant to be their conduits?[228] Here at the limits of relation, of incorporation, the question of kinship is lively as a question of accountings, recognition, and continuity (if not inheritance). Genealogy is a matter of reckoning in time, always, in and as history.[229]

Beyond Uitoto worlds, in the historical, national, and colonial genealogies with which they are entangled, the questions of "for whom and of what kinship is generative?" are raced and gendered. Indeed, they are racializing and gendering, as these axes of differentiation are the divisions from which settler colonial kinship is constituted, and among the differences of which

223 Like the abductees of the *Madre Monte*, Uitoto women were captured as unwilling kin, as "wives" to white rubber station masters in the period of the rubber bonanza.

224 Uitoto kingroups were reinscribed with the family names of white slave traders and rubber bosses. Don Sosimo explained: "They aren't our names, they were *regala'o* [gifted]...*puesto* [imposed]."") Another form of unwanted and dehumanizing kinship that marked the rubber economy for People of the Center.

225 C.f. Williams (1988) on enslavement, genealogy, and property.

226 C.f. Lepselter on uncanny narratives and im/possible or symptomatic reckoning with colonial violence, generally; and on narratives/ fantasies of capture in colonial context, specifically. While she describes white settler fantasies of capture as a projection of intolerable knowledge of colonial histories of abduction of Indigenous women, capture narratives here appear as persistent, phantasmic, and symptomatic echos of a collective traumatic history of capture and forced reproduction.

227 What futures are migrant Uitoto women refusing to bear, as they move into new territories, new realms of relation? What futures are they opening for themselves, for the kin they sustain and choose again and again? For the worlds that unfurl around them?

228 C.f. Wardlow (2006:77) on Huli women's "finger lopping" and suicides as refusals of patrilineal genealogical calculation.

229 C.f. Williams 1998; Povinelli 2006; Tallbear 2018; Yusoff 2019.

those modes of kinship are constitutive.[230]

Here we run up against the limits of translating between kinworlds, too, of rendering as kin our concepts and lived economies of connection, (dis)avowal, claiming and capture.[231] Uitoto stories of the limits of kinship map a set of propositions about gendered relation and generativity that both open and foreclose a distinct ethics and a particular horizon for cosmopoetic power. They are also critiques of colonial violence. They mark the boundary of kinmaking through alterity. And they leave us at the limit of liberal genealogy as the foundation and context for ethics of kinmaking, for ethics of affectivity, of a cultivated susceptibility toward the non-human. This is the border where one accounting of difference cannot cross seamlessly into another.

This is partly because the boundaries of liberal kinship have also been, historically, the constitutive limit of the human (in law and in theory). That which is human is that which is claimed in a genealogical relation to the white.[232] The end of a genealogical relation (of its legitimacy, utterability, substantiation) is the limit of the human. In the Uitoto history of colonization, this has played out as the cataclysmic undoing of kinship *as* world-ending violence. It has also played out as the falsification through genres of kinship of what was in fact monstrous engendering.[233]

In the aftermath of the rubber holocaust, People of the Center (including the communities that now primarily identify as Uitoto) rebuilt a kinworld through the transformation of a category of

230 C.f. Williams 1998; Povinelli 2006; Tallbear 2018; Yusoff 2019.
231 Povinelli 2001.
232 Wynter 2003; Yusoff 2019.
233 See, e.g., Chirif et al 2013[1912].

adopted kinship—the *huerfanos* (orphans). Survivors like Don Sosimo[234] had lost their *malocas,* in many cases their patrilines, in some cases their entire clans or language groups.[235]

The Uitoto were the most numerous language group before colonization, and the largest surviving community after their liberation from the Casa Arana. During the period of resettlement that followed, beginning in the 1940s, People of the Center who had been displaced to the port towns growing around new trade and military outposts (including Puerto X and Puerto Z) and on the peripheries of Leticia (Colombia), Pevas and Iquitos (Peru), and Manaos (Brazil) formed multiethnic communities of *huerfanos* under the leadership of surviving elders. The status of *huerfanos* shifted from the pre-colonial context, where it entailed a position of submission to a patriline of which one was not a member. In the wake of the rubber holocaust, it became in some ways and contexts a general condition. The People of the Center all together had lost their elders, had been torn from the landscapes and ecologies that embody their ancestors.[236]

This shift is reflected in transformations in the value discourses surrounding the key substances of personhood. Emphases on the uniquely human and magical qualities of each clan's proprietary strains of tobacco, for instance (which emphasize unbroken seminal links to the Grandfather of Tobacco, Moo Buinaima, and the moral perdition of other patrilines and their tobacco), and the ontological danger of consuming the tobacco of patriline outsiders[237], are less common than discourses emphasizing the mutuality of tobacco paste as a morally and ontologically unifying substance among People of the Center and beyond, to include other

234 See Ch. 1.
235 Pineda (2000): in the case of the Andoke, only two clans survived the Casa Arana.
236 Echeverri 1997; Pineda 1985, 2000.
237 Central to the accounts of Echeverri 2000; Londoño 2012.

Indigenous communities who historically share tobacco.[238]

This shift in plant discourses (not total, and crucially contextual) parallels a shift if not in the logic of kinship in communities of People of the Center, then in the strategic and creative deployment of the means of kinmaking. This shift involves, centrally, an emphasis on the adoptive and fabricated dimensions of kinmaking. Here I don't mean fabricated as "fictional," but rather an extra emphasis on the nature of persons and kin relations as horizons of continuous making. The category of *huerfanos* in this light is both a marker of historical destruction, of being collectively and in so many cases personally orphaned, and an ethical centering of the vulnerability of non-patrilineal kin with shared histories.

This shift also reflects a recentering of a kinship system around the feminine praxis of adoptive kin making, through women's productive, ritual, and magical plantwork. The kinship ideology anchored by tobacco is one of lineal descent, of kinship through tobacco-as-semen, and of the maintenance of exclusive ontological boundaries. In this emphasis, women are also always outsiders, figures of alterity whose engendering capacities are dangerous but vital mediators of a through line of masculine identity and reproduction. In urban contexts, under conditions of displacement, the discourses of tobacco's power, and of the potency of its exchange, emphasize (in collective contexts, at least, in spaces of cultural reconstruction and collective political representation) relations to ancestry *in general*. Tobacco is narrated as the vehicle for the transmission of ancestral knowledge (as embodied curing and engendering power) belonging to People of the Center, as cultural rather than clanic property. (That said, suspicions about the

238 Cf. Echeverri 1997.

contagious effects and morally suspicious qualities of others' tobacco persist.)[239]

The valuation of proprietary strains of tobacco-as-semen that organizes patrilineal descent, and the predatory boundary maintenance that tobacco magic centers has been de-emphasized in collective and urban contexts in favour of the adoptive ethics of women's plantwork. Women's plantwork involves the proliferation of diversity through adoption, and the unfurling of an ever-expansive kinworld through the work of consubstantiation through manioc starch and magical herbs. Women's gardens are microcosms of their engendering powers, and are made not by the careful guarding and replication of the similar, but by the expert enfolding of difference. Uitoto women gardeners are avid collectors of the new, circulating and experimenting with cuttings obtained from kin and friends in distant places.[240] The kinship ideology anchored by manioc, by contrast, figures kinship as horizontal and adoptive, as a project of continuous folding in of alterity through reciprocity and mutual recognition. In this emphasis, kinship is less a matter of origins and more a matter of accreted substance, of sympathetic resonance engendered through mutual memory and tending.[241] Maximally diverse *yucales*, plantings of staple manioc varieties, thrive by means of asexual reproduction—the propagation by cuttings, the circulation of parts whose identical forms grow in their kinswomen's and friend's gardens. This parallels, in its aesthetics of reproduction, women's capacities to render strangers into kin through the accretion in their bodies of manioc substance.

Twentieth century colonization devastated Uitoto kinworlds. It did so through the exercise of

239 See Chapters 2, 5.
240 C.f. Carneiro da Cunha 2009; Miller 2019; Nieto 2006; Rival 2001.
241 Here I mean tending as both caring for and inclining toward.

unthinkable powers over both death and birth—the deaths of tens of thousands of persons, and the capture of Uitoto women's engendering powers in relations of forced birth disguised as European matrimony.[242] Colonization continues to tear at Uitoto powers of relation and engendering. The armed conflict (even in ceasefire) steals children and drives families to send their girls away from the territory. The weaponized and industrial use of endocrine disrupting chemicals and toxic metals in Uitoto ecologies eat away at Uitoto people's ability to bear and nurture children.

The making of new kinworlds in the wake and in the midst of that devastation shows the extent of Uitoto communities' cosmopoetic force. It also, in its articulation with trans/national rights discourses, and with the peace and reconciliation process, shows the limits of liberal models of kinship as the basis of rights to life, citizenship, and engendering power. It also offers, though, an opening to considering that those forms of kinship that underwrite a collapsing world are not exclusive, permanent, or compulsory. They offer if not a model (because that would suggest an unproblematic translation, and an appropriation that would be one other perverse reproduction), a partially self-disclosing image of other ways of engendering relation, other forms of addressibility, other ways of holding ourselves open and accountable to the forms of alterity with which we are complexly and irrefutably bound.

The limits of liberal modes of kinship are also evident at a planetary scale in the context of the Anthropocene.[243] These are the limits of an ethics of the similar, of kinship as kind.[244] Recent phyto-centric ethical philosophy has called for the expansion of the horizon of the ethical

242 Chirrif et al. 2013.
243 In civil discourse, in activist language, and its opponents.
244 Infante 2019.

to include plant others. Marder, for instance, says that "to recognize a valid 'other' in plants is also beginning to recognize that vegetal other within us."[245] Reflecting on the distinctive intersubjective potential of human-plant relations, performance artist Manuela Infante argues, similarly, that "accepting plants have other ways of being is [part of a necessary learning] to not subjugate ethics to similarity. We must find ways to develop an ethical thinking towards that which is radically different from us, in any way."

These tendings toward the vegetal reflect converging projects (among philosophy, art, neurobiology[246], and design[247]) to translate plant and human subjectivities into a common register. As an ethical call, they seek ways of legitimating a historically suppressed kinship, of expanding our genealogies to include a constitutive outside, to nudge the border of the human-as-ethical subject plantward, across the Enlightenment divide.[248] These appeals are about recognizing, reckoning with, the ways the genealogies of Western political and ethical philosophy have constituted "the human" (as the bearer of universal and exclusive rights, as the seat of sovereignty however democratized, as uniquely possessed of reason, affect, agency, and ethical judgment) through the joint and co-constituting exclusions of race, gender, and species.

Our collective responses to this moment of planetary ecological collapse cannot be limited to extending the rights of a liberal human subject to elements of "nature," of folding

245 Marder 2013.
246 Cf. Brenner et al.; also earlier, Goethe 2009[1709]; Thompkins & Bird 1989.
247 See e.g. https://www.botanicalls.com.
248 Another path over that divide would be a counter-genealogy of the botanical kinships that have constituted philosophical understandings of the human; especially in the vitalist and Romantic veins (eg. Herder, Goethe, Nietzsche, Deleuze).

necessary and previously excluded others into the terms of a contract that remains otherwise unchanged (and whose effects are disastrous for the planetary majority.)[249] Rather, this moment could be an opening in the very logics and sensibilities, the openings and susceptibilities by which we conceive of kinship, of our being-of-a-kind-ness, of our being-together-in-time-ness. It could be a moment for uprooting entrenched modes of genealogical reckoning that allow only for disastrous reproductions of a world of violence against the planetary majority, on one hand, or for imaginaries of the catastrophic ending of that world from the perspective of the few for whom it represents an illusion of thriving.[250] [251]

To reconfigure our world-making powers toward regeneration it is necessary, as Irigaray argued, to reconceive of gendered difference as the grounds of an ethics of fertile alterity. Fertility here should not, and cannot mean reproduction of or in the lineage. It must mean creativity through sustained entanglement with the other, with forms and figures of gendered

249 As powerful and necessary as it is to see the legal extension of rights to rivers (eg. New Zealand's 2017 granting of personhood to the Whanganui River) and ancestral landscapes.
250 Because they will melt, too.
251 Genealogical reckoning in this moment, the question of kinship, is essentially about reproduction vs revolution, or at least displacements.

alterity.[252] [253] [254]

In this view, the lines of kinship are not one-way arrows, brackets and Euclidian geometries, arithmetic additions and indivisibles (as figured in our rationalizing structuralist parsings). The lines of kinship are telephonic. Crackling, fallible, connections to be called upon in ordinary and critical moments. Waiting in the archive of our bodies to be activated. Because a line is a boundary and also a bond, the lines of kinship are latencies, pulling on us as histories we feel in our own bodies, pulling us on into lines of desire we feel as our own bodies but that come from far beyond, and far before us.[255] [256] Reopening the channels of kinship in this moment of unthinkable disappearance means reckoning our relation to the billion kin blinking out of time just now, to the kin we will not know, the futures that we will not be able to give the kin that we

252 These questions of alterity across kinship systems look different with a focus on the in-marrying or affinal woman as the center, in structures where femininity is always only available as alterity. Irigaray says, for instance, that in a patriarchal kinship structure, even one's consanguineal female kin (mother and daughter, the daughter's mother, the mother's daughter) are made alien to one another by the legal and/as religious and/as ethical requirement to disavow one's female/feminine genealogies. In that sense, genealogy cannot be female/feminine. In patrilineal reckoning, women are only allowed to be figured in to genealogy as every time alien. But there are two levels here—one the lived, messy, "carnal" kinworlds that we can approach, be absorbed in, be remade by; the other the things we say about them, the accounts and accountings we offer, and the alliances and allegiances we build within both of those realms of reckoning.

253 For Irigaray, the reduction of gendered difference to biological reproduction represents a desublimation of gendered fecundity at the cultural level. In this sense, kinship as reproduction is a closure and a foreclosure within a patriarchal order, because it reduces the powers of the feminine (problematically, perhaps, as the "natural", the other) to a reiterative function of a one-sided (and therefor no longer dialectical) genealogy as world-making order.

254 C.f. Yusoff on genealogy and whiteness, anti-blackness: translating from critical Black studies, she casts European and colonial genealogy as not only a gendered erasure, but also always a racialized one, where lineage is made through a predation on its constitutive outside and on the property and properties that define it.

255 Psychoanalysis knows this (as, among other things, the Lacanian extimate); exchange theory knew this (Mauss) and/as kinship theory where that was also a theory of exchange (Lévi-Strauss; Rubin).

256 C.f. Clarke & Haraway 2018; Simmons 2017.

have borne this far. It means reckoning with our addressibility by the kin we have carried and been carried by this far into time. It means reckoning with the futures we cannot deliver and remain ourselves, and the futures we cannot deliver if we remain ourselves.

Those histories that claim us through the replications of injury and tending[257] shape our genealogies, but not vertically. We are subject to capture by our own histories, by the histories we carry as susceptibilities, and by the histories wound into others to which we are susceptible.[258] [259] Histories of injury, of violence, of undoing write our genealogies as much as the beginnings and begettings that engendered us. And they can write them in reverse. They can be written through violence reproducing itself genealogically, through genealogy reproducing itself violently.

7.

In a moment of planetary collapse of more-than-human kinships, the creativity and non-linearity of Uitoto women's kinmaking offers an opening to thinking through the work of regenerating relation in a post- or continuously traumatic present, and for formulating ethical relation beyond the human, as a means of cultivating futures.

Uitoto kinship with the more-than-human is articulated within an order of gendered

257 C.f. Butler (2006) on the twin forces of desire and grief.

258 Cf. Lepselter on colonial projections of capture in myths of the U.S. colonial encounter as psychodynamic of denial and projection, as a reckoning with intolerable knowledge of the colonial encounter. In Uitoto narratives of uncanny capture, there are echoes of adoption into and also out of the human (by figures like the *Madre Monte*, false kin, and shape-shifting colonizing beings like merchants, missionaries, and *guerrilleros*.

259 C.f. Van der Kolk (2014) on intergenerational trauma and susceptibility in the nervous system.

difference, registered in the distributed body of a kin world. What is happening under displacement, in Uitoto reserves disrupted at every level by world degenerating orders of violence, is a process of engendering only as dehumanizing force, as a replication of injury. The overlayed histories of industrial, narcotic, and pharmaceutical capital, in conjunction with militarized and extractive occupation are substantiated in the landscape of Uitoto territories and bodies as a degenerating force, as world-making anti-relationality through violence. And as Uitoto critiques as well as our own make clear, those formations are playing out at a planetary scale. Industrialization and militarized occupation are engines of degeneration of interspecies kinworlds throughout the biosphere.

Uitoto plantwork in this context is also scaling to the maximal, cosmological scales. It is not just an archive of an esoteric ethnobotanical tradition. It is a system of techniques for attuning to and caring for, living with, forms of radical alterity. A foundation for the instantiation of an ethics of kinship beyond the human. A kind of technique, and foundation, that is necessary for all of us in this moment.

Feminist and decolonial critiques point to the inherent violence of settler colonial genealogical frames of reckoning relatedness in history. Founded on narratives of transcendent white paternal authority,[260] and enshrined in and as law, settler genealogy is matricidal at its foundation, as Irigaray argues, and genocidal in its effects, as Yusoff demonstrates.[261] [262] Irigaray interrogates the ethics of Western genealogy as a philosophical, juridical, and kinship frame that writes women out of power and out of existence. The logic of the patriline—encompassing the

260 Daddy power.
261 Drawing on the critical genealogies of Black studies.
262 See also Williams 1998; Wynter 2003.

laws of god and men—forces women to surrender their engendering powers, their own lineages, their ontological grounding as subjects and world-makers. Liberal ethics are based in patrilineality, in the premise of a moral private sphere (where descent as property through the body of the mother is safeguarded), partitioned away from a public sphere of the political, economic, and rational.[263] [264] [265]Yusoff argues, against the grain of geological accounting for a single measurable originary moment of human impact on planetary natures, that the genealogy of the Anthropocene is more correctly theorized as a billion beginnings, a billion world-unmaking moments of subjugation of the earth and of colonized subjects. The political work of claiming any one lineage, any one originary moment, is a further erasure.

The Anthropocene takes shape as a moment of de-generation, of the galloping loss of those who might be kin by different counting, of the rampaging loss of species difference, by design and by shifts in conditions toward the unlivable. It also, as Yusoff argues, has emerged as a moment of genealogical reckoning in several senses, and across several registers.[266] As a scientific category, it takes the shape of a debate over an originary moment, a calculation of human responsibility for, impact on, and relationality to the geological (as the foundational substrate of all planetary life systems). It is a genealogical question in several senses in this

263 We can read Rousseau (1994[1762]), as conceiving of the social contract—the founding arrangement of mutual guarantee of self-interest in the state—as drafted against the sphere of the domestic, against the feminine, affective, quotidian, and diacritically generative. Against the perpetuity and regenerativity of kinship. The political (as/in the state) was instantiated through the repudiation of the maternal, of the generativity of difference, that is, through the sublimation of a sexual dialectic into a sublime singular originator, into divine paternity—the lawgiver.

264 For Hegel (2018[1807]), marriage/the family offers a site for a dialectical generativity. Irigaray (1993[1987] claims that in Hegel, even, however, the feminine is denied its proper ontology.

265 C.f. e.g. Rubin 1975; Strathern 1998.

266 Yusoff 2019.

discursive field. First, as a question of historical markers—which generation, which moment of human generation, has marked the earth in this way?—and as a question of genealogy as a political calculation. As Yusoff argues, the geological is always already genealogical, always a form of inscription marking lines of property and dispossession.[267] Second, as a moment where the genealogical or inter-generational frame is being leveraged for political and ethical claim making.[268] Finally, as the imaginative horizon for understanding the scale of ecological loss occurring in the present.

Ethical and political mobilizations that rely on the tragedy of white settler children's losing their share of an inherited progress narrative are a dead end. (The consequences of insuring they wouldn't are exactly what is disastrous for the planetary majority, what has been disastrous for generations of the colonized and dispossessed.) An ethics for the Anthropocene that depends on the motivation to guarantee one's own children's inheritance of a rich and safe future is a compulsive re-enactment of the conditions that have produced planetary conditions of unlivability.

However, the kinship frame as such is not a dead end. A radical suspension of our genealogical settlements, of our accepted lines of descent and reciprocity, could represent the cultivation of an opening to the call of kin and kinships we have previously disavowed. To take our genealogies as settled[269] is to cede the grounds of recognition, the right of address, and the

267 Geology, Yusoff argues, traces the sedimentation of regimes of violence in the flesh of enslaved and colonised persons. It is a science, mode of calculation, or epistemic frame inextricable from the genealogical violence of slavery and colonization.

268 E.g. Youth-led school strikes in Europe, recent youth litigation for the theft of their future.

269 Mazzarella uses "settlement" "to suggest the tension between the appearance of a negotiated, reasonable compromise and the violence of the settler whose stability of residence

prerogative of response to those for whom dominant genealogical accountings have been (and continue to be) generative of exclusive rights to the wealth of the earth. The work of unsettling is not a matter of liberal reassertion of choice, of freedom over or from form. To unsettle genealogy is to return through kinship to the possibility of those accountings as a cultivation of addressability, as the holding open of the questions from whom and to whom—of origins, of ancestry, of inheritance; of burdens and borders; of making relatedness in time and making time through relation. To unsettle genealogy, to re-open and to hold open our accounts of relatedness, shared substance, and obligation for, is to allow for the possibility of kinship that might be endlessly generative, that might be not just reproductive but reconstitutive, into history, from the future. Like the symptom, like the citation, kinship as queer ethical relation-making turns on the promise that repetition is not always (only) reproduction, that familiarity is not only descent, that descent is not always deference.[270] The energies inherent in reproduction (in its many modes) are what hold the structures of advantage in place, but those energies are also the ones that can leverage those structures by repeated nudging, by cultivated and persistent displacements, by repeated responses to the addresses that name us into place, into time. That time itself is the fertile grounds *and* the eventual fruition of reckoning relatedness, of kinwork. [271]

The partitioning of economy and kinship, with its attachments and exclusions,

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depends on the displacement and disavowal of the one that his presence silences"(2017:10).]

270 This is the promissory note of both Butlerian citationality, and of the therapeutic endeavour in psychoanalysis, as much as it is the promise held in Uitoto kinmaking plantwork and cosmopoesis.

271 To what extent is kinship always a frame for reciprocity, the name (in structural accounts, if not always in ethical ones) for how relations of reciprocity or its refusal are ordered? To what extent is it also the name we give to the ways relations of mutuality, of substantial affinity, of affective resonance (affectivity) are, if not ordered, channeled?

underwrites the nationalist and xenophobic politics that are another face of the Anthropocene as a corrosion of relationality. Environmental and migrant ethics based on patrilineal logics share in the partitions that underwrite the dispossessions and harms that constitute the Anthropocene as a degeneration: the premise that the only people to whom one owes ethical consideration are those of one's kind. But to refuse a kin-based ethics on the premise that the liberal patrilineal order is the only available one, either by (1) seizing a 'recuperated' historical romantic nature-centered or matriarchal alternative,[272] to flip the values without inquiring into the genesis of the binary or interrogating its naturalness, or (2) to invest our ethics and politics in the liberal kin-realm's constitutive opposite—the rational, deliberative public sphere[273]— would be to reinscribe it.

A less limiting alternative is not to draw on imagination from within our categories (historically produced alongside, and in service of, colonial and capitalist relations of dispossession), but instead, to unsettle our genealogies through the cultivation of queer, adoptive, and non-linear kinships. To do so would be to accept and to seek the acceptance of our disavowed kin—the relations that were severed and suppressed in the histories of enslavement, extraction, and forced (re)productive economies. To pay tribute to the ancestors who are disavowed in our genealogies. It would be to allow for sideways, queer, recuperative claims on ourselves; to pay forward and sideways and back the reciprocities we owe, through a cultivated opening to claims of relationality and obligation. It could be to allow ourselves to be claimed, captured, called on, and addressed in unaccustomed ways.

But it would be also to acknowledge that kinship can also be violence, can also be born of

272 And to some extent this may be what Irigaray does.
273 C.f. Rousseau; Smith; Habermas.

violence, can also be delivered through violence. And for those who have been claimed by, captured into relations of coercive reproduction, into haunted and haunting knots of relation, into dark kinships veined through with traumatic charges, into spaces of relation that feed on our dispossession, our dismemberment, our degeneration, unsettling genealogy means allowing ourselves to slough and sever the kin bonds that harm us, that prevent our thriving.[274] Unsettling genealogy means seeking modes of rememberment that are regenerative, that heal the degenerations of past harms, lingering injuries, inherited ruptures that haunt our presents. To rename and transform our relations, to renegotiate what is owed and by whom.

If kinship in this light encompasses both the call of the other and the receptivity to the call, cultivating kinship beyond the human right now means finding and holding open forms of gendered, engendering difference as world-making power through attunement, through the cultivation of the capacity for affectivity, the capacity to be affected. Approaching kinship as an ethical praxis of sustaining an opening—of refusing the foreclosures of genealogy, lineage, descent, and property, of cultivating a condition of undoneness, of susceptibility—offers to ground the social in an ethics of difference,[275] to ground an ethics of intersubjective regenerativity in and as time.

Kinship is a time-making and time-reckoning framework. Accounting for kin in a moment of biosphere collapse is also a question of cultivating temporalities. If the work of genealogy is constructing relation in and to our past, kinwork in the present is also about making

274 C.f. Wardlow 2006.

275 Including what Irigaray calls the *différence sexuée*, a fecundity of sexual difference (far from a biological or essentialist notion of sex here, meaning gendered as engendering, as psychodynamic and collective).

relation into and as our futures. Uitoto kinmaking praxis holds kinship as fragile, perpetually unresolvable, and therefor endlessly generative. Kinship, as the work of cultivating relation, suggests in its condition of perpetuity an opening onto the otherwise that is always already co-present. Uitoto kinwork as time-making praxis means that the perpetual work of kinmaking, of unsettling genealogies that project us out of ethical relation and mutual susceptibility is also a practice of cultivating futures. It means holding open possibility, cultivating an opening in the present for the emergence of the new and the long disavowed, of potent and regenerative modes of relation. It is the perpetual work of carrying in relation, and of loving what others cannot bear to. Of setting down what we cannot bear any further in service of what is still to come.

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