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CHAPTER 4

Parasitism and Subjection Modes of Paumari Predation

Oiara Bonilla

All lines go in one direction, none in the other.

They literally go to one opening: the gaping maw of the universal parasite.

Or to a common misery: the broken back of the universal victim.

—Michel Serres, The Parasite

This chapter is inspired by two field observations that form the basis for an exploration here of Paumari relational sociology. The first observation is that Paumari insist on defining their relations with others in 'commercial' terms. Thus the term by which they refer to themselves, pamoari, is also the term used to designate the client position vis-à-vis a patrão or boss (kariva) in a commercial context. In other relations, the Paumari also systematically position themselves as clients (pamoari), sometimes shifting to adopt the position of employees (honai abono) of a boss. The second observation is that Paumari describe themselves as prey (igitha) in their relations with others, whether wild Indians (Joina) coming from afar to devour them, or white people (Jara) coming to kill, enslave or convert them.

Given the history of the region and the Paumari involvement in the debt peonage economy of aviamento introduced along the Purus River during the late nineteenth-century rubber boom, neither of these two observations is surprising. Aside from the fact that absolutely everything is and must be negotiated (in exchange for either money or commodities), what is noteworthy is the indifference the Paumari typically show for the goods obtained in exchange for a favour, information, a fish or the like. It is as though asking for something were much more interesting than

actually obtaining it. Besides bargaining for everything, the Paumari insist on placing themselves systematically in the service of their interlocutors, very often transforming simple questions from the latter into orders or requests that must be duly remunerated or compensated.

On the other hand, they complain about their health and current life almost constantly, contrasting the present with the 'boss era' and the 'mission era' with an air of nostalgia.² Both this description of themselves as victims and the apparent definition of all relations in commercial terms are recurring themes in everyday life, observed in a variety of forms throughout my research. While still in the field, I tended to relate these two themes to the history of the Paumari involvement in the region's violent social and economic history (Bonilla 2005, 2007, 2009). As I have shown in my subsequent work, however, what appears to be a form of subjection can in fact be conceived of as a particular variant of ontological predation, one of its potential actualizations being precisely the shift the Paumari make from the position of prey (*igitha*) to that of pet (*igitha*)³ and the position of client (*pamoari*) to that of employee (*honai abono*).

My objective here is not in any sense to deny or minimize the effects of colonization and the violent impact of the rubber economy on the peoples inhabiting the region. On the contrary, I wish to add to the discussion of these events by exploring the issues raised by the apparent 'subjection' of the Paumari. The ethnographic data allows us to move beyond our own understandings of the terms 'submission' or 'subjection' so that Paumari meanings can surface. What subjects are these, who define themselves as pacific prey and place themselves systematically in the service of another? What types of relations are actualized in this movement?

Since the publication of my earlier article (Bonilla 2005), a number of other ethnographic cases have been described and analysed, each suggesting that indigenous peoples' definition of themselves as prey or pets can afford insights into various aspects of Amazonian ontologies, especially their ongoing historical transformations (see Costa 2009, 2010 and this volume; Deturche 2009: 118, as well as Fausto's (2008) comparative study of notions of mastery and ownership in Amazonia). At the same time, although this apparent victimization is related in the Paumari case to a certain market-based 'consumerism' (Hugh-Jones 1992: 43), it is not the commodities themselves that appear to be the focus of desire, but the relations that exchange and indebtedness allow to be actualized continuously (Bonilla 2005: 42). My aim here is to show that subjection, and its extreme limit as expressed in the ideal of parasitism, are also forms of predation and full-blown actualizations of the Paumari dynamic of relationality and sociality.

Clienthood

The Paumari today number around 1,500 people living along the lakes and shores of the middle Purus River in the south of Amazonas state. They speak variants of the same language, which belongs to the Arawá family (Dixon and Aikhenvald 1999: 294). In day-to-day life they frequently use Portuguese to communicate among themselves and with white people (Jara), generally merging the grammatical and lexical structures of the two languages. The Paumari live primarily from fishing and cultivating small swiddens where they grow various plant crops, particularly manioc, yams and bananas. They also plant crops on the river beaches during the Amazonian summer and trade most of this harvest with river traders journeying up and down the Purus, or with the bosses and traders in Lábrea and Tapauá.

The Paumari interest in commerce was attested by the first white travellers to explore the Purus during the second half of the nineteenth century. Their 'facility for trading' also tended to coincide with a description of the people as 'peaceful' or 'fearful', and as 'great lovers of song'. At that time the Paumari, or Pammarys, like the Juberi, were still known as the Puru-Puru, the 'blemished' or 'blotchy-skinned Indians', since they suffered from the endemic skin disease pinta, a nonvenereal form of syphilis (Treponema carateum) that causes skin-colour alterations and seems to have played the role of an identity marker for the group (Bonilla 2007: 65–70, 2009: 130). They lived in floating houses on the shores and lakes of the Lower and Middle Purus and were described early on as skilled traders who were peaceful and inoffensive, and disposed to singing:

They are peaceful.... They are happy, fun-loving and adore singing, ... Some traders who employed an entire village of them managed to obtain 200 to 300 turtles in one day's work. (Chandless 1949: 26)

Labre (1872: 27) describes them as "true canoeists" who work on extracting natural products, which they exchange for commodities and drink', while Silva Coutinho (1863: 71) emphasizes their disinterest in war and describes their relations with the river traders:

Some river traders exploit the fears of the Pammarys to obtain better deals. They would say that the Muras were coming to strike them, which was enough for the entire maloca to accompany the traders in trepidation of their enemics ...

Naturally fearful, they flee at the slightest sign of aggression, not only from the Muras but also from any other tribe, and will find resources through the means they have at their disposal for navigation.

. .

The Paumari recall that before the arrival of white people (Jara) and more specifically the bosses (kariva), they lived like the gulls (tihi) that come to roost on the beaches of the Purus at the start of the Amazonian summer.⁶ Hence they were much more numerous than today, occupying beaches from the Tapauá downriver to the Sepatini upriver, but were also consequently exposed to attacks from other Indians, the Joima, as we shall see later. After the appearance of the figures of the kariva and Jara, the Paumari abandoned the beaches, considered too exposed, and entered the forest in search of terra firme, though still choosing sites close to lakes and streams.

In the 'rubber era' and until the arrival of the mission in 1964, the Paumari were able to work seasonally for one or other boss (mainly rubber estate owners, but also loggers or fishermen) as either employees (honai abono) or clients (pamoari). Depending on context, the auto-denomination pamoari is used to refer to someone occupying the client position, that is, a client linked to a boss by debt. Employees are a somewhat different kind of client, able to repay their debts through work and services provided directly to the boss. As clients, the Paumari typically became indebted to various bosses (whether rubber estate owners, merchants or river traders) in order to obtain a single commodity from each one, which led to their insertion in a dense and complex network of relations of indebtedness with no guarantee of continuity (Kroemer 1985: 136).

For example, a family head would work for some months for a boss (as an employee), but still owe others (as a client), whom he would pay with his *produção*, a term used in Portuguese to designate any product extracted from the forest environment. In this way the Paumari obtained clothing, work tools and food, mostly in exchange for salted fish (pirarucú and other scaleless fish), turtles or timber, and more sporadically extractivist products like Brazil nuts, andiroba, copaíba or small quantities of latex. As a result the Paumari were primarily recognized as suppliers of fish and turtles to the regional market.

Before marrying, young men would frequently leave the village to work as employees extracting rubber or timber at a colocação (forest settlement), or sometimes to join the crew of a river trader or a fishing boat, usually for several years at a time. This still happens today and, Paumari men say, allows the young man to learn the 'Jara ways' (Jara kahojai) by 'being raised by him' and to obtain regular access to white people's goods (inisika). The 'Jara ways' include the ways white people work, tap rubber, extract timber, plant and hunt, and above all speak Portuguese, barter, eat, drink and dance. The relationship established between the youth and his employer is long-lasting and in many cases amounts to a form of adop-

tion. Hence many men today say that 'I was raised by Jara', meaning they grew up and lived with the whites.

Generally the young man returns to the village to marry without clearing his debt but having obtained privileged access to the commodities his boss supplies by living with him and becoming his adoptive son or godson, thereby obliging the boss to become his provider and protector. Today men of all ages tell of how they grew accustomed to the food and habits of the *Jara*, learned to pilot a boat and travelled along the length of the Purus and beyond, visiting other Amazonian towns, learning about other peoples and so on. They also explain how they gained their *Jara* surnames and were raised by a particular boss who today resides in the town.⁷ This practice is still common among the Paumari of the region of the Tapauá and Cuniuá rivers. By mobilizing these fictitious kin relations with the Paumari, the fishermen and traders themselves also guarantee their access to the region's lakes and streams for exploration (Bonilla 2010: 221–23).

Until the end of the 1960s, the bosses prevented the Paumari from planting, acquiring goods from the river traders, or fishing in waters that the bosses claimed as their own, except when the Indians were working to pay back their debts. With the decline of the rubber market, the arrival of the first mission (in the 1960s) and FUNAI (in the 1970s), and the gradual legalization of indigenous lands in the region (at the end of the 1990s), the debt peonage system gradually vanished and the power of the bosses waned. Even today, though, the Paumari run up debts with the 'little bosses' (patrõezinhos) along the river shore to obtain basic goods or sometimes flour and manufactured foods. They repay these debts with their own produce or provide some kind of service: the men clean the traders' yards or repair the roofs of their houses, while the women wash clothes and so on.

It is important to note that the Paumari do not evoke the era of submission to the rubber bosses with any particular expression of displeasure or revolt. On the contrary, they usually manifest a strong nostalgia for this period, recalling the time of the bosses as an era of plenty and relative peace. In terms of abundance of merchandise, that time cannot be compared to the 'mission era', that is, the period after the arrival of the Evangelical mission, which to a large extent took over the function of supplying the kinds of goods previously distributed by the bosses (Bonilla 2009: 137–39). This nostalgia is relative, of course. Although they have not forgotten the violence suffered during the era of the bosses, what older people like to recall is how good the bosses were when they provided an endless supply of goods and looked after the Paumari 'like their own children', sharing food with them and giving them clothes and

sometimes medicines. Above all, the bosses gave them Christian names and surnames ('people's names'). Hence, besides receiving commodities, protection and symbolic goods, the Paumari extended their relations beyond the limits of the village, establishing fictitious kinship ties through both Catholic baptisms – which were organized by the priests who visited the region – and fire baptisms in the Festivals of São João held by the bosses and *ribeirinhos*. Nowadays, they say, everything is much more difficult to obtain: you need money, and you have to travel to town to indebt yourself to supermarket and trade store owners who offer only manufactured goods and provide no guarantee of continuing the relation (Bonilla 2013).

-Kapamoaribi: The Human Form

The regional population consider the Paumari to be 'tame' Indians par excellence, a people who were 'pacified' and quickly learned 'civilized' ways (a quality invariably associated with the possibility of trading, at least in this part of the Purus region). According to the ribeirinhos, the two biggest dangers the Paumari pose to white people are their capacity to provoke skin diseases – their shamans may attack Others by sending spells in the form of a contaminating powder – and the possibility that the Paumari will become permanently indebted without ever repaying what they owe.

For the Paumari themselves, the term *pamoari* can be used to formulate an expression indicating the potential human quality – the 'pamoari-ness' – of any being or object. The expression is composed of a noun followed by a construction involving the self-denomination *pamoari*, which is preceded by the possessive prefix *ka*– and followed by the suffix –*hi*, indicating the human form or quality of the preceding substantive. All animals, plants and inanimate objects can be perceived in human form and as a collective. The river dolphin, for example, is potentially human and social: it can appear in a human form that lives in the rivers and lakes of the Purus, dwelling in its own village with its own people, performing festivals, speaking its own language, marrying and having children.

When someone refers to the river dolphin, they use the term 'basori. However, when talking about the dolphin's own kind, its social life and habits – its 'pamoari-ness', as it were – people use the expression 'basori kapamoarihi, referring to dolphin social life and dolphins as a collective (Bonilla 2005: 50, 2007: 301–5). In this context the Paumari translate the expression as 'dolphin people' or 'dolphin nation'. Here we can identify the typical expansion of Amerindian perspectivism, through kinship

and alliance, to the cosmos as a whole – everything in the world is potentially human in the sense that any entity can be manifested in a collective, humanized, anthropomorphized form, and above all can express a world in which each species is a point of view (Viveiros de Castro 2002: 351, 384–85).

The idea of pamoarihi - the human form of animals, plants and objects - has sometimes been translated by myself as, and associated by other authors with, the idea of owner. In my doctoral thesis I translated the concept at various points using the term 'master', noting that this was one of its potential applications (Bonilla 2007: 53). This semantic approximation attempted to explain and translate the concept of 'human form'. When the Paumari refer to the human form of a being or thing, they do not evoke or refer to the figure of an 'owner' in the sense, for example, of the Yudjá iwa described by Lima (2005: 94-96), let alone the idea of the owner-controller appearing in other ethnographic contexts (Fausto 2008: 329-31). Nor do they conceive of this human form as a type of magnified person (ibid.; Cesarino this volume) or suggest that the human form possesses or controls the species in question, or that the borders of each species delimit some form of domain. Instead, when people use the term pamoarihi, they are referring primarily to an exemplar of that species, a generic example of its human form, and to the expression of its point of view, its subject position (Viveiros de Castro 2002: 353). As well as comprising its human form - meaning its people form, its collectivity - the pamoarihi of the prev animal is also and above all the locus of its point of view. It amounts to its human subjectivity, actualized through the gaze of shamans - who in turn pass this viewpoint on to their audience. The human form of the manatee is the subject position of the manatee's human perspective of the world; what the pamoarihi expresses is the human point of view of the manatec species. Hence Fausto's (2008: 339) affirmation that the postmythic world is a 'world of multiple domains' where 'everything has or can have an owner' can be redefined in Paumari terms: 'everything is potentially pamoari' and therefore everything in the postmythic world has or can have a point of view.

It should be noted that while the term pamoari designates a being's humanity, it is also the term used to designate the client in a relation of subjection or commercial exchange with a kariva (boss). So would the human form (pamoarihi) of a being also be its client form? Could we say that people are clients of a boss? I think so, and would add that the way this relation can be actualized varies. How should we conceive of a perspectivist world in which the point of view is expressed by the weaker pole of the relation, by the world of the prey and the client?

Bosses and Employees

Let us explore more closely the different terms at play in Paumari commercial relations. As we have seen, the term *pamoari* assumes, on the one hand, the general meaning of the Paumari collective and, on the Other, the positional meaning of client in the context of commercial relations between bosses and clients. But there is another term that plays a constitutive role in commercial relations: the position of employee (*honai abono*). Although *pamoari*, signifying client, also designates Paumari as a whole, the Paumari seem to emphasize the position of employee much more, both in everyday life and in rituals.

The term *honai abono* designates a boss's employee, someone in the service of someone else, under orders (where *honai* designates a command or order, and *abonoi*, the person's soul-body¹⁰). The same expression is used to designate various professions of white people – a teacher is *ojomo'ihi* abono (ojomo'ihi: lesson, teaching), cleaner is jahahi abono (jahahi: cleaning) – as well as physical activities: planter is rakhajahi abono, fisherman is araba abono and so on.

The client (pamoari) is someone who, indebted to a boss, has to produce or extract something to pay back the debt. What links the client to the boss is debt and debt alone. For the Paumari, this seems to be humanity's generic position. But the employee (honai abono) is in a sense located one step ahead in terms of commitment to the boss, and vice versa. An employee is also linked by debt, but debt that will be repaid by services provided to the boss (which may eventually develop into a more long-term relationship). Employees place themselves at the boss's disposition in order to repay their debts, usually living with or near him, which in return obliges the boss to provide certain forms of care and support.

It should be stressed that the difference between the positions of client and employee is not always evident or marked. White people, for example, do not seem to distinguish the two terms, using them as synonyms. Among the Paumari, I also observed this oscillation between synonymy and the distinct use of the two terms. But when the terms are used in Paumari, the ambiguity evaporates and what is emphasized is precisely the difference between the two positions. Hence what differentiates pamoari from honai abono is the degree of mutual implication that each position enables with the bosses. While the term pamoari refers to any client, whether or not Paumari, in commercial relations it designates the position of the client as a debtor. This is the default by definition: in the face of a boss, the generic position is that of client. It therefore makes sense to say that pamoari (Paumari/client) is the generic position and honai abono (employee), as a transformation or a potential shift from the former to a new

position, is more interesting relationally speaking. Indeed, the relation between the boss (*kariva*) and the employee (*honai abono*) seems more interesting to the Paumari, since it is described and emphasized both in interethnic contexts and in their cosmology, rites and mythic narratives.

For example, bosses and employees appear in the *ihinika* rituals, which primarily involve the shaman's introduction of the *abonoi* (soul-body) of all foods (plant, animal or manufactured) into the soul-bodies of newborns, children and their mothers (Bonilla 2007: 169–217). Along with these *ihinika*, which take place almost daily, the soul-bodies of the foods invited to the festival arrive in their human form (*kapamoarihi*) and are preceded by the soul-bodies of other species described as their employees (*honai abono*).

The employees of the soul-bodies of the foods announce their arrival by addressing them directly as bi'i, father, or indirectly as their kariva, boss. In the eyes of the shamans, all these beings are people, who arrive in their human form. Some are employees, others clients and others bosses. Thus the manatee appearing in the ritual in human form (boma kapamoarihi) is a boss who plies the bottom of the river in his boat with all his employees on board: the human form of the 'daki'daki bird (wattled jacana, Jacana jacana) is the manatee's employee who plants his swidden, the human form of the kamokia bird (horned screamer, Anhima cornuta) makes his flour, the human form of the vaikajaro (tucuxi dolphin, Sotalia spp.) works as his rower, the human form of the viraka'da frog (unidentified) as his cook and the id'oki bird (great kiskadee, Pitangus sulphuratus) as pilot of his boat. The human forms that present themselves as bosses (being preceded by employees) are generally large animals or occupy a prominent place in the Paumari diet. The species described as employees, meanwhile, are generally associated with species considered to be bosses because of their specific habitat and/or dietary habits. Hence the horned screamer bird (whose human form is the employee of the manatee human form) lives in the marches and lakeshores and feeds on floating plants that are described precisely as the 'manatee's swidden'.

In the manatee *ihinika*, for example, the great kiskadee, its employee, appears first, announcing the manatee's arrival:

Let's go to this festival, Before the boss arrives, Let's go first¹¹

The manatec soon arrives saying (singing):

Let's go to this festival To which we were invited Let's go to watch To see if they arrive Where they told us to go

The viraka'da bird, which the manatee sees as his cook, then announces:

Let's go first to the festival Because after I have to make coffee for the boss

And the *kamokia* bird, who tends the manatee's swidden and makes its flour, chants:

Cousin, let's go to the festival Because the boss is already there Commemorating with our people.

Its cousin (another cook) replies:

Cousin, let's go, Because now we have to plant The swidden of the boss (kariva).

During the *ihinika* ritual of the tapir ('daama), a similar cortege announces the arrival of the tapir's human form, another boss. This time the cortege is formed by the *fifi* bird (striped cuckoo, *Tapera naevia*), the tick (kajapa) and the matiroro bird (red pilcated finch, Coryphospingus cucullatus). 12

The Paumari describe the tick as a human form – an employee of the tapir-boss human form. The striped cuckoo – also a kind of parasite, since it uses other birds' nests – is the employee announcing the boss's arrival (Bonilla 2007: 200–201). In everyday life parasites are generally described as the *bonai abono* of their hosts. This ethnographic detail strikes me as important since it expresses a subtle idea, frequently expressed in ambiguous form by the Paumari themselves, partly due to the oscillation in the use of the terms client or employee to describe it. The interest resides, I think, precisely in this alternation. Indeed, the difficulty I encountered in defining and translating the position of the tick highlights precisely the interesting ambiguity of its position. Is the tick a client who lives on/inside the boss, or an employee who only receives and never has to provide a service in exchange? According to the Paumari logic, it is evidently both and neither at the same time. Or better, the relation can be actualized as one or the other.

To return to our earlier question, how do we understand a world from the viewpoint of prey, victims or employees, that is, a world expressed by the viewpoint of the prey-client or the pet-employee? The position of the parasite and parasitism as a relation appears to provide an interesting line

of analysis (Bonilla 2007: 216-17). As we have seen, subjection, as conceived here, amounts to the shift from the more generic position of client (pamoari) to that of employee (honai abono) - the person under orders, the subject of a boss - in order to obtain goods and forms of care and to establish relations. In parasitism, though, as conceived through the ritual figure of the tick, subjection becomes a specific ideal mode of predation exercised by a client-employee who only obtains and never pays or works, but 'lives with', annulling the temporality and distance presumed by the debt and therefore neutralizing his or her own subjection. In other words it involves the predation and capture of a boss who becomes colonized by the client-employee. Unlike the employment relation between the cook and the manatee, which involves an exchange or circulation of goods and care, the parasitic relation (conceived here as the ideal, intensive background of a world of clients-employees) is unidirectional. The parasite feeds on, sucks from and may even eliminate the boss host, definitively annulling the relation and thus its own condition of existence. 13

Captures, Adoptions and Employment

In Paumari cosmography the relations between bosses and employees also determine the relations between soul-bodies (abonoi). Hence shamans leave in search of the soul-body of a child who has been captured by a food-spirit.14 This capture of the child's soul-body by the soul-body of a food-spirit causes the child to sicken immediately. The shaman must then ingest or inhale snuff and hallucinogens and then (with the help of auxiliary spirits and female singers) leave in search of the soul-body to negotiate its return. While this is happening, though, the child's soul-body is being adopted and consequently transformed into an employee of the soul-body of the food-spirit that captured it. If the negotiation attempted by the shaman and his assistants fails, the capture may become definitive and the child remain forever with his or her new boss, the food soul-body (an eventuality that translates as the child's death). This employment-subjection of the child is also translated into the language of kinship and more specifically that of adoption: the child becomes an adopted pet son or daughter (najivava, or 'adoptive child') of the soul-body of the food-spirit and its honai abono, employee. Consequently the child starts to address its captor as father, becoming accustomed to the 'ways' (hojai) of its new kin, learning their language and adopting their food habits, but also providing them with services. The more the soul-body becomes accustomed to its new kin, the more difficulties the shaman will encounter in retrieving it (Bonilla 2007: 191, 216, 358).

It is crucial to emphasize that the relational equivalence between adoption and employment is a key aspect of Paumari kinship relations (Bonilla 2007: 339–56). In fact, internal adoption (of Paumari children by their real grandparents or by classificatory parents) is common, and a form of fostering, or temporary adoption, also exists. This temporary adoption can equally be compared to the familiarization of animal young, a process that, as we shall see below, is understood as temporary by definition. The fact that adoption is conceived as a form of employment can also be linked to the question of affinity, that is, of affinal adoption, and the position of the father-boss as a potential affine-father (Bonilla 2007: 367–70).

After death, the person's abonoi detaches from its bodily envelope (toba bo'da) and follows the path to the Lake of Renovation¹⁵ (Aja'di ka'dako). This is where the unevangelized Paumari dead live, resuscitated after a magical bath and the removal of the food residues accumulated in their soul-bodies over the course of life. After receiving a new envelope (toba ja'dini), the dead are asked to choose between two types of seat: the mat (jorai) or the rocking chair.

The deceased who choose the mat remain in the lake, where they will live for the rest of eternity, able to eat and dance tirelessly. But those who choose the rocking chair (a regional symbol of the Amazonian boss) are immediately employed by the human form of the rainstorm (*Bahi kapamoarihi*), a meteorological spirit that, like the sun, is described as a very powerful, rich and generous boss. This power is translated in the spirit's strong, corpulent appearance and irascible temperament, but also in the quantity of boats it possesses, all piloted by Paumari soul-body employees who fetch water in the reservoirs of Manaus to pour onto the land. These same soul-bodies – employees of the human-rain form – also enable communication between Paumari shamans and the dead via thunder. Asked about their interest in working for yet another boss after death, the Paumari reply unanimously that the human-rain form, besides being powerful, is also kind and generous, possessing and providing endless quantities of diverse commodities.

Here, then, something is offered that the generic position of client does not guarantee: regular access to goods, their continuous flow, the boss's commitment to employees, and their relative geographic and corporal proximity to the boss. 'To be serving someone' is to be under their protection, living with them (or nearby) and being directly or indirectly fed by them. This immediately raises the questions of commensality in Amazonia, the process of kinship and the familiarization of animals and people, and the centrality of eating/not-eating (what and with whom) as a relational mode in the region (see among others Costa 2010 and this volume; Fausto 2002, 2007; Gow 1989, 1991, 1997; McCallum 2001;

Vilaça 1992, 2002; Viveiros de Castro 2012). To explore this idea in more depth, though, we need to analyse both the terms in which the Paumari conceive the prey position and the contexts in which this positioning most clearly appears.

The Prey Condition

Here it should be recalled that the Paumari describe themselves in many contexts as victims and prey, and often say that in the past they were like *igitha* – the prey of wild Indians (*Joima*) – or the pet animals of particular bosses (Bonilla 2005, 2007: 142–43). When telling of attacks by voracious Indians coming from afar to 'cnjoy their flesh', the Paumari describe their reactions using details that evoke prey fleeing from predators (e.g. hiding in a hollow log, the canopy of a tree or an armadillo hole, or fleeing into the forest). Only their shamans (*arabani*) and the ancient *Jobiri* managed to escape the voracity of these Others. The shamans were saved by their songs and transformational powers, whereas the *Jobiri* survived thanks to their physical training, agility, skill and capacity to camouflage themselves: they would dodge the arrows of the *Joima*, recover them and then shoot them back at their enemies (Bonilla 2007: 57–65).

In these accounts, the Paumari always appear as targets of attacks who are unable to retaliate directly. They are always defended or avenged by Others – distant similars with transformational powers, particularly *Jobiri* or captive children (whether Paumari adopted by enemies or enemy children who have been Paumarized). Here adoptive children serve as intermediaries between the Paumari and their aggressors or defenders. This amounts, therefore, to a pacifism mediated by third parties¹⁸ rather than a categorical rejection of aggression and revenge. Getting to know one's enemies and have some chance of transforming or dislocating their predatory perspective involves seducing them and allowing oneself to be (partially) captured. Given that it is usually the young of animal prey who are familiarized, it makes sense that the ideal subject to be captured is the child.

Shamans are also great defenders of the Paumari. But they are not described as soldiers like the *Jobiri*; instead, their transformational power is emphasized. More specifically, they protect the Paumari from external attacks by tricking aggressors or turning them into prey (*igitha*) (Bonilla 2007: 86–87). People say that the Paumari shamans freed a village from a siege by *Joima* who had surrounded one of their upriver encampments during a puberty ritual. To trick the enemies, the shamans imitated the cries of children, making it seem as though they were coming from one side of the village; meanwhile everyone escaped from the other side.

When white people came from Manaus to capture the Paumari and force them to do construction work in the city, a shaman called *Badori Titxatxa* (Grandfather Titxatxa) transformed them into otters as soon as their boats entered the lakes, or sent hordes of ants to invade the holds of their ships and devour all the stored food. ¹⁹ In this case the Paumari weapon against voracious enemies is the transformational power of shamans, and above all their trickery and cunning.

Direct violence and revenge are replaced, at least in the Paumari accounts, by agility, cunning and their capacity, as prey, to seduce predators through the mastery of bodily techniques (e.g. the agility of the *Jobini* and their capacity to transform into children) and verbal techniques (e.g. shamanic songs or imitation of children's crying and foreign languages). Attracting an *igitha* means observing it, knowing how to imitate its song (the Paumari consider all animals to have their own song and therefore to possess the capacity to communicate) and recognizing its habits, such as by knowing where it drinks water or where it roams, what type of fruits it eats and how to recognize its tracks (Gow 1989: 570). This also recalls the various techniques for attracting prey and familiarizing animals, and their relation to amorous seduction and kinship (Taylor 2000: 314–16).

There is not enough space here to list or detail the techniques the Paumari use to seduce, attract and adopt prey.²⁰ However we can note that the inversion of roles that they actualize by positioning themselves as prey with the aim of being partially familiarized by Others, establishes ties of commensality that force the Other to approach and assume the position of boss-father, 'affinizing' this figure and transforming it into a potential affine (Bonilla 2007: 367; on the ambiguity between affinity and consanguinity, see Brightman and Grotti this volume). The position of bossfather, seen from the viewpoint of predation, is a transformation of the enemy into a potential father-in-law, reflecting the 'function of dynamic mediation exerted by potential affines' (Viveiros de Castro 2002: 162). Forcing the boss-predator to become an adoptive father/potential fatherin-law also involves forcing this Other to recognize the possibility of the viewpoint, unstable by definition, of a shared world. Hence the ambiguity and instability Fausto evokes over the course of his text - regarding both the definition of the of 'master' or 'owner' position, and adoption and ownership relations (Fausto 2008: 335, 341, 352) - seems to me to express precisely the background of enmity and affinity intrinsic to the perspectivist dynamic, a background that conditions and actualizes the relations (Viveiros de Castro 2002: 157, 166).

Finally, returning to the Paumari, this apparent inversion also has to be considered in relation to their descriptions of their supposed pacifism. In these accounts, the Paumari compare themselves to birds (or prey) that prefer singing and coexisting peacefully to making war. This comparison

of themselves to prey (*igitha*) is especially frequent in historical contexts. When describing the eventual departure of the first Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) missionary to work in the area, for example, the Paumari recall their despair, comparing themselves to orphans who had been left 'like motherless ducklings'. At one level these comparisons are clearly metaphoric images that serve to emphasize the Paumari's present-day concern with establishing and maintaining peaceful relations with white people and other ethnic groups. At another level, though, they are absolutely literal affirmations that describe not only the relations of proximity and dependency that unite them with Others (the ideal of endogamy and commensality), but also their dispersed occupation of the region's beaches (they compare themselves to gulls who flock to the beaches in summer).

The analogies drawn between Paumari and *igitha* (prey, birds, pets) are also observed in several accounts I collected of the arrival of the first SIL missionary at Marahã Lake. Like the *Joima*, who had come from afar to 'relish the flesh of the Paumari', the *americanos* – foreigners coming from far away – were feared, as they were notorious for capturing Paumari children to make corned beef, which is still sold in the region today.²¹ The accounts evoke the first contact with the foreign woman, followed by the flight of the Paumari and then their gradual familiarization with the missionary (notably through gift giving; the exchange of goods for Paumari produce, especially craftwork; and the treatment of their skin diseases), until her eventual final departure and the consequent feeling of abandonment it provoked in the Paumari.²²

From this we can ascertain that when the danger is one of being devoured, the favoured viewpoint is that of the *igitha*-pet, but when the danger stems from exploitation and economic domination, the favoured perspective is that of the employee. It is this voluntary subjection on the part of the Paumari that enables the countercapture of foreigners seen as potentially dangerous and voracious. In other words, by placing themselves in the position of prey-client, the Paumari force the interlocutor to adopt the corresponding position of familiarizer, thus diffusing the imminent threat of being preyed on and devoured, at least temporarily, while also creating the possibility of subjection and ideally parasitism as forms of unlimited and univocal access to desired goods.

Hence, bosses who did not provide goods generously or refused to supply anything before being paid were killed by shamans through sorcery attacks (Bonilla 2007: 101–2).²³ Taking this idea to its ultimate consequences, the predatory weapon of the Paumari is undoubtedly their capacity to be subjected, forcing the interlocutor placed in the position of domination to take pity on them and adopt them as though they were indeed 'motherless ducklings'. Potential predators are dislocated from a position of exclusive domination to a more paternalist position, more de-

pendent on their subjects and committed to caring for them. This capacity to subvert predatory danger contains exceptional potency and force, not only to neutralize danger but also to obtain what one desires and define the relation in one's own terms, diverting the authority and power exerted by predatory bosses in one's own favour and preventing hierarchy from becoming consolidated by continually multiplying the relations of subjection and debts with diverse bosses (Bonilla 2013). Here pacifism, self-victimization and subjection appear to echo what Serres describes in his essay on parasitic practices (1980: 109–12, 390–91).

Living Well and Parasitism

One of the characteristics of the dynamic animating the Amazonian perspectivist world is precisely the ability to change the Other's viewpoint – that is, to dislocate oneself in order to provoke the dislocation of the Other, changing the latter's view by moving to affect the Other's perspective and thereby transform the relation, ideally to one's own benefit (Taylor and Viveiros de Castro 2006: 169). Thus the idea of subjection and parasitism as forms of micropredation and subversion of domination and hierarchy seems crucial to conceptualizing those collectives that, rather than present themselves as predators, warriors or the only truly human and brave peoples, tend to position themselves as victims or to submit voluntarily to the Other. Hence, the Paumari might say: 'to warriors, predation; to clients, parasitism'.

I wish to make clear that the concept of parasitism as a form of predation, constructed through the ritual figure of the parasite (the tick, the tapir's employee), is my own abstraction and remains to be explored and defined more carefully and in more depth. As I have shown elsewhere, certain aspects of the potency that the Paumari exert through their own subjection recall Deleuze's analysis of sadism and masochism in terms of humour.24 Indeed, Deleuze shows how the masochist's use of humour to subvert and deny any submission to the law and punishment enables the attainment of his or her objective: pleasure (Deleuze 1991: 77-79, 105-15). As I suggested above, subjection-parasitism can be conceived of as a form of ontological predation that has the Paumari relational figures of prey-client and pet-employee as its potential forms of actualization. The subjection to the Other as a mode of existence, or an actualization of a lived world - far from reflecting a de facto submission to an Other or the actualization of a hierarchy established by fixed and given positions (bosses and clients, owners and domains, masters and slaves), transcendental values and positions - is a subversion of the very possibility of domination. Hence, following Deleuze, the subject's literal submission to

the law 'nevertheless conceals elements of irony and humor which made political philosophy possible, for it allows the free play of thought at the upper and lower limits of the scale of law' (Deleuze 1991: 81). Thus humour 'is the attempt to sanction the law by recourse to an infinitely more righteous Best' (82). Systematically revealing oneself to be the victim of atrocities perpetrated by others and presenting oneself as the most defenceless being possible allows authority to be underlined in a more ferocious humoristic form (Bonilla 2007: 391–99). Talking specifically about the position of the parasite, Serres (1982: 26) also identifies its political potential: 'One day we will have to understand why the strongest is the parasite – that is to say, the weakest – why the one whose only function is to eat is the one who commands. And speaks. We have just found the place of politics'.

Pursuing the same logic, if being human means being a prey-client and living means being captured, this is because being subjected and familiarized-employed enables the ideal of micropredation and parasitism. As Serres (1982: 79) also emphasizes: 'The parasite is the essence of relation. It is necessary for the relation and ineluctable by the overturning of the force that tries to exclude it. But this relation is nonrelation. The parasite is being and nonbeing at the same time'. To be or not to be, in Serres' sense, is to be or not to be in a relation – or, in Paumari terms, 'to be captured' or 'not to be captured' (equivalent to not existing: Bonilla 2007: 215–17, 259–60). Hence, in Taylor's (1996: 210) words, '[b]eing a live human person is not a state defined as such ... yet it is nonetheless precisely circumscribed by the articulation of a set of non-explicit premises. Being a person is thus an array or cline of relational configurations, a set of links in a chain of metamorphoses simultaneously open and bounded'.

What the Paumari aim for, more than the control of Others and predation itself - as I initially suggested (2005) - is the parasitic ideal, the desire for a world where bosses become continually captured and apprehended captors, making them eternal providers not only of manufactured goods but of everything deemed indispensable to living in the world: kin, names, food, exchanges and enemies. In a world of prey, the ideal form of predation is parasitism. However, it is essential to remain aware of the instability of what defines these positions, so as not to lose track of the dynamism of transformations that never close in on themselves or fix positions, but rather 'multiply the mediations' (Serres 1982: 220). For the Paumari, then, living well is different from what has so often been understood or described as living in peaceful coexistence among kin, following ideals of 'tranquillity', 'conviviality' and 'emotional comfort' that exclude predation and alterity, and banishing difference and expelling it beyond the boundaries of the group (Belaunde 2000: 209; Overing and Passes 2000: 1, 7-19).

In sum, this ideal limit of parasitism is where the Paumari person lives well, but there is a price to pay: it involves living well among Others and thus an exposure to risk and danger, 'living dangerously as the existential condition of the social form' (Viveiros de Castro 2012: 29, 32). Submitting oneself – being captured – forces the predator to become a host and thus constitutes oneself too as a discrete, invisible, relentless predator.

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Notes

Translated by David Rodgers.

- 1. On the debt peonage system in Amazonia, see Geffray (1995, 1997), Léna, Geffray and Araújo (1996) and Rezende Figueira (2004), as well as the collection edited by Carneiro da Cunha and Almeida (2002).
- 2. As is common in this region, the native conception of time and history refers to a past divided into 'times' or 'eras': see Costa (2007: 48), Gow (1991: 59-90), Grotti (2013: 17-19), Santos-Granero (2007: 48), Taylor (2007: 155).
- 3. The Paumari use the same word, *igitha*, to denote both pet and prey, and the distinction is usually clear from context, though speakers frequently play upon the ambiguity that the single term affords.
- 4. Rival (1999) describes the Huaorani identification of themselves as prey in a pioneering article that I found extremely valuable when thinking through the Paumari data.
- 5. For a similar situation among the Urarina, see the recent analysis by Walker (2012).
- 6. The term Jara is probably taken from Lingua Geral, though it should be emphasized that it does not have the same acceptation as the Tupi-Guarani term jara, meaning 'owner' or 'master' (Fausto 2008: 331). Jara, in Paumari, designates the category 'white people' and more specifically ribeirinho, 'river dweller', contrasting with the categories americano (foreigner) or Joima (wild Indian). It is also important to stress the difference between Jara and kariva, the former designating the ribeirinhos and the second the patrões (bosses). They are not synonymous. In no context in Paumari is Jara used to designate the category 'owner' or even 'patrão.'
- 7. The main bosses for whom the Paumari worked later settled in Lábrea, where they became store owners. Many of the former white clients of these bosses remained on the river shore, becoming the so-called little bosses, patrōezinhos, while others became river traders.
- 8. This nostalgia or positive recollection of the period of subjection to the bosses is also found in other ethnographic contexts. e.g. the Piro say that subjection to the

- bosses allowed them access to the 'civilized world', i.e. to knowledge, history and kinship (Gow 1991, 1993: 332-34).
- 9. See Santos-Granero (2007: 60) for a description of the ritual appropriation of San Juan fireworks by the Yanesha. In the Paumari case, the São João event is and continues to be a *Jara* (white people's) festival during which people obtain godparents (compadres and comadres), though it is sometimes held conjointly with certain ibinika rituals.
- 10. Here I use the term soul-body to translate *abonoi*, a term that contextually designates both the trunk (of the tree and the body) and the body's parts as a whole, as well as the soul, and which could be taken to designate something like an animated body or a personified soul (Bonilla 2007: 145–49). See Lima (2002) for a discussion of the perspectival and relational complexity of Amerindian terms for soul and body.
- 11. See Bonilla (2007: 200-205) for a gloss of the songs.
- 12. Another food spirit that comes to its *ihinika* in human-boss form is the pirarucu fish (*babadi*), one of whose employees is the bird *bikiakia* (unidentified). Meanwhile the tambaqui fish (*i'oa*) in its human form is a river dweller (*Jara*) who likes sugar cane, rum and forró music. The human forms of the fish live in villages and towns located at the bottom of the Purus River and the region's lakes.
- 13. The theme of parasitism and the figure of the parasite have been discussed in other Amazonian contexts, including rituals, as in the case of the Miraña described and analysed by Karadimas (2003). Adopting a different but no less thought-provoking approach, works on Chinese Mongolia and Tibet have also explored the theme of parasitism (see Da Col 2012).
- 14. This usually (though not only) occurs when the parents fail to respect the prescriptions (kaaji) that apply after the *ibinika* has been held (e.g. parents should not hit their child, allow her to be hurt or scared, or let him fall, and generally are to take exceptional care of the child).
- 15. For the Evangelicals, the dead follow an entirely different path before finally arriving at the House of God (*Deus gorana*) (Bonilla 2009).
- 16. This description of the human form the rain boss, the meteorological spirit of the rainstorm is a transformation of the mythological figure of *Bahi*, father of *Jakoniro*, father-in-law of *Jamapitoari* and insatiable eater of manatee flesh (see Bonilla 2007: 34–35 and Menendez 2011). Here the mythic position of the boss/father-in-law clearly expresses the language of potential affinity.
- 17. The *Jobiri* are probably the Jubery or Juberis, described by travellers as a Puru-Puru subgroup. The *Jobiri* are described as warriors, and belonging to this category was hereditary (transmitted both patrilineally and matrilineally). I discuss this topic in another work.
- 18. This position recalls that of the included third (or "thirdness") as a position of 'complex effectuation of potential affinity', described by Viveiros de Castro (2002: 153–154).
- 19. The Paumari always categorize insects that bite or sting as predators and sometimes call them *feras* (wild beasts) in Portuguese. This reinforces the idea of micropredation as a potentially full predatory act.
- 20. The difference between definitive capture and temporary or partial capture should be established here. The Paumari model of adoption of children (i.e. internal adoption, generally of grandchildren by G+2) is that of fostering, in which the child spends a long time living with and helping his or her adoptive parents.

However, such children may go back to living with their real parents and never cease to recognize them (and often refer to them) as such. Likewise, I observed the Paumari treating their pets as adoptive children, raising them to adulthood before releasing them, explaining that they had to return to their original kin but (at least in the case of birds) would come back to visit them. This once again evokes the idea of the instability of the position of familiarizable prey and the person in general (Taylor 1993, 2000; Vilaça 2005). In my view, capture and predation in this context are not dynamics that can be subsumed by the concept of 'property', even if it is defined as temporary or 'relational' (Santos-Granero this volume).

- 21. The theme of the cannibal stranger (*pelacara*, *sacacara*, *pishtaco*) recurs throughout the region and the entire Andean foothills (see Gow 2001: 41, 256–60).
- 22. The conception of the self as 'orphaned' or 'abandoned' is not exclusive to the Paumari, just as it is not necessarily related to their ontological particularity: it may also be read through the themes of capture and sickening (Taylor 1997: 151; Viveiros de Castro 1986: 184–96).
- 23. There is yet another twist here with regard to shamanism and the relation between shamans and auxiliary spirits, since it is precisely in this relation that predation is expressed and realized in affirmative form (Bonilla 2007: 351-56).
- 24. For an analysis of subversive humour and laughter in Paumari rituals, see Bonilla (2007).

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Ownership and Nurture

Studies in Native Amazonian Property Relations

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