



## Healing translations

Moving between worlds  
in Achuar shamanism

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This article analyzes a series of intra- and intercultural translations involved in the shamanic practices of the northern Jivaroan Achuar. First, it shows how certain states of suffering, experienced as an unwanted metamorphosis of selfhood, are reframed in the course of shamanic healing rituals as the symptoms of an insidious process of disempowerment and “whitening” unleashed by other, enemy Jivaroans. The curing session conflates the victim’s sickness and the history of interethnic relations, construed as a painful process of involuntary qualitative change. A further series of translations come into being when the cure fails and the patient abandons his Jivaroan identity and moves into a lowland Quichua identity. This involves mapping the implicit autobiography of a Jivaroan, moving from illness toward recovered health and social agency, onto Quichua narratives of their own history. However, owing to increasing closure of ethnic groups, Jivaroans nowadays have to deal directly with the spoken and written words of the Whites, and this involves new forms of translation evoked in the final part of the article.

Keywords: translation, shamanism, Amazonia, Achuar, lowland Quichua

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In their Introduction to this issue, Hanks and Severi argue that translation, understood as the move not only between languages but more broadly from one context or register of communication to another, is a pervasive feature of the production of culture, at the level of a single group as well as between different societies and between registers of expression. Insofar as meaning and meaningful action are generated by inferential processes drawing on analogic extension from one domain of experience to another, processes that depend in turn on the reflexivity that is an intrinsic feature of communicative behavior, the work of translation in this sense is the very stuff that constitutes culture, and therefore should be the true object of





anthropological inquiry. The aim of this paper<sup>1</sup> is to contribute to the discussion of this view of cultural processes (and of the science devoted to studying them) by evoking some of the operations of translation involved in Upper Amazonian shamanic practices. The ethnographic material this contribution is based on is drawn from fieldwork conducted mainly between 1978 and 1981 among the northern Achuar, one of the several “tribes” that make up the large Jivaroan ensemble spread over the lowlands of southeast Ecuador and northeast Peru.<sup>2</sup>

The notion that shamanic therapeutic practice is in some way analogous to translating is anything but novel. The point has been made frequently by various lowland specialists, though usually the analogy is offered in a loose way, precisely as a means of “translating” an enigmatic indigenous form of action and discourse for the benefit of a Western audience. The parallel between shamanism and translation rests on a series of features widely reported in the ethnographic literature pertaining to this region: the cosmopolitanism of shamans—they have usually traveled outside of their tribal territory, have undergone apprenticeship with nonlocal shamans, claim to speak foreign languages, and above all have established close links with invisible nonhuman beings—the fact that their curing chants are generally couched in some form of more or less hermetic “other” language that presumably implies operations of translation on the part of both the practicing shaman and his audience, and, finally, the fact that indigenous shamanism “works” in transcultural contexts, as it caters increasingly to nonindigenous patients, thus involving further processes of cultural translation. Carneiro da Cunha (1999) has taken up the issue of shamanism as a mode of translation in more precise way, arguing that shamans are translators in the Benjaminian sense of the term (Benjamin [1923] 1968) insofar as their goal is to establish “harmonies” or “resonances” between worlds or planes seen from different perspectives: in particular, they seek to articulate local and global perspectives—global meaning in this case an overarching view of the larger regional economic and political dynamics that shape the lived world of both Indians and mestizo Amazonian populations. Though Carneiro da Cunha does not develop this point, her argument presupposes that the misfortune shamans are called to deal with is somehow connected with the manner in which these ever-changing dynamics are experienced at the local level. This is the issue I want to take up here: how illness is transmuted through shamanic practice into a condition that is readable in terms of the history of interethnic relations, a process involving an ordered sequence and combination of “trans-lations” (i.e., shifts from one plane to another and the “harmonic” effects thus created) that I will try briefly to describe, as it occurs among and between the northern Jivaroan Achuar and the Quichua-speaking forest groups that have developed in post-conquest times in their neighborhood. I will argue that the healing techniques of these people are grounded in a

1. This contribution draws on, and sometimes repeats, several previous publications (notably Taylor 1997 and 2007).
2. Besides the Achuar, the Jivaroan ensemble includes the Shuar proper, located primarily in Ecuador, the Awajun and Wampis of the Maranon basin, and the Shiwiar of the middle Pastaza valley, closely connected to the Achuar. Though their language seems only remotely related to the Jivaroan family, the Candoan groups (Kanduash and Shapra) of the lower Pastaza region clearly belong in all other respects to the Jivaroan cultural set.

series of moves between three nested fields of reference. The first is language use: during the cure, shamans perform their ability as translators of the discourse of spirits with which they interact, though there is actually very little reported speech in their “translations.” The second is intracultural and centers on the weaving of correspondences between certain forms of suffering and the history of relations to dominant White<sup>3</sup> outsiders as it is locally conceptualized. The third is intercultural and revolves around the move between two neighboring indigenous cultures and their respective regimes of historicity. I will try to show that overall these practices reveal a paradoxical mode of translation that aims at maintaining rather than suppressing the difference between the “texts” involved.

### ‘Warrior’ and shamanic states of selfhood

Since I will concentrate here on indigenous understandings of states of unwellness and the means of overcoming them, let me begin by describing the two states of selfhood that Achuar men consider desirable and strive to achieve. My focus on masculine forms of subjectivity throughout this contribution is due in part to limitations of space, but it also reflects the Jivaroan perspective on ethnic identity. It is assumed that women are less marked than men in terms of tribal identity because, while sharing the martial values that orient much of Jivaroan behavior, women do not have the means of embodying them: they lack the high level of “heat” or “anger” that fuels men’s capacity to confront and kill.<sup>4</sup> Being an exemplary Jivaroan—as opposed to merely living in a Jivaroan group—is thus a male prerogative, as only men’s bodies fully incarnate the dispositions that are held to be paradigmatically Jivaroan. Since my interest lies in analyzing what is implied in the indigenous understanding of “being a Jivaroan” as well as the link between the waxing and waning of ethnic identities and local understandings of relationships to non-Jivaroans, I believe my emphasis on masculine forms of selfhood is justified in the context of this article, though it evidently results in a highly skewed picture of Jivaroan lifeways.<sup>5</sup> As I have argued elsewhere (Taylor 1996, 2007), male Jivaroan identity is predicated on the strong linkage set up between “normal” states of healthy selfhood and the disposition to engage in antagonistic relationships. To be a proper adult male Jivaroan is to live in a predatory stance vis-à-vis Others (primarily other tribal Jivaroans) and to be therefore capable of making and defending a “family”: that is to say, a more or less extensive collective of congeners or conspecifics defined as

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3. I use the term “White” as a shorthand label for all nonindigenous people regardless of the color of their skin, in accordance with Achuar and Shuar usage: they call all such people *apach*.
  4. Brown observed similar attitudes among the Awajun (2014: 222). He tentatively attributes the shockingly high rate of suicide among Awajun women and young men to their difficulty in living up to the demands of the assertive form of male individualism that orients traditional values.
  5. For a view of gender relations among the Jivaro, see especially Bant (1994); Bianchi (1980); Kelekna (1981); Bant (1994); Seymour-Smith (1991); Maader (1999); Taylor (2000, 2008); Perruchon (2003).



*winia shuar*, “my people,” an expression that, according to context, may refer to a person’s nuclear family, household group, extended bilateral kin web, or tribe as a whole.<sup>6</sup> This type of selfhood is shaped by engagement, from a very early age on, in a series of ritualized agonistic interactions with same-sex humans (in ceremonial discourse, war-related rituals, encounters with Whites in institutional contexts, etc.) as well as with spiritual beings (in vision quests, in dreams, in hunting expeditions, etc.), and relations of seduction and taming with female and/or junior Others (potential spouses or lovers, young animals, adopted or procreated children). These gradually fostered interactions, particularly the frightening, drug-induced encounters with powerful spirits called *arutam*—the ghosts of dead prominent Jivaroans, normally of the same tribe as the vision seeker—lead to the kind of magnified selfhood that in principle allows men to occupy the high ground in any dual relationship and to influence others’ aims and dispositions—in short to become *kakaram*, that is, powerful/eminent individuals.<sup>7</sup> This form of subjectivity is in turn linked to the ability to narrate autobiographical histories centering on intratribal feuding and intertribal (but endo-Jivaroan) warfare. This kind of historiography is notable for the glaring absence in it of any mention of, or reference to, the centuries-long, highly conflictive relations between Jivaroans and representatives of the colonial and neocolonial Republican dominant society. The autobiography of Tukup’, a famous Shuar *kakaram* or *uunt* (“old/big one”), collected in 1982 and analyzed by Hendricks (1993), offers an illustration of this point: while the oral memory of the Macabeos—the mestizo population of the frontier town of Macas settled in Shuar territory—is full of dramatic accounts of the *kakaram*’s much-feared visits to the settlement, Tukup’ barely alludes to his repeated performances of confrontation with the town’s authorities. The Achuar male autobiographies collected by us during our fieldwork, some of which are partially transcribed in Descola’s *The spears of twilight* ([1993] 1998), are identical to Tukup’s narrative in their narrow focus on vengeance-driven intra- and intertribal conflicts to the exclusion of interethnic strife, or even of evocations of the narrator’s life-course outside of his involvement in feuds—in particular of his experiences of travel outside Jivaro land and encounters with non-Jivaroans. In this respect Achuar historiographical accounts stand in sharp contrast both to the ritualized *jawosi* fixed-form songs analyzed by Oakdale (2007), in which Tupian Kayabi men evoke their travels as well as their war experiences, and to the Kalapalo narratives of encounters with Whites described by Basso (1993). Among the Achuar, unless solicited by visitors such as anthropologists, men did not at the time of our main fieldwork produce detailed accounts of their interactions with outsiders, and these did not belong, as is the case for warrior autobiographies, to a stabilized and distinctive discursive genre. I will return to this point further on.

The belligerent stance expected of Achuar men and the kind of selfhood it is associated with—call it the “warrior stance” for convenience’s sake—is shared to some extent by shamans, but the latter elaborate their identity through a mode of

6. On the logic underlying the indigenous use of ethnonyms, see Taylor (1985).

7. On *arutam* quests, see Karsten (1935); Harner (1972); Descola ([1993] 1998); Maader (1999); Taylor (2000, 2003); Rubenstein (2012).

subjectivation distinct from that of warriors. Instead of engaging directly in antagonistic rivalry with human and nonhuman Others, shamans cultivate ongoing “amicable” (usually kin-based, more precisely affinal) relations with specific classes of Others, in this case with the entities responsible for afflicting humans with illness, misfortune, and mortality and spirits that control game animals—often the same class of beings. Shamans thus develop a kind of Janus-like dual identity, predicated on their affiliation to two distinct species or groups, that of their own kin-based local group and that of their supernatural affinal relatives—typically, aquatic animals such as otters that present themselves to lone hunters as beautiful young women and draw them into their underwater world, pictured as an urban habitat of cement houses, cars, bars, and police or military garrisons.<sup>8</sup> The fact that Jivaroan shamans, as well as those of the neighboring Quichua-speaking tribes, do not engage in overt, face-to-face warfare and homicide, and usually abstain from hunting, does not mean that shamans are “peace oriented.” To the contrary, they are in a state of constant warfare with other rival shamans intent on gaining control over their opponent’s helper spirits<sup>9</sup> and magic darts (*tsentsak*, the material instruments for inflicting and curing illness) and on harming whichever group of humans the latter may be affiliated to. To this extent, shamans actively participate in the feuding complex central to the existence of the Achuar, not least by orienting the focus of hostility toward more or less clearly defined enemies, in tandem with the local *kakaram* they usually pair with. Nonetheless, shamans and warriors have distinctive ways of framing identities, based on different ways of relating to Otherness.

The relation that lies at the heart of Jivaroan warriorhood (the default state of adult men) is defined by a permanent tension between Ego and an Alter defined as “Enemy,”<sup>10</sup> that is to say, as maximally different from Self. The axiomatic difference between the terms of the relation is both presupposed and reproduced by exacerbated antagonism. In abstract terms, “antagonism” is a process of anti-identification that blocks the incorporation or assimilation of one term by the other: while the polarity of the relation is reversible—“killer” can become “prey” and vice versa—a transformation indeed central to many Amazonian rituals—neither of its terms can be subsumed by the other, short of canceling the relation. This is precisely the relational form designated by the concept of predation, as it has been defined

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8. On the “otherwordly” travels and encounters that are the source of shamanic skills, see Pellizzaro (1978) and Rubenstein (2002) for the Shuar, Brown (1986) and Greene (2009) for the Awajun; for the lowland Quichua, see especially Whitten (1976) and Kohn (2007, 2013).
  9. Helper spirits, called either *pasuk* or *tunchi* among the Achuar, are usually figured as invisible animals (often birds, because of their song and ability to fly) that act both as the shaman’s “eyes” and as guides or leaders of the magical darts. In the context of healing sessions, they are often referred to by shamans as their “children.” However, the *pasuk*, the magical darts they command, and indeed the shaman himself tend to merge or be interchangeable in shamanic discourse.
  10. The Achuar have two words to refer to enemies: *nemas*, feuding adversaries of the same tribe as the locutor, and *shiwiar*, a modulation of the word *shuar*, “person,” the default autodenomination of most Jivaroan groups. *Shiwiar* specifically designates other tribal Jivaroan enemies.



by Viveiros de Castro ([1986] 1992, 1993; Viveiros de Castro and Fausto 1993), and further refined by Fausto ([2001] 2012) through his exploration of the means whereby alterity is transmuted into sociality through the taming process he calls “familiarization.” In shamanic multiple selfhood, by contrast, the relation between Ego and Alter is built on a process of identification rather than on one of differentiating antagonism. In such a process of identification, each term of the constitutive relation is poised to subsume the other, instead of being opposed to it. “Self” can thus slide into an “Alter” fragmented into a multiplicity of instantiations (animals, other humans, spirits, etc.) and become a congeries of “I’s, since it is no longer dependent, to exist, on its continued predatory stance vis-à-vis a unified “Other” (the Enemy). The polarity of a process of identification is, however, just as reversible as in a process of differentiation: Self can either subsume, or be subsumed by, Alter; it may, in other words, become irrevocably “animal” or more generally “Other,” just as it may pull “animality” or ‘Otherness’ into itself.<sup>11</sup>

### Becoming sick and being cured

As it is easy to imagine, being a Jivaroan male is a highly demanding vocation; and while Jivaroan culture as a whole is extremely resilient, the state of being defined as paradigmatically Jivaro is fragile. As in any highly competitive mode of sociality, the relative hierarchy of individuals is unstable and constantly shifting. Jivaroan selfhood is thus highly vulnerable to the erosion of the web of relations that constitute it. Feelings of social and physical weakness, continued lack of fortune at hunting, repeated bouts of illness in the nuclear family, symptoms of discomfort or pain that have no visible physical cause and that can’t be rapidly cured by traditional pharmacopeia or Western medicine (when available) are soon interpreted as the manifestation of a shamanic aggression. Such states often lead to prostration and an abrupt disengagement from ongoing social relations and practices: the ill person retires to his bed and communicates only minimally with his kin, if at all. This condition, particularly if it is lasting, invariably calls for shamanic therapy.

Schematically, an Achuar shamanic cure develops along the following lines.<sup>12</sup> Faced with a patient in a state of paralyzed agency, usually accompanied by one or several relatives, the officiating shaman or *uwishin* begins by absorbing *natem* (commonly known as *ayahuasca*, a decoction of scrapings of lianas of the *banisteriopsis* genus) and modifying the felt environment within which the session is taking

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11. Interestingly, the contrast between these two modes of subjectivation translates at the iconographic level into distinctive kinds of figuration: the “warrior” configuration is materialized by the shrunken-head trophies (*tsantsa*, also ritually called *misha*, “profile”), central protagonists in Shuar war-related ceremonies that articulate the opposed perspectives of Self and Enemy, whereas shamanic selfhood is expressed by the image of the *Juriyri*, a being conceived by the Achuar, and often portrayed by Quichua potters, as a two-sided creature, with a smiling human face at its front and a monstrous, predatory face at its back hidden under its hair.
  12. For a fuller description of Jivaroan shamanic sessions, see especially Pellizzaro (1978); Greene (1998, 2009); and Rubenstein (2002).

place (the light, the flow of air, the smell- and soundscape, etc.). While scrutinizing the patient's body, he<sup>13</sup> begins to whistle and hum, and then starts to sing, first softly then loudly, to summon and communicate with his helper spirits and the stock of magic darts he keeps in his saliva or phlegm, figured as an inner pond (*kucha* or *cocha*, Quichua for "lake"). There are innumerable classes of *tsentsak*, each with a generic name, distinctive color and texture, and presumed mode of action (e.g., spider monkey *tsentsak*, wasp *tsentsak*, corral snake *tsentsak*, black *tsentsak*, etc.). The *uwishin* must counter the darts afflicting his patient with his own stock of corresponding *tsentsak*; thus, shamans try to acquire from other *uwishin* as many varieties of *tsentsak* as they can. Animated and guided by the shaman's singing, his darts couple in the patient's body with those sent by the opposing shaman's. The aggressive darts "hooked" by the healer's *tsentsak* are then sucked back into the curing shaman's body, "tamed" and converted by him so that they will fly back and attack the enemy shaman responsible for the patient's illness.<sup>14</sup> The cure ends, or, if the session is lengthy, is interrupted with phases of "ordinary" conversation between the shaman and the patient or his accompanying relatives. In this register the *uwishin* delivers allusive and elliptic accounts of what he is seeing as he or his *pasuk* (helper spirits) travel over distant places, and offers advice on the dietary and behavioral precautions the afflicted person should observe to hasten his or her recovery.

Throughout the session, the curing shaman interacts with a rival shaman intent on killing or—to use the term favored by the Achuar—"eating" the patient. The predatory aggression is carried out by the enemy shaman's invisible allies, who under his orders attack the victim as a hunter would pursue a prey. This action implies a form of identification of the attacking shaman to his spirit helpers, but also and primarily a process of differentiation between them (the shaman and his helpers) and the victim, viewed simply as meat, an eatable noncongener. The curing shaman's task is to reverse the polarity of this process. To achieve this, he also sets up an identification with his spiritual allies by stressing his bond with them and his familiarity with their language, but instead of leading them to see the patient as prey, he presents the victim to his helper spirits as a fellow "human" (i.e., a conspecific) rather than as meat. As the shaman insists in his sung discourse, the victim's body is "transparent" to him, he sees into it, thereby implying that he, like a spirit, sees the victim's inner being as a "human" rather than his "clothes" as a being of another species. He thus draws the patient into an affiliation to a nonhuman

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13. Female shamans are not unheard of among the Achuar, but the general feeling is that women, particularly if they are of childbearing age, cannot cope with the double life imposed by a shamanic vocation and lack the power needed to confront enemy shamans. Women shamans seem to be more common among the Shuar (Rubenstein 2002; Perruchon 2003).
  14. *Tsentsak* are supposed to hunger constantly for fresh "meat," and they are therefore difficult to control; shamans are always suspect of losing their hold over their stock of darts and thereby endangering their kin. Hence the ambivalent feelings aroused by the presence within a local group of a recognized shaman, who can easily slip from the position of protector into that of hidden aggressor. As one of Perruchon's informants pithily expresses it, "There are bad *uwishin* and good *uwishin*, but they are all bad" (Perruchon 2003: 226).



collective (the one the shaman is connected to) and, by implication, into an identification with him, the officiating shaman. As the healer fosters recognition of the patient as a congener by his spiritual allies, he also deals at the same time with the patient's (real) human side, by engaging the victim and his relatives in conversation and drawing them into the context of the cure. Thus the patient, like the shaman, becomes dual, with the difference that, unlike the shaman's, his or her human identity is weak and vacillating. Meanwhile, the curing shaman is working to reverse the polarity of the predator/prey relation within which the patient is trapped by the enemy shaman, such that the latter falls prey himself to a predatory attack by his "turned" darts and, it is hoped, succumbs to their onslaught. As I have suggested, Jivaroan shamanism is enmeshed in the predational scheme governing the system of relations with "Other" collectives. This means that the switch in the polarity of the predator/prey relation effected by the shaman has powerful social effects. By setting up a process of identification between the patient and the invisible entities that afflict humans, the shaman simultaneously strengthens the patient's affiliation to his human (Shuar) kin group by reinstating and fueling the agonistic stance that feeds his identity; and the more precise is the shaman's identification of the enemy, the more this effect is heightened. Intensification of hostility through focalization and intensification of solidarity are mutually implicating.

In summary, the cure revolves around the shaman's ability to shift an afflicted person from a condition of weakened or paralyzed agency (the patient is trapped in a double process of "desubjectivation," by spirits acting at the behest of an enemy, and by his own kin group, from which he or she is cut off by the collapse of his status as an active interlocutor and proper kinsperson) to a situation allowing for the "jump-starting" and bolstering of the mechanisms feeding healthy magnified self-hood, through a kind of transfusion of condensed, properly oriented relationality.

### The world of Whites in shamanic discourse

On the face of it, Jivaroan shamanic curing rituals are thus firmly grounded in the dynamics underlying the production of "warrior" selfhood and their continued reproduction, a mode of being closely associated, as I mentioned earlier, with a kind of historical discourse carefully insulated from reference to the outside, White-dominated world. Yet the healing songs elaborated to reactivate the warrior mode of being as well as "informal" shamanic discourse are replete with allusions to the very world excluded from traditional Jivaroan autobiographical narratives. In these utterances, as well as in the myths on the origins of shamanic power, objects and icons indexing relations to powerful foreigners are insistently foregrounded. Typically, an Achuar shaman will describe himself as located in some markedly White location (towns, military garrisons, air control towers, etc.), he or his *pasuk* dressed in elements of foreign attire (boots, uniforms, helmets, etc.) and manipulating the most significant objects of their environment (pens, motors, books, swords, tanks, etc.). Tsakimp, the Shuar shaman whose life-story Rubenstein recorded and analyzed, describes his *natem* visions in the following terms: "It was like I was in a plane, above everything, . . . I saw many people . . . figures passed back and forth: clowns, monkeys, a beautiful woman . . . thousands of beautiful women and a temple, a

big structure passed by" (Rubenstein 2002: 159). In the same vein, the myths relating to the aquatic spirits named *tsunki*, who are the ultimate source of shamanic abilities and with whom the *uwishin* explicitly identifies, describe them as living in underwater cities full of machines and seated on turtles seen as cars (Pellizzaro 1978). Above all, the shaman repeatedly alludes to his mastery of foreign languages, either through direct metalinguistic assertions ("I speak the language of . . . I call my *pasuk/tunchi* in the language of . . .") or through frequent recourse to diglossia, particularly the use of Quichua words and sentences, Quichua being viewed as a kind of generic foreign language—as indeed it was in the context of the network of *reducciones* conforming the huge Jesuit Mainas mission established in the Upper Amazon between 1638 and 1768. By way of illustration, here are excerpts from a song performed in 1979 by Dumink, an Achuar shaman settled close to Canelos Quichua territory, to cure a young man suffering from chronic stomach pain.<sup>15</sup>

About twenty minutes after absorbing a cup of *natem*, Dumink begins to shake a leaf bundle over the patient's body while whistling and humming; after a while he starts singing:

... I, I, I, I . . .  
Being a *tsunki* person . . .  
I am resting on my stool . . .  
I rest in a cement house . . .  
Being a *tsunki* person  
*Ari ri ri ri ari ri ri ri . . .* (*ari* is Quichua for "come here")  
My darkening *tsentsak* flock to me . . .  
Eagerly they come they come . . .  
Being a Napo shaman . . .  
My *pasuk* dons his metal helmet . . .  
They stand all in shiny armor around me . . .  
Eagerly my armadillo *tsentsak* come to me . . .  
Eagerly and smelling of perfumed soap  
My white paper *tsentsak* come running . . .  
With their pistols with their motors they fly over there  
Being a Napo shaman I rest here, I rest in my *cocha*  
In my cement house I, I, I, I . . .  
*Ari ri ri ri ri, ari ri ri . . .*

The language of Achuar shamanic chants is not, as such things go, particularly difficult for noninitiates to understand, contrary to the situation prevailing among, for example, the Panoan Yaminahua as described by Townsley (1993), or the Kuna, whose shamanic ritual discourse is notoriously esoteric (Lévi-Strauss 1963; Severi 1987; Fortis 2012). While there is some distortion of language (syllabic repetition, use of foreign words, etc.), most of the vocabulary and syntax is familiar to an Achuar audience. Further, the songs are neither elaborate nor fixed in their content and transmitted verbatim from initiate to novice; indeed, some *uwishin* assert that the words count less than the song-sound and only hum or whistle during

15. Collated from author's field notes, April 17–20. The audience included the patient's wife and mother-in-law as well as two anthropologists. The singing went on for over two hours, with interruptions for "normal" conversation, whistling, sucking and spitting, and loud sighing.



their performance (see also Maader 1999; Perruchon 2003), claiming that this is how they hear and speak to their *pasuk*. In Achuar shamanic sung discourse, the constant shifts in deictic markers make it difficult to disentangle the enunciator(s) standing behind the “I” used by the singer, as well as the time(s) and place(s) he/they is or are located in any given episode of the chant.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, the script of the actions performed by the enunciator(s) is relatively easy to follow. In the healing sessions we recorded, shamanic discourse alternated between, on the one hand, evocations of the magical darts’ attitudes and behavior in regard both to the patient’s body and to the healer’s body from which they emerge, and, on the other hand, allusions to what the shaman and/or his *pasuk* see as they travel over “foreign” landscapes studded with icons of White power such as towns, hydroelectric dams, markets, churches, and motorized vehicles. The shaman thus weaves threads of correspondence between the patient’s experience of suffering, which is given shape and concreteness through the healer’s description of what he sees in the victim’s body, and elements of an “other” world marked by symbols of foreign might. Though the patient and his or her attending relatives may not (and indeed are not meant to) grasp all the metaphors and allusions spun by the shaman, they catch enough of these linkages to build a representation both of the sick person’s condition and of the shaman’s practice and perspective.

The world shamans build up through their healing songs is thus a strange, dream-like space mixing elements of different times, places, and types of outsiders, above all Whites. This is of course a feature of shamanic practice that has often been noted. Given shamans’ position as brokers of alterity, the proliferation in their ritual chants of indices of their familiarity with the Whiteman’s world has often been interpreted as the symptom of a discourse of resistance to domination and cultural dissolution, through the mimetic appropriation of White power (see, e.g., Chevalier 1982; Taussig 1993; Santos Granero 2002).<sup>17</sup> However, this understanding does not address the question of why this type of discourse is developed solely or primarily in the context of a therapeutic intervention, in the face of states of existential woe; nor does it resolve the paradox generated by the contrast between the aims and dynamics of the cure—the activation in a ritual context of the mechanisms underlying the build-up of magnified, Jivaro-centered warrior

16. On “multiple enunciators” in ritual discourse and the ways shamans distribute their various “I’s, thereby bridging different places, times, and planes of reality, see especially Oakdale (2007) and Severi ([2007] forthcoming, 2009).

17. *Contra* this view, Gow (1994) has argued that the *ayahuasca* shamanism common to many Indian groups of the Upper Amazon and to large sectors of the non-Indian local population actually originated among urban mestizos, as a metaphor of the historical and economic processes inherent in their own “ethnogenesis,” and then spread to the Indians during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I remain skeptical of this historical hypothesis—colonial documents attest to the existence of *ayahuasca* shamanism long before this, at least among the Jivaroans—but I think Gow is right in assuming that the wide, transethnic diffusion of this kind of shamanism can be explained at least in part by its capacity to figuratively represent the basic processes underlying the political economy of Western Amazonia, in particular the regional system of debt-driven labor known as *habilitacion*.

subjecthood—and the means of achieving this goal—the evocation in song of a world full of Whitemen's past and present acts, objects, and images.

### Illness as 'orphanhood'

The answer, I believe, needs to be looked for in the indigenous conceptualization of states of unwellness. Among the Jivaro, as in many lowland groups, suffering is not viewed as the secondary symptom of an underlying physiological cause; rather, it constitutes in itself the illness. This is particularly true of the kind of ill-being—internal pain, feelings of depression, anxiety, and weakness—that is rapidly interpreted as the result of a shamanic aggression. This condition constitutes a negative mirror image of the changes in self-perception associated with a successful quest for *arutam* encounters, as described by the Achuar: a sudden increment in clarity of purpose, a feeling of physical and social power, intensified “anger” against the ever-present Enemy and the urge to destroy him, coupled with a heightened sense of care for one's spouses and children and the ability to produce proper kin relationships. *Arutam* encounters, in short, bring about a positive metamorphosis of the self, attributed to the incorporation of the spirit as a kind of internal “voice” or guiding consciousness. The “hyper-I” produced by this internalized dialogic configuration linking a live and a dead Jivaroan stands in sharp contrast to the debilitated, purposeless “I” of the suffering individual. Nonetheless, there is a commonality of pattern in the form of the changes involved in vision quests and sickness which leads people to interpret this kind of unwellness as the outcome of an unwanted metamorphosis, caused by an internalized malevolent agent—as opposed to the desirable transformation induced by the incorporation of an *arutam* spirit.

The positive and negative forms of metamorphosis that are implicitly paired feed into distinct experiences of temporality. While *arutam* vision quests endow men with the ability to make and to narrate history in the Jivaroan warrior mode, and thus to give shape and direction to the flow of time, the unwanted conversion induced by shamanic attacks traps the victim in an elongated, directionless temporality of pain that confers a particular saliency to the experience of negative change. When describing this condition, the Achuar liken it to a state of orphanhood, an assimilation that makes sense in light of the social isolation entailed by the victim's prostration. In keeping with the widespread Amazonian view of bodies as sites where relations to others are created, transformed, or terminated (Conklin 2001; Vilaça 2007), the sickening of the victim's body makes him or her remote from his or her family, cut off from it by the inability to act in and communicate with it; and the victim's kinspeople respond by talking about and around—rather than with—him or her, a situation akin to that of parentless children, at least during the period before they are fully integrated into the household of a relative. Further, illness is a reversion to a childlike state of vulnerability and inability to cope with asymmetric, threatening, or challenging relationships. But the allusion to orphanhood has yet another dimension: loss of parents carried with it the very real threat of becoming the life-long slave of a White person, insofar as parentless children were, until the mid-twentieth century, the persons most exposed to being traded to White or mestizo *patrones* (bosses), who usually adopted and raised them as household



domestics, later to be used as indentured *peones* on the boss' landholdings. Even when they did not experience it directly, this was a condition familiar to the northern Achuar through their close relations with neighboring Quichua families, few of which escaped debt peonage at the hands of mestizo traders and landholders throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>18</sup> Beyond this, most Achuar men in their late seventies had spent some months or years as young men working for White bosses, usually itinerant traders (locally known as *regatones*) who traveled through indigenous territories exchanging hugely overpriced manufactured goods against forest products such as dried meat, pelts, various kinds of fibers and resins, and low-grade rubber latex. Such experiences were undergone "to learn," according to the Achuar, and by this they meant to gain familiarity with the geography of power evoked in shamanic discourse; by the same token, the voyages alluded to by shamans in their songs resonate with the experiences of distant travel and servitude experienced by most adult Achuar men (see also Kohn 2007). This is one of the reasons, I surmise, why Achuar men do not tell stories about these episodes of their life: narrating them would be tantamount to claiming shamanic knowledge and ability.

In short, while the Achuar managed throughout the heyday of the rubber boom and the subsequent tropical hacienda system to preserve their autonomy and their control over their labor force, they were well acquainted with the extreme forms of exploitation that framed relations between Indians and Whites in lowland Ecuador and Peru until the last decades of the twentieth century. The condition of illness provoked by an invisible aggression and calling for urgent shamanic intervention thus involves the experience of an involuntary and painful process of induced change, assimilated to the exit from a Jivaroan identity into a child-like subservient position in the White-dominated world as an anonymous laborer—what the Achuar call a "person for nothing" (*nankami aents*) or "tame parrot." This is why the curing shaman foregrounds allusions to the White world in his singing: if sickness is an insidious process of disempowerment at the hands ultimately of dominant Whites, the identifications and differentiations elaborated by the shaman necessarily involve the major symbols of foreigners' power.

### Being 'whitened' and appropriating White power

As I have mentioned, the history of relations between Jivaroans and Whites is not encompassed in traditional autobiographical narratives, nor is collective tribal history recorded in features of the landscape, as is the case among, for example, the Yanesha (Santos Granero 1998) and the Eastern Tukanoan and Arawak tribes (e.g., Hill & Wright 1988), or encoded in the jungle environment, as it is among the Napo Quichua (Kohn 2007, 2013). Jivaroan history is emphatically in the first person and

18. Taussig (1987) presents a compelling view of the "cosmography" generated by the debt-peonage system as it developed in Western Amazonia during and in the wake of the rubber boom. For a fuller description of the workings of this system among the Ecuadorian lowland Quichua, see especially Whitten (1976, 1985); Muratorio (1987); Kohn (2007, 2013).

rarely refers to a plural “we,” except in a narrow sense to designate a group of men directly participating in the events described by the narrator. This view of history accords with the Jivaroans’ emphasis on the achievement of enhanced individuality and with their “presentist” or, more accurately, forward-looking stance. The Jivaro see themselves not as a “society” endowed with a durable identity or tradition, but as a collection of like but unique persons striving each to forge an exemplary life-course. Accomplishing this aim depends on men’s ability to magnify their selves by confronting enemies and by absorbing lesser kinsmen’s subjectivities into their own personhood through the social influence they wield. The capacity to be fully Jivaroan hinges in turn on encounters with *arutam*, forgotten, singular dead Indians, precisely the kind of spirit they will become posthumously, thus ensuring the transmission of new potentialities of making history in the Jivaroan manner.

But why are interactions with Whites, including successful feats of arms against them, excluded from these narratives? My hypothesis is that such interactions cannot be encompassed by the causal logic of vengeance that fuels autobiographical historiography (Carneiro da Cunha and Viveiros de Castro 1985). While the presence of Whites constitutes a permanent threat because of the forces of dispossession that accompany it, Whites themselves are too ubiquitous, come under too many guises, and engage with Indians in too many and different ways to be subsumed under the category of *shiwiar*, “Enemy.” In this sense, they—and what they bring into the universe—are more like an environment than a fixed category or species of person, something that is built into the texture of experience, a dimension of the lived world that flows from Whitemen’s singular ability to externalize their presence not only in buildings, objects, and institutions but also in the forces that determine the movements of persons and things throughout the region.<sup>19</sup> This is not a freakish view of the way foreigners with Western values unleash economic forces while naturalizing them and distancing themselves from the consequences wrought by these forces. Denying indigenous people control over their lifeways, destroying their habitat, and pillaging forest resources are not as such willed acts: they are, according to prevailing ideology, the unintended effect of the march of Progress, History, or the Market. This, I suggest, is why the history of involvement with the dominant society is construed by the Jivaroans as an ongoing process of defense against the pressure of unwanted change, rather than a linear chain of chronologically ordered events. In sum, contacts between Jivaroans and Whitemen are viewed as a prolonged and painful process of transformation, analogous to the shifting sense of self and the feeling of disempowerment brought on by illness.

Given these Indians’ preoccupation with the quality of selfhood and its manifestation through bodily states, and with the threat of others’ power to modify it by crippling a person’s agency through an attack on his or her body, the conceptual conflation of interethnic history and sickness is understandable: both modes of being are negative experiences of transformation. In contrast to Amazonian groups such as the Kayabi or the Wari (Oakdale 2007; Vilaça 2007), Jivaroans strongly resist the “whitening” of their bodies; maintaining Jivaroan corporality is a condition

19. On indigenous perceptions of capitalist forces in the Upper Amazon, see Santos Granero and Barclay (2010); for a wider comparative view, see Bashkow (2006).



for holding fast to their identity.<sup>20</sup> History is for them the memory of repeated attempts at global conversion<sup>21</sup> —and not only in the religious sense—just as illness is the perception of an untrameling of the tissue of relations underpinning healthy selfhood. In both cases, these shifts of subjectivity are the consequence of an indeterminate malevolence mediated in such a way that no one assumes responsibility for it. Enemy shamans and Whites wreak their havoc in the same insidious way. For this reason, and because relations with Whites have to do with qualitative, continuous processes of change rather than discontinuous events, interethnic history lies outside the scope of the kind of narrative developed in warrior autobiographies, which emphatically stress individual agency and the consequences of intentional acts. Social memory of interethnic history is instead encapsulated in the images generated by the shamans' ritual chanting.

The framing during the cure of the patient's illness as an invisible process of predation somehow connected to the dynamics of the Whites' world also implies a parallel reframing both of the shamanic aggression and of the curing process. Thus, when the healing shaman describes his invisible nonhuman allies (and therefore himself, insofar as he identifies with them) as a collective that has "seen" and mastered the most significant aspects of the White world, the identification he sets up between the patient and himself as a member of his supernatural family—and by implication between the patient and these nonhumans who have successfully incorporated White power—does not mean that he is acting as a proxy for Whites, nor that he is engaged in "whitening" his patient; rather, he is drawing a sick, "proletarianized" Jivaro into a position that reverses the polarity of the relationship he or she is caught in by making him or her into a White-absorbing dominant subject—just as he, the shaman, is himself. Or rather as he purports to be: needless to say, the shaman's position is in fact highly ambiguous and the orientation of his loyalties is open to suspicion: is he truly an "über-White," that is to say, a Jivaroan who has appropriated and mastered the tools of White power, or is he the fifth column of the encroaching army of outsiders? The ambiguity of the relation between the shaman and the foreigners whose world he summons in his chant helps to account for the outbreaks of "witch-hunting" that occasionally sweep through Jivaroan territory and lead to the simultaneous killing of a number of recognized or suspected practitioners of shamanism—a phenomenon that, by recent accounts, is becoming ever more frequent and widespread as the threats to Jivaroan lifeways proliferate. The same ambiguity, it should be added, attaches to the patient who has undergone the cure, insofar as he or she has in effect been made into a quasi-shaman, or has

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20. This does not mean that Jivaroans do not try to incorporate elements of White bodily power, such as that transmitted by Western medication or foods; but such efforts are seen as a Jivaroan metabolization of foreign physiology rather than a "whitening" of Jivaroan bodies.
  21. Unlike the "fickle" Tupi, whose apparent receptivity to Christianization so gratified early missionaries (see Viveiros de Castro 1993; Fausto [2007] 2012), the Jivaro were and are notoriously resistant to religious conversion. From the sixteenth century on, missionaries sent among them never ceased to complain of the Indians' "crass materialism" and "Voltairean skepticism"; they roundly declared the Jivaro to be "the most difficult mission in the world." (On missionaries' view of the Jivaro, see Taylor 1983.)

at least taken the first step leading to a shamanic career, namely that of being recognized as a kinsperson, that is, a human, by a collective of Others. Normally, this shamanization is limited to the context of the cure, and the possibility of it lasting beyond it is counterbalanced by the patient's ostensible engagement in practices normally avoided by shamans: hunting, eventually joining in feuding expeditions, and above all talking about the experience of the cure as he or she understands it. Active shamans never talk about their nonhuman family and their interactions with them, because otherwise they would lose their connections with it and their supernatural allies would turn against them.

### Shifting identities, connecting histories

What happens if the cure fails, or if the patient decides to prolong and develop his or her state as a quasi-shaman? As I stressed, the aggressor shaman responsible for the victim's suffering is presumed to be another Jivaroan, or at least to be acting at the behest of other Jivaroans, given that the relation of permanent hostility that shapes the Jivaroan social world is largely confined to the ethnic group. The Enemy is, axiomatically, a fellow Jivaroan and his or her kin group. But these adversaries work in fact as agents of "dejivaroization," since the outcome of their attacks is to destroy the scaffolding that upholds the kind of identity held to be paradigmatically Jivaro, and ultimately to reduce their victim to a condition of anonymous servitude within a world governed by the impersonal relations of exploitation of a capitalist political economy. The sufferer is thus trapped in an impossible relation: he is being "eaten" by enemy Jivaroans but is deprived of the means to assume the warrior-stance that such an aggression normally calls forth. This may be why chronic or prolonged illness of the kind we have been dealing with used to entail exiting from a Jivaroan identity for some period of time—sometimes for good—and adopting a Runa (forest Quichua) identity. While boundaries between Jivaroan tribes are strongly emphasized, those between Jivaroans and their Quichua neighbors have been from the outset far more porous; indeed, there is good historical evidence that the Canelos Quichua bordering northern Achuar territory came into being during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries by absorbing former Shuar and Achuar people escaping from epidemics, attacks by colonists settled in the upper Upano valley, and heavily militarized, Jesuit-led missionary expeditions. Throughout the nineteenth century and during a good part of the twentieth century, Canelos Quichua communities continued to incorporate a steady trickle of Achuar fleeing real or imagined threats to their lives, or attracted by the Quichua's proximity to the sources of Western goods and their reputation as powerful shamans.<sup>22</sup>

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22. Reeve (1993–94) makes the important point that, according to the Curaray Quichua she worked with, the reason why people from other tribes chose to become Runa was to escape from illness, victimization, and the threat of extinction. For a synthetic view of the historical dynamics shaping ethnic identities and relations in the northern Upper Amazon, see Taylor (1999, 2007); for a fuller account of the ethnogenesis of the Quichua Canelos, see Whitten (1976).



In the case of ill persons, the process of transculturation came about gradually, as the victimized Jivaroan person sought out distant shamans presumed to be more powerful, and drifted ever closer to the powerhouses of shamanic ability located in neighboring Quichua territory (often near or in significant White settlements or establishments such as military bases, hospitals, or mission posts). Quichua shamanic healing sessions usually develop over a long period of time; consequently, the patient would often move into the curing shaman's household, or settle close by. Not infrequently, he would use the opportunity either to enter into apprenticeship with the Quichua *yachaj* and start a career as a shaman or to marry into the Quichua shaman's kin group. Entering into this state implied a new series of "translations": at the most obvious level, it meant adopting a new language and ethos, a new style of behavior and interaction. This may seem like a huge step. Actually it is no such thing: although Jivaro-Quichua bilingualism is neither formally transmitted from parents to children nor indeed publicly claimed among the northern Achuar—as if each person had to gain for him or herself the experience of "converting" to Quichua culture—the Quichua language was in fact familiar to most people (among men at least), as was the style of interaction characteristic of Quichua persons. Both Quichua and Jivaroans imitate each other's "typical" behavior for fun—Achuar ceremonial dialoguing and agonistic attitudes among the Quichua, brawling and indiscriminate eating among the Achuar—and their mimicry is flawless. In short, contrary to appearances, there was little translation (in the ordinary sense of the term) involved in these processes of transculturation. Rather, such identity shifts implied highlighting different aspects of what was in reality a largely shared cultural background in terms of everyday practices and representations.

However, there is one kind of knowledge, more accurately one expression of knowledge, that is specific to the Quichua and did require a real process of translation: namely, learning to reframe both collective and individual experience of relations with Whites in terms of the kind of historical "narrative"<sup>23</sup> specific to the lowland forest Quichua cultures.<sup>24</sup> This mode of history elaborates a linear sequence of "times" (*ura*) involving a series of collective transformations. The first "Time" is conceived as a precontact "wild" state characterized by unmediated relation to the forest environment (hunting, collecting, no horticulture, no sedentary settlements, etc.), social isolation, intense internal warfare, and ignorance of the outside world. Then came "times of slavery" (or "time of the bosses"—the labels given to this stage of Quichua history vary from one lowland group to another), paradoxically typified as a positive though painfully oppressive phase of "learning" essential knowledge about the White world through firsthand experience of a relation of subservience, and finally the "present times" of political emancipation and mastery over the proper combination of White and Sacha Runa (forest people) knowledge and practice. This kind of historical narrative clearly refers to the ethnogenesis of the Quichua groups out of the remnants of distinct tribal groups

23. I place the term "narrative" in inverted commas because this brand of history is not exclusively discursive: it is coded in landscape, ritual, and ceramic iconography.

24. On lowland Quichua regimes of historicity, see especially Whitten (1976, 1985); Muratorio (1987); Reeve (1988, 1993–94); and Kohn (2007, 2013); see also Gow (1991).

decimated between the early seventeenth and nineteenth centuries by contact with Whites, within the framework of some form of oppressive articulation to mestizo or missionary settlements. However, from an Achuar point of view, learning to understand and master this kind of history does not require the acquisition of new substantive knowledge—all indigenous people in this region share the same memories of demographic collapse due to epidemics, debt slavery at the hands of rubber bosses, tropical *haciendas* or rapacious traders, forced evangelization, and so on—but for Jivaroans it does imply a reorganization of this shared memory, since among them the history of interethnic relations is not elaborated in a stabilized, linear form of collective narrative.

At the same time as it accounts for the coming into being of a collective identity and way of relating to Self and Others that is specific to the Quichua groups, this kind of historical narrative constitutes an idiom for generating a representation of a trajectory of transculturation. It maps onto implicit autobiographies of illness and recovered healthy selfhood, via a “time of wildness” that evokes both Jivaroan sociality as seen by the Quichua and the condition of “orphanhood” constitutive of illness as seen by the Achuar, through oppressive shamanic learning of a proper perspective on the White world at the hands of a dominant, boss-like Quichua master-shaman and/or father-in-law, and on to a state of recovered health marked by the capacity to face Whites in an empowered position. At this point, the healed person may either revert to his initial ethnic identity and resume his engagement in the behaviors and practices central to his culture of origin, or decide to remain a Runa, having in the meantime absorbed a conceptualization of history that is a central feature of forest Quichua identity.

It is noteworthy that until recently (in the case of men at least—that of women is somewhat different), transculturation almost never led to permanent exit from the indigenous world and adoption of a mestizo identity. Though increasingly involved in the economy and politics of the Ecuadorian and Peruvian nation, Jivaroan persons remain to this day firmly attached to their identity as non-White forest people. But over the past twenty years it has become more and more difficult for them to sustain it: while they are adept at finding new niches (indigenous political organizations, armed conflicts between states, etc.) within which to deploy the adversarial relationships that underpin male magnified selfhood, the practices that used to sustain these relations (feuding, war-related rituals, ceremonial dialogues, etc.) are losing ground or becoming neutered through cultural patrimonialization. At the same time, the threat to the land and autonomy of all Jivaroan tribes is growing, as oil and lumber companies, agro-industrial and tourist enterprises, as well as state agencies, vie to move into their territory and intervene in their community affairs.

As the fear of a generalized process of “whitening” intensifies, and as the possibility of switching to a Runa identity steadily diminishes in the wake of the (uni)cultural ethnic politics now pervasive in Andean nations, shamanism is gaining ground among all Jivaroan groups, both as a defensive resource and as a ubiquitous threat. Because of their ambiguous position as brokers of White power, shamans are suspect of fostering or hastening the process of “dejivaroization,” not least by adopting the tools of White “shamanism,” namely the kind of popular sorcery described in the penny literature sold in the markets for poor people (Perruchon 2003). A troubling outcome of the growing fascination for these “how to” manuals



of witchcraft is the suspicion that attaches to the possession and circulation of written material of any sort, particularly among the young, feared because of their knowledge of reading and writing in Spanish and therefore open to accusations of having secretly converted to White-inspired black magic<sup>25</sup>—again, other Jivaroans acting as proxies for outside, clearly White, agents. At the same time, shamans are the only ones who can “see” what is going on and have the means of countering the effects of sorcery. Thus, Jivaroan people nowadays are constantly oscillating between the need for shamanic therapy and the urge to expunge from their communities—sometimes by outright lynching—all and every real or suspected agent of “whitening,” including young adolescents and even children.

## Conclusion

This contribution focuses on a series of intra- and intercultural transpositions or linkages of domains of experience effectuated by and around shamanic practices. I have tried to show how certain states of suffering implying sociological deprivation and weakened agency, subsumed under the label of “orphanhood” and experienced as an unwanted metamorphosis mirroring in a negative way the process of enhancement of Self resulting from *arutam* encounters, are reframed in the course of shamanic healing rituals as the symptoms of an insidious process of disempowerment, more accurately of “going peon” in the White-dominated world, unleashed by other enemy Jivaroans. This “B version” of the patient’s illness emerges from the conflation operated in and by the shaman’s healing chants between the victim’s sickness and the history of relations with powerful foreigners, construed as a painful process of involuntary qualitative change.

The linkage of the experience of illness with an experience of history and attempted conversion (and vice versa) runs parallel to another process of “translation,” involving in this case a series of shifts between the language of the spirits heard and spoken by the shaman and the language of the patient and the audience. The metadiscourse of translation elaborated by the healer articulates the two worlds in which the shaman acts as a “human,” that of his supernatural allies and that of his (real) human kin group, and is oriented toward the conversion of his invisible servants (his helper spirits and magic darts) into kinspeople of the patient instead of predators. Through this affiliation the patient is both identified with the healing shaman and lifted out of his position of vulnerability, reinstated as a subject capable of absorbing and mastering White power. At the same time, by focusing the patient’s and his relatives’ hostility against the enemy shaman and by heightening thereby the kin group’s solidarity, the healer reconnects the victim to his social environment and to a purposeful existence as a warrior.<sup>26</sup>

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25. These developments are being documented by Gregory Deshouillères among the Shuar and Simone Garra among the Awajun and Wampis, both of them currently finishing their Ph.D. dissertation. I thank them both for sharing their knowledge with me.
  26. In concrete terms, if circumstances are favorable to a precise identification of the person(s) responsible for the patient’s misfortune, chances are he or his relatives will be in short order the target of a killing expedition.

At the horizon of these dual processes of connecting different domains of experience, which themselves reverberate many other ongoing changes of registers and contexts not explored here, lies a further series of shifts which are activated when the cure fails and the patient abandons his Jivaroan identity and moves into a Runa identity. The primary trans-lation involved in this process of transculturation is not so much the expected translation of one language and more generally of knowledge of culturally appropriate behavior into another; rather, it is the conflation of Runa narratives of their history and the implicit autobiography of a Jivaroan moving from illness and disempowerment toward recovered health and social agency. Since this way of dealing with states of “dejivaroization” has become largely unavailable to the Achuar, owing to increasing closure of ethnic groups under pressure to become clearly bounded tribal entities each “possessing” a specific culture, the relation between Jivaro and Whites is nowadays far less mediated—and actually far more violent, though on the surface less overtly conflictive—than it used to be. Presently all Jivaroans deal permanently and directly with the spoken and written words of the Whites, and this involves new forms of translation. The illness of “whitening” henceforth affects everybody, and not just some individuals suffering from temporary states of existential malaise; also ‘healthy’ Jivaroans have in effect become part White. Thus, the current attempts to master the power of Whites through a shamanic appropriation of their own witchcraft increasingly pit Jivaroans against their own selves as well as against their fellow kinspeople, always suspect of acting as proxies for White masters, even when—and particularly when—they are acting as proper Jivaroans.

The processes I have discussed may seem far removed from what is usually understood as translation, that is, the transporting into another language of the semantic content of a source speech. Yet if we take translation in a broader sense, as the work carried out to bridge and bring into resonance different spheres of practice and contexts of communication in order to open avenues for the imaginative production of meaning, particularly in areas that are of core concern for a given culture, I believe the processes I have described can be usefully analyzed as strategies of translation, even though a noteworthy feature of Achuar shamanism is the strong resistance it evinces to the idea and possibility of translation in the ordinary sense. The Jivaroan case illustrates a mode of translation as “resonating juxtaposition” that emphasizes the heterogeneity of the fields of experience involved and maintains the differences in perspective that are brought into play, rather than seeking to resorb them in a new language. In other words, while the possibility of translation is constantly evoked in shamanic discourse, it is never actually carried out: the shaman repeatedly claims to speak “foreign” languages, and to be communicating with his spirits in these idioms, but his statements are never direct quotations of the utterances of spirits—except when he is humming or singing without words. . . . Thus, the *uwishin* foregrounds his capacity as a translator—he knows the language of Others—but he does not in fact speak for these Others, as their spokesperson: he only speaks *to* them. Indeed, he enhances this position of “nontranslating translator” through the mediation of his *pasuk*, whom he addresses, who relay his calls to the *tsentsak* and report back to the performing shaman; but this embedded translator does not give voice to the *tsentsak* and ultimately to the spirits any more than does the shaman, who describes the effects of the *pasuk*’s vocal herding



but does not present it as reported speech. Likewise, the *uwishin*'s audience do not ask him what the spirits are saying; instead, they insistently ask him what he or his *pasuk* see rather than hear, despite the fact that shamanic discourse stresses the communicative aspects of the shaman's performance. These facts are entirely consistent with the transversal dimension of Amazonian shamanism underscored by Viveiros de Castro ([2009] 2014): the aim of shamanic performance is to exhibit the dual nature of shamans and the coexistence and hence possible articulation of perspectives it allows, rather than to transmute or strictly translate diverging points of view. By contrast, the process of transculturation that leads ailing Achuar to adopt a Runa identity does seem to involve a full-scale operation of translation, since the point of such a move is to exit from a Jivaroan mode of being and communicating and switch to a different repertoire of attitudes, behaviors, and codes, a move that by definition requires multiple forms of translation. No "nontranslating translator" here: you are either a Jivaroan or a Runa. Yet even this configuration carries strong echoes of shamanic dual "citizenship." To begin with, Runa identity is itself dual, predicated as it is on the ability to be simultaneously a "docile" Christian person connected to the White world and an autonomous forest person, to combine Alli Runa and Sacha Runa being, as shown by Whitten (1976) in his classic monograph. Further, claims to submerged, originally non-Quichua identities play a strong part in Runa ethnicity (see Reeve 1993–94); in some cases these backgrounded identities reemerge to fuel the ethnogenesis of new ethnic groups—most famously in that of the Ecuadorian Zaparo, who until the 1990s seemed to have been entirely absorbed into the Quichua lowland population but have since reappeared as a distinct, territorialized, and officially recognized tribe. Thus, at both a collective and an individual level, the juxtaposition of different indigenous identities—and of the social knowledge they carry—is a structural feature of Runa culture. To this extent, all Runa persons share a shamanic mode of selfhood; and by the same token, they share the Jivaroan *uwishin*'s stance as performers of heterogeneous perspectives—as mediators or diplomats rather than as translators.

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### **Des traductions-guérison : Evoluer entre plusieurs mondes dans le chamanisme Achuar.**

Cet article analyse une série de traductions intra- et inter-culturelles associées aux pratiques chamaniques des Achuar du Jivaro septentrional. Premièrement, nous montrons que certains états de souffrance, vécus comme une métamorphose indésirable de la subjectivité, sont repensés, dans les rituels de guérison chamanique comme des symptômes d'un processus insidieux de subordination et de « blanchissement » déclenché par d'autres, par des ennemis Jivaros. La guérison assimile la maladie de la victime et l'histoire des relations interethniques, conçues comme un douloureux processus de transformation qualitative involontaire. Une autre série de traductions se met en place lorsque le traitement échoue et le patient abandonne son identité Jivaro et opère un déplacement vers une identité de Quichua des plaines. Ceci implique de restituer l'autobiographie implicite d'un Jivaro, quittant son état maladif pour recouvrir sa santé et son autonomie, dans la forme des récits historiques Quichuas. Cependant, à cause de la fermeture croissante des groupes ethniques, les Jivaros doivent désormais faire face directement aux mots parlés et écrits des blancs, ce qui implique de nouvelles formes de traductions évoquées à la fin de cet article.

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