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2. Fractal Subjectivities

An Amazonian-Inspired Critique of Globalization Theory

Michael A. Uzendoski

*En los patios de las casas los delfines tocan sus guitarras
y enamoran a las muchachas.*

Juan Carlos Galeano, "Leticia," in *Amazonia*

In the mind's eye, a fractal is a way of seeing infinity.

James Gleick, *Chaos: Making a New Science*

Anna Tsing (2004), like many other current theorists, has been writing innovative things about globalization. Her recent book problematizes "scale" in a way that questions the local/global dichotomy through the trope of "friction." Her work joins that of many others complicating anthropology's traditional focus on the local by shifting more focus to processes of globalization. Globalization study owes much to the work of Arjun Appadurai, who has emphasized how global "flows" make local reproduction "fragile," contradictory, displaced, and destabilized (1996:198). The stories considered here, however, defy reduction to the local, but they also make little sense when viewed from Appadurai's

idea of "scapes" or Tsing's metaphor of "friction." What about people who view the local as global and vice versa, a perspective described by Mascia-Lees and Himpele, in which "ethnographic collocation . . . [can] occupy two (or more) places simultaneously" (2006:9)? As I will show, contemporary Amazonian storytellers conceptualize themselves as fully modern subjects, but they define their subjectivity through fractal relationships with animals, spirits, and nature—relationships that I argue define Amazonian sociality in the first and last instance (Kelley 2005). These relationships do not oppose locality and globality; they show that people are defined simultaneously by the local and the global, part and whole, and the one and the many.

Indeed Amazonian realities complement and undermine capitalism's presumed homogenizing of things and thing-like relations, as well as contradict the supposed monopoly capitalism has on global processes. As Hutchins, Whitehead, and Chaves demonstrate in their chapters in this volume, Amazonian historicities wreak havoc on modernity's universalizing projects and "interrupt" the "totalizing thrusts" of capital (Chakrabarty 2002:101, cited in Hutchins, this volume). The fractal forms of Amazonia, as I hope to show, articulate the body as defined by alternative subjectivities that can engender alternative modernities, social movements that question capital (Chakrabarty 2002; Parameshwar Gaonkar 2001; Uzendoski 2005a; Whitten and Whitten 2008).

I first look at a story told in 1997 by a *mestizo* person about a dolphin that impregnates her sister-in-law.¹ This story is from the Leticia area of Colombia, and it was taped by the Amazonian poet Juan Carlos Galeano, who wishes that it be used here. I next consider another *mestizo* story from Iquitos, Peru, that was told to me during a fishing trip in the spring of 2006. This story involves an encounter with the *boa negra* (black boa snake) and a near-death experience. I next consider a native story told to me in Kichwa during 2006 in the Upper Napo region of Ecuador.² This story is about the disappearance of a boy who becomes a governor in the spirit world. I also look at emer-

gent genres of storytelling in Amazonia, specifically the poetry and folktales created by Juan Carlos Galeano (2000, 2005, in press) and "electronic" Kichwa music, called Runa Paju, from Amazonian Ecuador. These materials allow me to address how fractal relations of the body cross social and cultural boundaries, including my own relationship with Juan Carlos and the storytellers discussed here.

I have chosen these three stories and materials because they are compelling accounts that reveal how fractal principles can be used to conceptualize an emergent subjectivity that has not been much discussed in relationship to globalization. Despite the diversity of materials I consider, the relations show an underlying conceptualization of subjectivity as embedded in the larger flows and material exchanges with animals, spirits, and nature—relationships that move through and transform the sociality and social logics of capitalism itself.

Chaos Theory and Fractality in Social Anthropology and Amazonian Anthropology

By "fractal" I refer to relations in which the whole and its parts are made similar, creating a relational world based on self-similarity (Jackson 2004:11; Mosko and Damon 2005). Ruth Richards describes fractals as "forms . . . born from infinity; by definition, they can look similar on infinitely receding or expanding scales" (2001:72). Fractals are found not only in nature, but also in culture and in the patterns of globalization. Recently, for example, Appadurai has suggested that newer approaches to culture should draw on fractality explicitly:

What I would like to propose is that we begin to think of the configuration of cultural forms in today's world as fundamentally fractal, that is, as possessing no Euclidean boundaries, structures, or regularities. Second, I would suggest that these cultural forms, which we should strive to represent as fully fractal, are also overlapping in ways that have been discussed only in pure mathematics (in set theory, for example) and in biology (in the language of polythetic classifications). Thus we need to combine a

fractal metaphor for the shape of cultures (in the plural) with a polythetic account of their overlaps and resemblances. (1996:46)

Appadurai's use of fractality allows one to see modernity's universalizing thrusts as creating similar kinds of relationships throughout time and space and across boundaries. However, Appadurai focuses on what Hutchins (this volume) refers to as "History 1."³ History 1 is "the universal and necessary history we associate with capital. It forms the backbone of the usual narratives of transition to the capitalist mode of production" (Chakrabarty 2002:668). While Appadurai's (1986, 1996) schemes may help one to see the processes of modernity at large through the various scapes and commodity flows his work brings into view, these are not the stuff of History 2, which does not naturalize commodity relations.⁴

In History 2 the past is created in the fractal forms of culture that generate alternative modernities and alternative conceptualizations of the world. History 2, unlike History 1, does not belong to the reproduction of capital. This notion of History 2 is similar to Whitehead's (2003) paradigm of "historicity." As Whitehead asserts, historicities are "the cultural schema and subjective attitudes that make the past meaningful," ways of knowing the world that undermine the usual narratives of History 1, globalization, and modernity (xi). Historicities, being fractally configured, usually posit the past as a recurring set of relations that extend into the future.

Theorists have been writing about the dynamics of something like History 2 in Amazonia as complexes of self-scaling relations, although these relations have not been described in explicit terms of fractality. Here one might speak of "Amazonia at large," a kind of fractal world-system defined by social and cultural principles distinct from those of the reproduction of capital. In these schemes one finds that the future and past are interconnected nonlinearly.

Evidence for such relations permeates Amazonian ethnographies. Consider Lévi-Strauss's mythological permutations in *The Raw and the*

Cooked (1969), where myths from multiple cultures and geographic regions appear like transmutations of the relations of one myth. Pierre Clastres's notion of a "society against the state" spins out recurring dynamics that are inverted between the Amazonian region and the state societies of the Americas, a fractal set of relations and transformations that address nonlinear dynamics. In a memorable example of fractal thinking, Clastres writes, "'Things in their totality are one.' A startling utterance, of a kind to send Western thought reeling back to its beginnings. Yes this is indeed what Guarani thinkers say, what they are continually proclaiming—and they pursue its strictest consequences, its most unsettling implications" (1989:171).

In Ecuador Canelos Kichwa potters juxtapose chthonic imagery of the anaconda and other animals with oil bosses, church figures, and other images of state authority. This "duality of power patterning" (Whitten 1985) occurs throughout stories, mythology, art, music, and fiesta rituals. These patterns reveal the Canelos Kichwa strategy of subordinating modernity to Amazonian historicity by collapsing the future with the origins of the world, a process of "ending everything" (see Whitten and Whitten 2008:154).

The Bororo of central Brazil define themselves through two major principles of the world, *aroe* and *bope*, which are dynamic but opposing processes that define all living things. Although these terms are hard to define, the *aroe* might be glossed as "soul" or the principle of timeless identity, and the *bope* something like "life processes" that are responsible for all change, including life and death itself, and also such processes as rain, natural disasters, sex, and production and consumption (Crocker 1977, 1986). *Aroe* is linked to enduring "spirit," naming, and social structure; *bope* is linked to processes of *raka*, or blood.

These dynamic forces define and move through all living organisms, transcending the boundaries of species, individual, and time and space. In the Bororo world one finds the *aroe* and *bope* forms fractally configured; they define conceptions of the body, speech

events, rituals, practices, village structure, shamanism, and food production, consumption, and circulation.

The *aroe* and *bope* recur in everything. They define how people are born, mature, and die, but they also define the world in a particular Bororo way; they are the pattern of Bororo historicity and are principles at the root of why the Bororo are so "vigorous" and "obstinate" in their rejection of Brazilian modernity (Crocker 1977:130). One might argue that the Canelos Kichwa incorporate History 1 and transform it, whereas the Bororo treat History 1 with disdain. Both strategies, however, involve using fractal relations to denature History 1 by asserting indigenous historicity. There are many other examples, and Heckenberger has noted similar patterns in the literature: "Amazonian ethnotheories of the body, the person, and the world, are critical examples of this pattern of cascading (self-scaling), series of sameness/otherness, alterity and mimesis, for theoretical and ethnographic reasons" (2005:261). A broader, regional approach to Amazonian History 2 might help anthropologists theorize nonlocal complexity in ways that could transform understanding of historicities, global processes, borders and boundaries, alternative modernities, subjectivity, and fractal cosmologies, topics currently at the center of anthropology and related disciplines.

Story 1

This story was told by Inia Geoffrensis in Licia Villar (Leticia), Colombia, in the summer of 1997. The narrator is a Spanish-speaking *mestizo* whose ancestors were native, but the specific group or groups are unknown. The story is an eyewitness account. The main character is the narrator's sister-in-law. I am working from a tape recording, originally in Spanish, of the story.⁵

This story is about my sister-in-law and it is a true story. My sister-in-law spent much time alone at home because her husband was in a business that caused him to travel a lot. She stayed home and minded a small store that sold sugar, moonshine, and other small items.

Every night my sister-in-law would hear strange noises in her house of someone walking with very wet rubber boots. She saw a figure move through the light but she only saw a shadow. She said, "Who is there?" But no one responded.

That night she dreamed and dreamed of a very elegant white man.

One night she went to bed, and when she turned off the light she felt something cold in the bed. She tried to see what it was but it was only shadows. She asked, "What is this? Who is there? Is it a demon?"

And the next day she woke up with a tremendous headache and felt nauseous. She felt different. And when she went down to the shore to wash her clothes, a huge dolphin jumped and turned over and over right in front of her. It was like the dolphin was watching her. And she wondered why this dolphin was pursuing her.

She got a feeling. The ancient grandparents used to say that dolphins could turn into men, and right there she got this feeling. "Ay, my God, this dolphin is a man," she said. "He is pursuing me."

That night again she was alone, she couldn't sleep. She was afraid. Then another night, a very rainy night, she got another feeling while asleep. She felt someone touching her. When she woke up she knew that she had been impregnated. She began to experience symptoms of pregnancy.

Then her husband came home finally and noticed that his wife was pregnant. He got angry and jealous and could not understand why she had disrespected him. She begged his understanding and cried and cried and cried. After four months her husband left her because of her indiscretion, but the truth was that it was not her fault.

She began to get pains, normal ones for five or six months. And one day she woke up sick. She called out to her husband's mother and she came. The woman feared that she was going to have a miscarriage. But the truth was that she gave birth to two dolphins.

My mom was the midwife and delivered those two dolphins. She said, "My God, these are not babies. They are dolphins." She almost fainted on the spot. So we decided to wrap them in a towel and let them go in the

river. As soon as they touched the water they swam off. That night she had strong dreams. She dreamed of the dolphin. He said to her, "Thank you. Thank you for giving me my two babies."

Analysis

The key relations in the dolphin story can be conceptualized through the fractality of humans and nature, land and water, masculine and feminine, Amazonianness and whiteness. The story's basic relation is that of masculine to feminine, represented in the woman's relationship to her husband.

The woman's husband must leave her quite often for his business transactions. The externality of modernity's commodity structure imposes itself on the core family relationship of the household. In the man's absence, however, a new "man" arrives. He is not only attractive but also white, and thus represents, at least on the exterior, modernity in the flesh (see Slater 1994). The man in reality is a dolphin who has shape-shifted.⁶ He sleeps with the woman and impregnates her. The woman notes that he feels cold, perhaps because he is of the river domain and gives off little bodily heat. The dolphin-man also makes the woman dream, and she realizes she is pregnant through her dream. When the woman's husband returns, he thinks his wife was unfaithful and leaves her at the four-month mark of pregnancy. The power of the dolphin is its ability to change its body. Not only does he transform into a human, but he also combines his corporeal substance with the woman's to make his own young, and the woman becomes a mother of dolphins.

The cosmic body here is the mutual feeding and shared flow of substance between masculine and feminine, dolphins and humans, and the river and forest domains. The dolphins benefit from the reproductive powers of humans, and humans take advantage of the river for their own food. People do not eat dolphins, but dolphins are thought to help them obtain fish and other aquatic nourishment. The woman's ordeal is one of many exchange moments in a larger and more complex circulatory system, where people, souls,

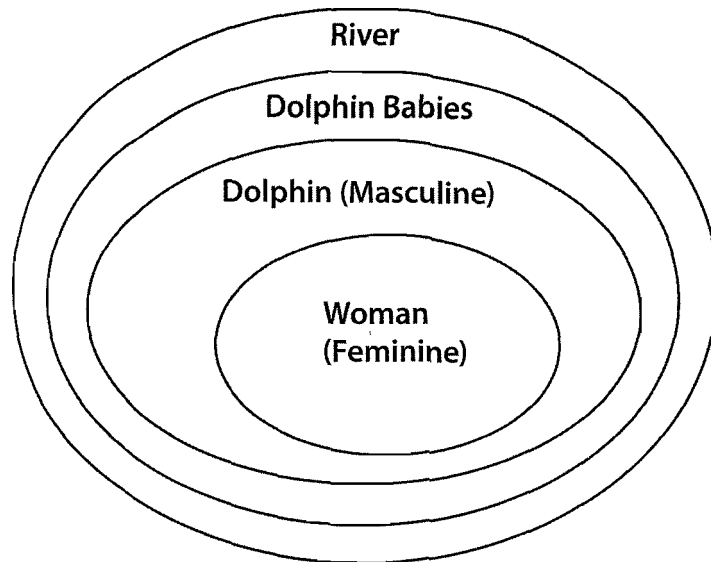


Fig. 1. The cosmic body in story 1.

substances, food, and social relations flow between the human and aquatic domains.

The story also brings modernity into the cosmic body by incorporating historical nuances and family history into the relations. The opposition of whiteness to Amazonianness in Peruvian society is conveyed by the image the woman sees of the dolphin, who appears to her as a “very elegant white man.” Like white people, dolphins are exotic, powerful others, but the relationship is not purely structural, nor does it reflect something about white hegemony. The dolphin, a shape-shifter, presents himself clothed in the key symbols of the modern world, the very thing the woman’s husband is chasing in his business dealings. Unlike a lot of humans, dolphins understand that modernity is all about corporeal appearances.

Story 2

This story was narrated by Walter, who lives on a floating house near the city of Iquitos, Peru. Walter is a descendent of Cocama people. He claims not to speak Cocama fluently, but says, “I know enough

words to get my *masato* [manioc beer] when I need it.” Walter considers himself an Amazonian and easily moves between native and nonnative aspects of life. He works for the military and resides in a floating urban neighborhood.

Walter recounts this story as a personal experience. An interesting aspect of his life is that when he was a young man he appeared as a debt-peon in Werner Herzog’s famous film *Fitzcarraldo* (1982). The story was told to me when I was on a research trip with Juan Carlos Galeano in April 2006. Walter told the story during a fishing trip and again in his house a few days later. I recount the story here from memory and the tape recording we made.

One day I was walking back from my chagra [field] when I was younger, and along the trail I saw something surcando [jumping] with shiny skin. It was a beautiful black vibora [viper snake], and I dispatched its head with a machete blow. I flicked the head aside with my machete and then immediately became drawn to the beauty of the snake’s skin. It glistened in the light and so I peeled it off and put it in my bag.

When I returned home I hung the skin up to dry and decided that it would make a very nice belt. My old belt was broken, so I used the viper’s skin to make a new one.

Once the belt was ready I put it in my pants and began wearing it. Soon after I began wearing the belt I became violently ill. I had a fever, diarrhea, aches and pains, and felt very weak. The fever lasted for days and would not subside, so my mother took me to see the doctor at the health clinic. The doctor gave me medicines, but they did not work. I had fever, fever, fever for days and was not getting better. I was sure I was going to die.

My mom then decided to take me to the shaman to see if he could find out what was wrong with me. He examined me and then asked me to tell him if I had done or seen anything strange around the time when I had gotten ill. I told him no, but that several days before I had fallen ill I killed a simple black vibora. I then told him that I made a belt out of its skin and that I had been wearing the belt.

The shaman became animated and said, "That was no víbora! That was a *boa negra* [black boa snake]! I knew it!" Before I had come to see the shaman he had dreamed of the *boa negra*, and so this explained his dreams. The shaman said, "Quickly, bring me the belt!" My brother ran home quickly and fetched the belt. The shaman scolded me, "This is the *boa negra*. This is the *boa negra*, the *boa negra*, not some ordinary snake. This is the source of your problems. He has made you ill."

The shaman then undertook a program necessary to heal me. He dispatched the belt very carefully, burying it far away, and took precautions that the illness would not also pass to him. He cleansed me several times and took *ayahauasca* [a hallucinogenic drink made from a rainforest vine, used by shamans to see into the spirit world] to fight off the *boa negra*'s powers, although it was a difficult struggle, because the *boa negra* is very strong. If it wasn't for that shaman I would have died. That is the story of my experience with the *boa negra* and how I barely escaped with my life.

Analysis

The main fractal relationship in this story is the potency of the *boa negra*, which represents the human interconnectedness with the forest domain through predatory flows. The *boa negra*, like the dolphin, is a shape-shifter. He transmits his shamanic power through his skin, even after he is physically dead. His body makes Walter ill in a way modern medicine cannot cure. Similarly the *boa negra* makes the shaman dream and conveys to the shaman his predatory potency from the perspective of the cosmic body.

The story features the motif of human-animal predator-prey relationships. In the beginning of the story Walter's role as predator becomes reversed through the snake's shamanic potency, which transforms Walter from predator to prey as his body becomes open to the cosmic forces at play. That the *boa* is prey is only an appearance, since he is a cosmic being. Like dolphins, *boas* never seem to be what they really are.

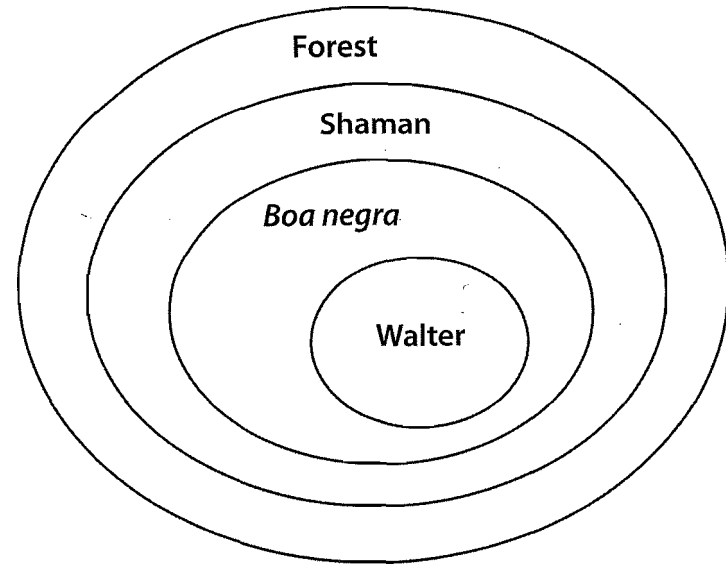


Fig. 2. The cosmic body in story 2.

The story also fractally engages modernity from the perspective of cosmic realities and what Marx described as commodity fetishism. Walter, thinking that he has hunted a nice skin, attempts to turn the living *boa* into a "thing" with use-value. Walter uses the skin to make a belt, a potential commodity. Mosko (2005:27) has noted that commodities are fractally configured if one follows Marx's analysis of modernity, since the relations that define things also define the relations among people. The *boa negra*, however, has a cosmic body and thus cannot be transformed into a mere thing. For Walter the belt is more like poison. The *boa negra* teaches us that his predatory capabilities allow him to fetishize commodity fetishism.

The cosmic body in this story is the connection of Walter to the *boa negra* (through his encounter and making the belt), the shaman, and the forest. His body rejects the Western theory of biogenetic healing because of its embeddedness in larger cosmic flows of predation with forest beings. The shaman, because he is an expert in the cosmic fractality of bodies, finally heals Walter when modern medicine cannot.

Story 3

This story was told to me by Bandiro, a Napo Runa person from the community of Pano, Ecuador. This narrative involves the history of the name of the river Achiyacu and is an important tale in the history of the community of Sapu Rumi. This story is regarded as family history. The events described happened several generations back. The story was told to me in the Kichwa language (Upper Napo dialect) in July 2006, and I recount it from memory.

This is a story that the older generation told me. When I was little I always wondered where the name Achiyacu came from, as it was the name of our river. As I got older I began to inquire into the name of this river. I bothered my uncles and grandparents until they finally began telling me stories about the past. Most people today do not know this history because the events happened a long time ago. They know the name Achiyacu but do not know what the name means or where it comes from.

The story begins with a boy, who was around thirteen or fourteen years old. The boy lived over there, near that bank, where there used to be a house [points to a place near the bank where there is nothing but weeds]. One day the boy disappeared. He just vanished. His parents were very worried, so they consulted a shaman, who took ayahauasca to find out what had happened.

During the ritual the shaman saw that the spirits under that very large stone [points to the very large stone] had taken him down to the underworld because they had desired him to be one of the governors of their city. The shaman tried to free the boy, but the spirits had a hold of him by all his arms and legs. He could not free him. They decided that more help was needed, so they enlisted the help of more shamans.

During the next session the powerful shamans all took ayahauasca together in an attempt to free the boy. When they traveled to the underworld they saw that the boy had become old. He had grown a white beard and looked wise. They used all of their might to free him, but the spirits held on as tight as can be, holding him by his arms and legs. The shamans decided that they needed even more help.

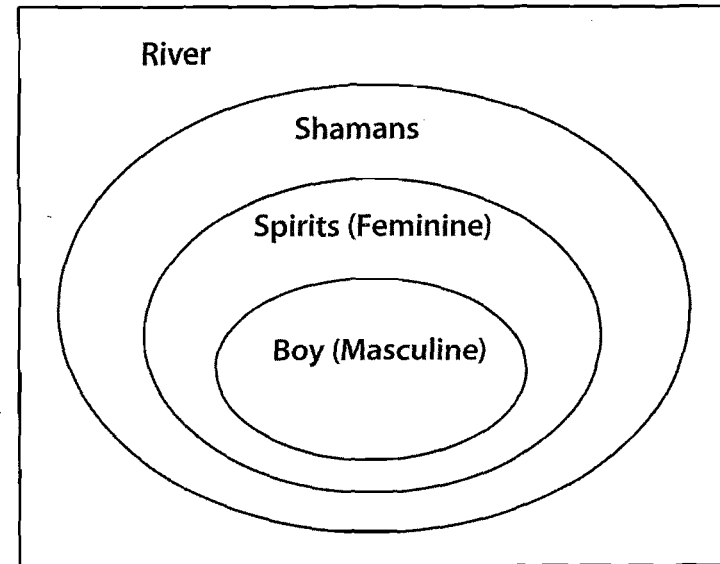


Fig. 3. The cosmic body in story 3.

The shamans enlisted the help of several more powerful shamans and they all took ayahauasca again. This time they again saw the boy, but the spirits were prepared and wrapped around him so tightly that the shamans finally gave up. They saw that the spirits had named him Achi, which means "old" and "wise" in this dialect of the Kichwa language. They also saw that the young boy now had a wife and several children and was a governor of a city. The shamans then declared that this river was "Achi's domain" and thus named the river Achiyacu, which means "old river."

Analysis

This story again features aquatic potency, but the main characters are spirits (*supai*), who represent animal subjectivities in the context of their own world(s). Like the first story about dolphins, this one is framed in terms of the cosmic body that involves circulatory relationships of people, souls, energies, and food among the aquatic and human domains. The story focuses on questions of human-animal-spirit reproduction, but involves "marriage by capture," whereby a

human boy becomes a son-in-law to a family of powerful spirits. The story is another version of the very common Amazonian motifs of human-animal intersexuality and affinity.

The landscape reflects the potency of the animal spirits. A very large stone marks the entrance to their world, and the river, the key source of sustenance for the community, is stocked by them. The taking of a young human boy to serve as a governor in their city reflects the motif of animal spirits being masters of modernity. They are reported to have airplanes, trains, and cars in their cities, and they often take people to visit their cities when they dream.

The naming of the river after the boy becomes a spirit governor is an interesting fractal relationship of naming. As in the modern world, the river is named after an old person with government authority whose new name conveys that idea in a word. In the Tena dialect of Amazonian Kichwa, *achi* refers to an elder person of authority. It implies kinship. Naming the river Achiyacu conveys a kinship connection to the spirits who live in the city underneath the large rock.

Unlike white people, however, the spirits do not try to develop or modernize the human world at the expense of the forests and rivers. The spirits have mastered and perfected their version of modernity, so much so that there is no pollution, no poverty, no alienation, and no market forces. It is a generous and giving modernity that provides for human needs in the rivers and forests. Such is Achi's legacy, a relative who sends fish for his human descendants to eat. One day he may call on them again to help govern the place.

Fractal Principles in All Three Stories

As Gleick has noted, fractality is about "a particular, well-defined, easily repeated set of rules" (1987:98). These three stories from diverse regions in Amazonia share a set of similarities. The rules seems to be quite simple, but they permit infinite complexities of possible relations:

1. Humans and animals are not qualitatively different beings.

Animals have souls, intelligence, and subjectivity and can marry with and have children with humans.

2. The major question of the human-nature relationship is one of corporeal flow between humans and nonhuman nature. Animals and humans are intersexual beings.
3. Animals, when they use their cosmic bodies, become masters of mimicry and shape-shifting.
4. Animals often give humans what they want and desire, including allowing their children to become prey so that humans will live well.
5. Animals often deceive humans to get what they want and desire, including making humans prey so that they themselves can live well.
6. Because humans do not really know what animals and spirits want or when they may strike, animals and spirits are unpredictable and dangerous. We often do not even know what hits us, especially when they want our blood.
7. The animals use the human fascination with modernity to deceive us. This makes them even more dangerous.

These rules can be further simplified if one eliminates the implicit assumptions of Amazonian cosmology, animism (see Descola 1992, 1996), perspectivism (Viveiros de Castro 1998), and dark shamanism (Fausto 2000, 2004; Whitehead 2002; Whitehead and Wright 2004). The most basic rules are 3, 4, and 5, which can be glossed as mimesis (Taussig 1987, 1993; Uzendoski, Hertica, and Calapucha 2005; Uzendoski 2005a), and predation or sorcery, since rules 4 and 5 are both predatory principles that involve perspective switching between human and animal subjectivities. Rules 1, 2, 6, and 7 are groundwork or implications (modernity) of the more basic rules. In the materials presented here, the core relations that the storytellers have emphasized are cosmic embodiment, predator-prey exchanges and circulatory relations, and the fulfillment of mutual desires and attractions. That these

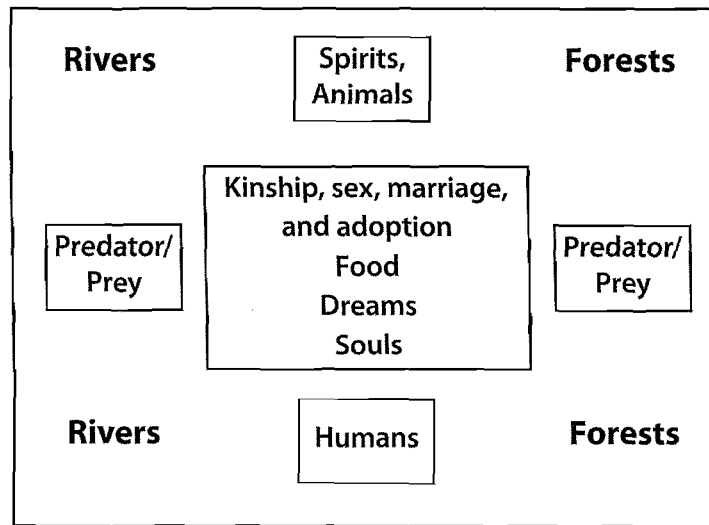


Fig. 4. The general form of the cosmic body.

desires are fully articulated with the tropes of modernity is perhaps a new twist. These relationships can be represented in a diagram of the more general scheme of the cosmic body.

I am arguing that the cosmic body represents the most encompassing of the relations in the stories. Like Dumont's notion of hierarchy, the cosmic body encompasses the individual body, gender, and sociality. It is often in the background of daily life, but in specific instances, such as the ones I have discussed here, corporeal connectedness to animal and spirit predation surges to the forefront. As I have demonstrated in analyzing the stories, exchange relationships between the animal and spirit world and the human domain encompass the daily lives of individuals. The encompassing power of animals and spirits, as both providers and predators, represents the mystery and daily presence of the cosmic body.

Natives and Nonnatives

There is an artificial divide separating anthropologists interested in the native cultures of Amazonia and others, such as literary scholars and environmentalists, who tend to focus on nonnative populations.

It is as if these different populations do not share territory or exchange ideas, things, or artistic works. Much of cultural anthropology deals with Amazonia as if it were populated only by natives. Similarly scholars who work with nonnative peoples write about Amazonia as if it were devoid of the indigenous peoples or cultural features of indigenous derivation.

The reality of the place is much more complex. Native and nonnative peoples often share space, intermarry, and tell stories to one another. In Napo, Ecuador, as in many other places, *colonos* (colonists) have carved out spaces along rivers and along the edges of indigenous settlements. While urban areas are usually dominated by nonnative peoples, rural areas are much more heterogeneous. In the Iquitos region there are populations of *ribereños* (river people) with an indigenous cultural lineage but who no longer possess an overt "native" identity or speak a native language. These peoples are distinct from the *colonos* in that they have a deep knowledge of Amazonian ecology and cultural patterns. Throughout Amazonia one can find a continuum of native-nonnative relationships that are rich and complex.

Natives and *ribereños* share a common intellectual tradition, whereas most *colonos* are newcomers to these ideas. *Colonos* often resist these ideas, whereas *ribereños* like Walter embrace them. A defining feature of the cultural patterns of natives, *ribereños*, and even some *colonos* is the notion of cosmic corporeal fractality with nonhuman nature. The prevalence of *mestizo* urban shamans in Iquitos, the largest city in the Peruvian Amazon, speaks to the adaptation of nonnatives to native concepts of fractality with nature. The work of Candace Slater (2000) reveals that a similar intellectual tradition has emerged in the Brazilian Amazon among nonnatives there. The cosmic body appears to be an intellectual tradition of considerable complexity and influence.

Today Amazonian notions of fractality increasingly appear in new forms of expression, but the cosmic body remains a central theme. Also, alphabetic writing, poetry, video, and emergent styles of mu-

sic are becoming common. Despite these changes the fractality of human-nature relations remains a defining characteristic of how people conceptualize and define their subjectivity. Let us now explore some contemporary, nonnative Amazonian artistic expressions in more detail.

Fractality and Friendship

I begin this section with my friendship with Juan Carlos Galeano, whom I met in 2001 at Florida State University while he was in the middle of his first project dealing with Amazonian oral traditions. Galeano, a poet and translator, grew up in the area of the Caquetá River of the Colombian Amazon. However, like many of us he made his life far away from his natal home and did not think of his home as a place of much interest. He was interested in other endeavors. After some years of living abroad he came to see Amazonia in a different light and as a source of poetic inspiration. Later in his career he decided to embark on a project to record and study the folktales from places throughout Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Bolivia, Brazil, and British Guyana. Juan Carlos was about to embark on a trip to Ecuador and asked me if he could take something there for me. We hardly knew each other, but the opportunity to send gifts to Ecuador was one I could not pass up.

I sent with him some gifts for my Napo Runa host family who had adopted me as a son (*churi*) during my stay in 1994 (see Uzendoski 2005a). I made up a package of clothing for Fermin Shiguango, my *yaya* (father) and principal mentor of the Kichwa language and culture. I drew a map on the back of an envelope for Juan Carlos to get to Fermin's house, which was some distance (a forty-five-minute hike) from the road. An experienced traveler, Juan Carlos arrived with little problem and was greeted as if he were a member of the family himself. He spent some days there.

Fermin is a storyteller and a shaman, and my relationship with Juan Carlos began through him. Fermin told Juan Carlos who I was to him in the Amazonian context. He emphasized that I was his son and

pointed out the things I did while I was there. In these descriptions he exaggerated, but the stories were meant to show my cosmic connection to Fermin's family and to the forest and rivers of their home. For example, Fermin pointed to a place in the forest where I had killed a peccary, even though I had never killed such an animal while living with him. He pointed to the places where I spent time and the spaces I considered my favorites, especially by a large stone near the river. Juan Carlos was taken aback by the love they had for me, since he assumed that I was like many others intellectually interested in the rainforest but who seemed to lack a deeper cosmic connection to the place. (See Beth Conklin's chapter in this volume, which describes similar kin-making processes.)

Fermin then gave Juan Carlos the gift of some healing experiences, and Juan Carlos taped a story titled "Puma yuyu" (The Jaguar Plant) from Fermin in Spanish, which Juan Carlos later rewrote according to his own poetic sensibilities (see Galeano 2005, in press). I had learned about *puma yuyu* years before from Fermin and had published my own anthropological analysis of its mythology and ritual uses (Uzendoski 1999). Although our work on *puma yuyu* is in different genres, both publications capture the religious thinking behind the plant and its role in the cosmic body, not just in the abstract, but as it came to define certain events in Fermin's life. My essay emphasizes Fermin's lineage and connection to the mythical and transformative substance of primordial jaguars; it is an anthropological analysis of native mythology and ritual, with an emphasis on Kichwa language and culture. Juan Carlos's rendition is not at all faithful to the original, nor is it framed in assumptions of native versus nonnative. His is a Spanish story completely rewritten to fit a poetic sensibility.

Juan Carlos's version (in press) emphasizes how Fermin's family viewed the death of Fermin's mother (still living when I wrote my piece) through the *puma yuyu* complex. Juan Carlos's story preserves the essential fractal relationships of the cosmic body, despite his poetic

innovations and social omissions of Kichwa-ness. I quote from the English translation:

Eventually death came from heaven and the old lady died peacefully. They gave her a Christian burial and later, relatives would bring flowers to her grave every week. This went on until one day one of the granddaughters went to visit and found that something had dug a hole in her grave. "It was as if an animal had dug in to eat her remains, or as if someone had tried to rob her bones to do witchcraft" said the priest and some others.

But they were wrong, and her relatives were not worried, because, according to the sorcerer, the pumayuyu turned her into a jaguar after death and she was still in this world. Her relatives had a very happy party, because their grandmother now was walking freely and eating the best bush meat.

When Juan Carlos returned from Ecuador we immediately became close friends, mainly because we now had the context of a shared intellectual tradition. He had immediately grasped the significance of *puma yuyu* as part of the general form of the cosmic body. I saw that he had a deep commitment to Fermin's intellectual tradition, to his cosmic view of the world. He saw me as someone who could understand his poetry. Juan Carlos published his version of the *puma yuyu* story, along with forty-one other stories, mostly told by *mestizo* storytellers from other Amazonian countries, in *Cuentos Amazónicos* (2005, appearing in English translation in 2009). Fermin's story fits in seamlessly with the others, which are so diverse that their linear connections (where they are from, whether native or nonnative, their cultural traditions) are in chaos. But the order appears at the level of the underlying relations.

Later Juan Carlos and I decided that we would collaborate on projects. In April 2006 I made a trip to Iquitos to spend some time researching stories with him; he was working on a documentary film focusing on the storytellers and shamans behind his folktale book. As I came to know and talk with the storytellers he was working with, it became

increasingly clear that there were fractal similarities between these *mestizo* stories and the indigenous ones I knew from Ecuador. I also realized that Juan Carlos's poetry was actually part of a larger tradition of emergent Amazonian art. In Iquitos, for example, there are many urban nonnative artists engaged in painting, music, and storytelling (see Luna and Amaringo 1991). Many of these artists use *ayahauasca* for creative inspiration, but they all draw on the Amazonian intellectual tradition of the cosmic corporeality in expressing their art. They see themselves as continuing a wise tradition (*sabio*) that originated among native groups, but which they are expressing through different mediums. These urban artists communicate and work with native artists who continue in their own traditions of ceramics, weaving, and storytelling. Natives are taking up new forms of expression as well.

A Few Thoughts on Fractal Boundary Crossing

Most of Galeano's stories and poems are told by *mestizo* people in Spanish, but they show a connectedness to the indigenous world. Much recent research has shown that this boundary between *mestizo* and indigenous is more fluid than previously thought, and Galeano's writing reveals this fluidity in a creative way. It shows a common subjectivity that transcends ethnicity but does not obliterate its social presence. Stories travel, but more to the point is the intellectual traditions of religious thought represented in them. Modernity is not simply replacing indigenous realities in a linear fashion with cold, rationalistic truths about the world. Amazonian realities are present and active in defining the subjectivity of the nonindigenous, who now represent the majority of the population in many regions. I have described these relations elsewhere as an "alternative modernity," a concept that can be defined as the cultural transformation, and questioning, of modernity's most basic social and cultural assumptions (see Uzendoski 2004b, 2005a, 2006). Hybridity might be a similar way of describing how such processes occur, but, as I try to show in this chapter, hybridity in

Amazonia is shaped by specific forms of subjectivity, as also discussed by Hutchins in his chapter on indigenous tourism.

In *Folktales of the Amazon* (Galeano in press) the indigenous are the background interlocutors of the stories, but they are also a defining part of the present dynamic by which modernity is transformed and hybridity is given a specific shape. In one of Galeano's stories, "Yara's Gift," an indigenous man takes on the role of shamanic interpreter and explains what happened when a man from Lima has a troubling experience with a fish-woman. The man from Lima possesses a dolphin tooth given to him by an indigenous friend.

Towards dawn he woke up again. This time he heard something like an animal flopping on the ground and a soft guitar and violin music coming from the river. He looked through the crack of the door and saw a lovely fish writhing on the dry dirt of the yard. The fish was a curvinata, and he wanted to catch it, but he grew fearful, and again stayed put. The fish's death agonies continued; then the sounds stopped and the music faded.

When his workers returned, the man told them what had happened. They explained that surely that was the Yara who had come to charm him. "What stopped her was the dolphin tooth you wear on your neck," one of the Indians who worked for him said. "But, sir, now that you have seen the Yara, it will be very hard for you to fall in love with another woman, no matter what city or country you go." (Galeano 2005:28–29)

One can imagine such encounters and interactions throughout Amazonia, where people from the outside are actively taught by natives to interpret experiences from a fractal subjectivity defined by the cosmic embeddedness of the body. As the story points out, the encounter with the fish-woman changes the man forever. His subjectivity is altered; he no longer will be able to find love, for his body and soul have been taken over by desires flowing into the unseen world.

Ira Bashkow's (2004) essay on boundary crossing provides a way of conceptualizing relations among social actors who share space but

are not isolated groups. Bashkow develops a neo-Boasian perspective on boundaries using linguistic notions of "isogloss" (a dialect boundary) to provide a sense of boundaries as sites of "differentiation." However, the boundaries do not, by themselves, exclude or contain (450). I think this idea is a good one for thinking about relations between the indigenous and nonindigenous in Amazonia. Although there are real boundaries between the indigenous and the nonindigenous, and within these groups as well, the presence of the boundaries also invites their being crossed. These processes are similar to linguistic overlapping and differentiating that occur among dialects of a language. Bashkow, for example, writes, "Contrary to our naive view of dialects as discrete entities, the isoglosses of distinct features often fail to coincide; instead they form tangled patterns of crisscrosses and loops, making it impossible to establish a definitive line of demarcation between dialects" (451). I think the notion of tangled patterns of crisscrosses and loops goes far in explaining the complex coterminous relations that exist between and within the indigenous and *mestizo* worlds. These patterns, by no coincidence, also emerge in the poetic sensibilities of Galeano's stories.

The fractality in the stories reflects an Amazonian theorization of this problem where boundary crossing and looping are not just major themes but also modes of social action. The storytellers are less concerned with cultural boundaries than with natural boundaries, but all "boundaries are meant to be crossed" in the Amazonian world, to borrow a phrase from Santos-Granero (2002). Such processes of boundary crossing, which involve multitudes of natural and social "others," define and permeate Amazonian cosmologies and practices of social reproduction.

Techno-Kichwa Fractality

Napo Runa popular music, called Runa Paju (Runa magic or power), is another example of crossing over and fractality, but here we have natives borrowing from Hispanic, Andean, and African South American traditions in order to express their own religious sensibilities. Although

musicians sing Kichwa lyrics and refer to their underlying cultural realities, they incorporate electronic keyboards, foreign instruments, and new musical elements into this hybrid form of religious practice. Indeed popular Kichwa music, which still expresses many conventional religious principles, has gone techno. The musical group Playeros Kychwa (who choose to spell "Kichwa" in their own way) refer to themselves as *los Yachak de la Tecnokychwa*, which roughly translates into "the shamans of techno-Kichwa."

One Playeros album, volume 3, contains two new styles of "traditional" Amazonian music, "Cumbia del Indio" and "Salsa Kichwa." However, the hybridity in this music is used as a means to further Amazonian religious thought. Rather than impoverish the traditional themes, the singers incorporate foreign elements to transform them. In the song "Salsa Kichwa," for example, the lyrics say that this music, *Runa taki*, is transforming "all of Amazonian Ecuador." A *taki* is not a secular thing; it is a song with shamanic power, designed to do something in the world, such as heal or make someone feel happy (see Uzendoski, Hertica, and Calapucha 2005). Like Galeano's poetic stories, the Playeros are an excellent example of how fractality criss-crosses and loops into new genres.

Consider the popular Playeros Kychwa song "Chini panga" (Stinging Nettle Leaf), whose lyrics have an explicitly fractal structure:

<i>Chini panga shina</i>	Like a nettle leaf
<i>Asichinimi</i>	I make laugh
<i>Chini panga shini</i>	Like a nettle leaf
<i>Wakachinimi</i>	I make cry
<i>Ruku ñañawara asichinimi</i>	My older sister, I make laugh
<i>Jipa ñañawara asichinimi</i>	My younger sister, I make laugh

The fractality emerges when one considers the sounds and meanings of the Kichwa words, for the grammatical suffix *chi* (a causative, "to make do") resonates explicitly with the word *chini* as a sound quality. These are in addition to the fractal qualities of the music itself, which

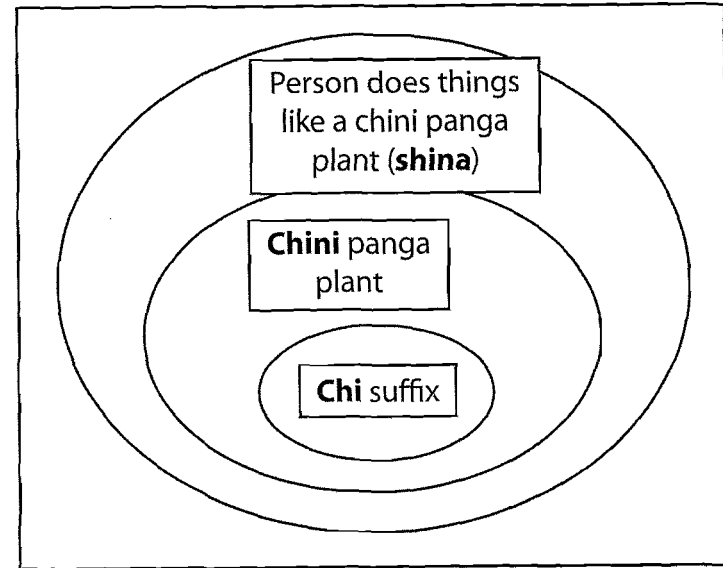


Fig. 5. Fractal relationships in the Playeros Kychwa song "Chini panga."

I do not consider here. The song creates clear self-similar meaning relationships among the *chi* suffix, the *chini panga* plant, and the actions of the subject, who takes on the qualities of the plant in being "sharp" and "strong" (*chini panga shina*, or like a nettle leaf). Although the song is incredibly simple, its use of fractality invokes the notion of the cosmic body, for bodily actions (laughing and crying) are linked to plant qualities (sharpness and strength). The song is a perfect example of Kichwa fractality as employed in emergent aesthetic expressions. (In the figure, the word *shina* means "like.")

Conclusion

In this chapter I have analyzed narrative materials from several locations in Amazonia to show how people use fractal forms to define subjectivity in relation to other people, things, the forest, spirits, and globalization. Despite the diversity of materials considered, the relations show an underlying conceptualization of humans as intersubjectively defined by relationships with larger wholes that are not reducible to globalization theory itself. My analysis of three stories showed how

people configure experiences such as pregnancy, illness, and death through the body's cosmic embeddedness in nonhuman nature (the spirit world of animate subjectivities). The stories help people make sense of globalization and are not simply local. They show how real people transform the commodity logics of capitalism using Amazonian notions of fractality. In the first story a dolphin shape-shifts into a modern white man, a predatory outsider. In the second story a nice belt made of snakeskin contains the death-power of a boa, who is the giver and taker of all life. In the third story a contemporary river becomes a place animated by erotic spirits that kidnap the young but also provide the source of all life through fish and water. These stories show that although capitalistic globalization may be present and socially powerful, it remains subordinate to the social flows of the cosmic body, flows that define and determine human subjectivity in the first and last instance.

I also discussed the problem of boundary negotiation in Amazonian thought and practice to show the complexity involved in relations between native and nonnative subjectivities. I analyzed how materials and relations move between languages, cultures, and emergent genres by comparing my own work with that of the poetry of Juan Carlos Galeano. I used the story of my becoming friends with Juan Carlos via our interrelatedness to the cosmic body, an intersubjectivity that spans the boundaries of ethnicity, upbringing, academic disciplines, and the nation-state boundaries of Amazonian regions and the United States. Similarly I looked at the modern electronic music of Amazonian Kichwa speakers (Runa Paju) as a way to show how multiple native and nonnative elements are combined in conveying cosmic corporeality. The song "Chini panga," though short and simple, demonstrates the fractal principles present in contemporary native Amazonian expressive practices.⁷

The flexible subjectivities of shape-shifting discussed in this chapter belie a fractal logic of scale that allows persons—whether human, animal, plant, or spirit—to assume multiple manifestations in local

settings. Such shape-shifting occurs commonly today in narratives of experience that deal with globalization and in which spirits assume the appearance of worldly beings (pilots, doctors, businesspeople, even anthropologists) in the midst of remote forests, urban centers, or rural villages. Such stories, as I mentioned earlier, defy analysis in terms of either anthropology's long-standing focus on the local or its more recent efforts to theorize culture in terms of globality.

The materials considered here reflect possible infinite variations of subjectivity as embedded in the larger flows and material exchanges with animals, spirits, and nature. These configurations, which span large geographic distances and myriad social boundaries, reflect an Amazonia at large, a reproductive philosophy that spins out infinities of fractal relations among and within human and nonhuman beings, societies, and civilizations. These recurring relations, as I have argued, belong to a reality of historicities, which in the case of Amazonia implies also the "cosmic body," those fractal processes that interrupt and denature modernity-as-capital.

Notes

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1. I use the term *mestizo* to mean someone who self-identifies as nonnative and does not speak a native language. I realize, however, that the boundaries between "native" and "mestizo" can be and often are ambiguous.
2. All of my work thus far, which spans fourteen years in indigenous communities in Upper Napo, has focused on Amazonian Kichwa speakers (see Uzendoski 1999, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2005a, 2005b, 2006; Uzendoski, Hertica, and Calapucha 2005). The current research, which represents an effort to branch out, was inspired by a brief research trip to Iquitos, Peru, in the spring of 2006. This trip was partially funded by Florida State University.
3. Hutchins (this volume) interprets Chakrabarty's reading of history: "I . . .

understand Marx to be saying that antecedents to capital are not only the relationships that constitute History 1 but also other relationships that do not lend themselves to the reproduction of the logic of capital. Only History 1 is the past 'established' by capital because History 1 lends itself to the reproduction of capitalist relationships" (Chakrabarty 2002:98). Chakrabarty points out that, although Marx says History 1 is forever trying to subjugate the "multiple possibilities that belong to History 2," there is no certainty that this has been, or will be, a completed process. History 2, then, might be thought of as a "category charged with the negative function of constantly interrupting the totalizing thrusts of History 1" (Chakrabarty 2002:101).

4. Graeber writes, "As so often with grand declarations that the age of totalizing frameworks is over, the actual effect [of Appadurai 1990] is to draw attention away from the current attempt to impose the largest and most totalizing framework in world history—the world market—on just about everything. This leaves skeptics such as me . . . wondering whether the ideology of the market (freedom as choice and endless fluctuation) is not being reflected in the very form of arguments that claim such universalizing systems no longer exist" (2002:3).
5. The story was taped by Juan Carlos Galeano, and he has given permission for its use here. The translation into English is my own, as are all the translations in this chapter.
6. For discussions of shape-shifting see Slater 2000; Uzendoski 2005a; Uzendoski, Hertica, and Calapucha 2005. I define shape-shifting as a somatic transformation involving the "power" or "soul-substance" of the body. Shape-shifters can be, for example, jaguar-humans defined by jaguar power that resides in their "flesh" and that gives them a different kind of body. The jaguar-human, however, does not necessarily have to turn into a jaguar in outward appearance. A shape-shifter can also be an animal that transforms into a human, as in the dolphin-man here.
7. The late Amazonianist Irving Goldman (2004) argued that Amazonian peoples are mostly concerned with metaphysical reasoning and a holistic, religious perception of the world. Goldman theorized that Amazonian religious thought is highly developed and incredibly complex, and that this tradition rivals our own commitments to science. In other words, Amazonian religious thought is a holistic theory that explains much more than simply "religion." Amazonian religious thought addresses questions the West has chosen to answer through many disciplines, including philosophy, biology, anthropology and sociology, and history, to name a few.

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