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THE LOWLAND SOUTH AMERICAN WORLD

The Lowland South American World showcases cutting-edge research on the anthropology of Lowland South America, providing both an in-depth knowledge of Lowland South American life ways and engaging readers in urgent social, environmental, and political issues in the contemporary world.

Covering the vast expanse of a region that includes all of South America except for the Andes, its 40 chapters engage with questions of what "Lowland South America" means as a geographical designation, both in studies of Indigenous Amazonian peoples and other lowland areas of the continent. They emphasize the multiple ways that the practices and cosmologies challenge conventional Western ideas about nature, culture, personhood, sociality, community, and Indigenous people.

Some of the region's well-known contributions to anthropology, such as animism, perspectivism, and novel approaches to the body are updated here with new ethnography and in light of the varying political situations in which the region's peoples find themselves. With contributions by authors from 15 different countries, including a number of Indigenous anthropologists and activists, this book will set the agenda for future research in the continent.

The World of Lowland South America is a valuable resource for scholars and students of anthropology, Latin American studies and Indigenous studies, as well history, geography and other social sciences.

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As the editors of this book, we owe thanks to a great many people who helped make it a reality. Admittedly, this project—which was initially proposed in 2020—at times seemed bound to fail. Whether working with contributions from 48 authors from some 15 countries, written in several different languages, or the unanticipated consequences of Covid-19 pandemic, the scale and unique timing of this book has presented major challenges. Its completion is in large part the result of wide-ranging support from an international community of scholars whose enthusiasm for a book bringing together new and emerging research in Lowland South America has given us encouragement at every stage. Of course, it is the work of the authors of the individual chapters—and the diverse lowland communities they have studied—that have made what we believe is an excellent and timely collection. But we also acknowledge the support of a much wider community of scholars around the world who voiced their support for this project from the outset, including those who did not contribute chapters to it.

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PART II

MYTH, MEMORY, AND STORYTELLING

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE ORIGIN MYTH OF A MYTH

THE "LAND WITHOUT EVIL" REVISITED[1]

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HOME BY THE SEA

In May 1912, in a swamp by the Tietê River shoreline in São Paulo, German anthropologist Curt Nimuendaju encountered a group of Guarani Indians. Decimated, sick, and starving, these "genuine Indians of the rainforest"—with lip adornments, bows, and arrows—came from Paraguay but could only mumble a few words in Spanish and knew nothing of Portuguese. As Nimuendaju observed, "They wanted to go across the sea eastwards and such was their confidence in the success of the plan that they almost made me fall into despair. It was their only topic of conversation" (1987 [1914]: 105). Yielding to their stubborn determination, he decided to accompany them, covering 43 miles in 3 days before finally camping by the sea. After a long, rainy night, the Guarani were downhearted, perplexed before the vastness of the ocean, and sunk into frustration and helplessness. Following a series of discussions and some ritual ceremonies, Nimuendaju managed to convince them to settle down at the newly established Araribá Indian reservation, but as he could not stay and live with them, the Guarani soon resumed their plans to migrate beyond the seas in search of redemption (105–108).

Nimuendaju's fate would remain chained to this utopian quest. When he published *The Legends of Creation and Destruction of the World* in 1914, he could hardly foresee its repercussions. The text would become a classic, "one of the most famous ethnographies of Brazilian anthropology, an essential text for the Tupi-Guarani studies and of major significance in Nimuendaju's work" (Viveiros de Castro, 1987: xviii). With overwhelming simplicity, it describes his fascinating adventure among the Apapocúva, a Guarani-speaking group in the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso do Sul. If we think about Nimuendaju's biography, marked by austerity and modesty, it is unlikely he could have done it differently: we cannot dissociate his descriptive accuracy from his early orphanhood, his lack of university education, his passionate self-taught ethnographic background acquired while working in a factory, or the poignant efforts of his half-sister to pay the travel expenses of his first journey to South America with her meager salary as a teacher (Baldu, 1945; Pereira, 1946; Laraia, 1988). This canonical work includes, for the first time, an expression that

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became a key trope in regional studies and popular imagination up to the present-day: *yvy marãey*, the "Land without evil."[2] We can therefore trace the origin of the myth of the "land without evil" to the famous ethnologist's pilgrimage with a small group of Guarani Indians, and particularly to the pioneering text that was born from that experience.

A century later, one of Nimuendaju's "fundamentals of the Apapocúva religion" reappears in Bolivia's new Political Constitution: "The State assumes and promotes, as ethical and moral principles of a plural society: *ama qhilla*, *ama llulla*, *ama suwa* (not to be a slacker, a liar or a thief), *suma qamaña* (to live well), *ñandereko* (life in harmony), *teko kavi* (good life), *ivi maraei* (land without evil), and *qhapaj ñan* (noble life or path)" (Bolivia 2009: chap. 1, art. 8).[3] Obviously, the principles of the "land without evil" have undergone countless modifications during nearly a century of migration without an apparent ending. Its itinerary, regardless of millennial echoes, looks like a garden of forking paths.

Nimuendaju himself may have perceived this complexity when he wrote: "The Guarani Indians are so well known that it seems superfluous to write anything about them" (Nimuendaju, 1987 [1914]: 3). It is somewhat paradoxical, then, that we could say the same of his own work because, apart from his own merits or even the fervor with which generations of Americanists treasure it, it seems as if the author and his work have been more celebrated than read (Viveiros de Castro, 1987: xviii). If we look beyond the Guarani Indians, the author or even his famous book about the "land without evil," we may thus pose the same question: what can we say about the myth that has not been already written? Like Nimuendaju with the Apapocúva, what we can certainly do is follow the migration of the idea: whether Apapocúva myth, Tupi-Guarani myth or anthropological myth, the "land without evil" is in any case a myth, and therefore we can trace its trajectory as a *mythologique* (Lévi-Strauss, 1964: 71).

Myth proposes a sensory language to rethink reality as a whole, without dividing it into areas and segmenting its understanding. By means of an extensive comparative analysis, Claude Lévi-Strauss reveals that the Bororo bird-nester story—the "key myth," "myth of reference," or heuristic point of departure (M1)[4]—is but an inverted version of the neighboring Gê myths (M7-12), and gradually the dense chain of transformations spreads to encompass the entire Amerindian universe (Lévi-Strauss, 1964-1971). By translating every formal opposition into an analogue code (nature and culture, raw and cooked, container and content, clean and dirty, and so on), each myth works as a transformation of another one, and any given text cannot be distinguished from its "variants" or "versions" as it actually *is* the total sum of its transformations. In a similar fashion, by taking the Apapocúva story about *yvy marãey* as reference myth (M1), we could analyze the ways in which the text has mutated through time and space (M2, M3, M4, and so on) and even transcended the realm of "mythology" to gain new life in unexpected domains such as political philosophy, theology, literature, Indigenous politics, and even popular imagination.

M1. CURT NIMUENDAJU: THE HEROIC TIMES

The land is old, the Apapocúva said, and the final cataclysm seemed imminent. To escape the apocalypse they trusted their *pajés* (shamans) and their colorful repertoire

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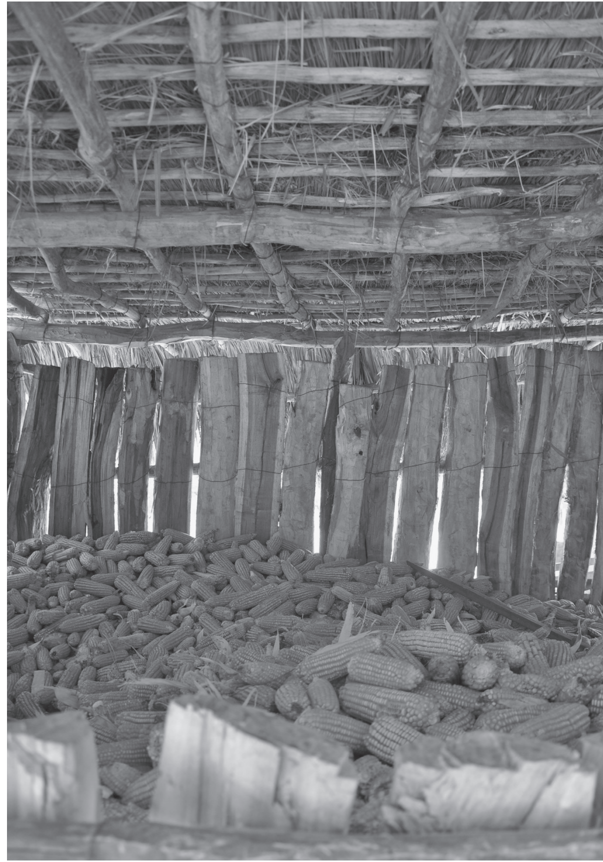

Figure 5.1 Image of abundance among the Guarani: The avati'o or "house of corn."
Source: Photograph by Diego Villar, Campo Durán, 2012.

of magical resources, dances and chants, but above all their capacity to travel in person to the land without evil, where crops grow themselves, celebration is everlasting, and death does not exist. These expert guides did not always agree on the coordinates: "The opinions of the competent *pajés* differ slightly regarding the location where paradise is to be searched" (Nimuendaju, 1987 [1914]: 97). Some thought that they should follow the steps of the mythical hero Guyraypotý after the universal deluge: fasting, chanting, and dancing until the body becomes light enough to reach the sky. Others, instead, believed that the land without evil may be found in this world, and more specifically in its center, where Ñanderuvuçú built his primordial home. Or else, according to the most popular belief, you should go "eastwards, beyond the seas," because the final destination "where you do not die" is the paradise that awaits humans at the end of their existence, but it is also a place that can be reached during our lifetime through the appropriate rites. It is undoubtedly for this reason that Nimuendaju himself did not hesitate in joining the Apapocúva's ordeal: a desperate quest, with no apparent chance of success, but an adventure that at any rate would not end in defeatist resignation (Nimuendaju, 1987 [1914], cap. 5).

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It is pointless to speculate whether this seminal version of the myth (M1) is a direct reflection of the "Apapocúva land without evil," or whether it is the original matrix or even a sort of primordial archetype. In any case, by showing us an historical photograph of the relationship between the Apapocúva and their chronicler at the turn of the twentieth century, Nimuendaju's text constitutes a sort of "foundational myth" or "reference myth" that contains all the ingredients which, when added in different quantities, will lead to a series of interpretations. The ethnic factor: The Apapocúva Guarani of Mato Grosso. The mythical-eschatological factor: the looming world's destruction as a "fundamental topic" of native religion. The prophetic factor: salvation through migration toward the "land without evil," led by the *pajés*. The very notion of *yvy maraey*: an otherworldly paradise and, at the same time, a panacea "on the surface of the Earth" attainable in this life. Finally, there is the ritual discipline that this quest involves: fasting, dancing, chanting, and migrating beyond the eastern seas.

Perhaps the most important question is that which Nimuendaju asks himself at the end of his narrative: "Are these 19th-century Guarani migrations the final death throes of that former migration that led the Tupi-Guarani to their coastal settlements in colonial times?" He then makes an "assumption": "The drive of the Tupi-Guarani migrations was not warlike expansion, but most likely a religious reason" (Nimuendaju, 1987 [1914]: 107–108). Timidly outlined, the question and hypothesis occupy just a few lines of the several-hundred-page book. But they provide, however, a glimpse of what Nimuendaju perceived as a significant connection between a proven historical event generally known to many Tupi- and Guarani-speaking groups (i.e., the migration) and a specific explanation offered by the Apapocúva (i.e., the search for the land without evil). In this "original sin" (Pompa, 2004) of Guarani studies, the primordial intuition becomes depersonalized and triggers the transformation cycle. The myth starts to think itself.

M2. ALFRED MÉTRAUX: THE ORIGINAL SIN

If the motto "land without evil" owes its appearance to Nimuendaju, it is also true that it has gone down in history and achieved its longed-for immortality thanks to another ancestor of Americanist ethnology: Alfred Métraux. The Swiss ethnologist interpreted "the old texts narrating the migration of several Tupi-Guarani tribes from an Apapokúva perspective or, rather, from Nimuendaju's perspective" (Melià, 1995: 314). In fact, when he states that "we may start this study from the known to the unknown," Métraux deals with his own interpretation of the sixteenth-century chronicles from the point of view of the Apapocúva myth, thus revisiting "the Tupi-Guarani historical migrations" (Métraux, 1928a: 201).

In an elegant prose where the eschatological system becomes a "messianism" and the religious experts none other than "god-men," Métraux re-interprets the Tupi-Guarani religion based on some of the very same elements described in M1. But these seem to be broadened, radicalized, and expanded beyond the initial boundaries of space and time. He widens considerably the ethnic frame of the myth, and cultural kinship becomes linguistic kinship: from the few hundreds of Nimuendaju's Apapocúva Indians he moves to the whole linguistic family, and his conclusions are refocused in relation to the "Tupi-Guarani Indians" or the

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"Tupi-Guarani civilization" (Métraux, 1928b; Bossert and Villar, 2007). From being the specific motor of Apapocúva migrations, the "land without evil" becomes the general key to understanding all "Tupi-Guarani" migrations recorded since colonial and even pre-Columbian times (Métraux, 1928a: 213). Pajé Tupi, Caraïbe Tupinambá, Tumpa Chiriguano Indians: they all share the same obsessive reminiscence of a fantasy land where no one can die. This discourse soon leaves eschatology behind. In the case of colonial migrations, it even appears transformed into a symbol of freedom, accounting for the fight and struggle against the European oppressor, and even as the reason for strange rites like ritual cannibalism, ecstatic dances, and the rebellions led by the Chiriguano *tumpas* ("god-men" or prophets) in the eighteenth century.

Métraux then compares the staunch belief in the existence of a terrestrial paradise in societies so remote in space and time as the Tembé, Tupinambá, or Chiriguano with the Apapocúva's "land without evil." His scholarly rationale turns this fusion into the "fundamental" element of "Tupi-Guarani" religion and even of their sociology. Thus, M2 turns M1's lukewarm assumptions into scientific facts and statements. Not only does it provide academic legitimacy and credibility to the very idea of a "land without evil," it also propels it toward a much broader scenario suitable for the proliferation of variants, ramifications, and nuances.

M3. EGON SCHADEN: CHRISTIANITY AND ACCULTURATION

From the 1950s onwards, the "land without evil" becomes a recurrent theme and there is hardly any work about the "Tupi-Guarani Indians" that does not mention it in one way or another. It is impossible to cover all of these studies in this chapter, but there are a series of well-known names whose views cannot be overlooked. Leaving behind the tendency toward wild guesses, these new studies reassess previous ethnological comparisons. Although they do not disregard the famous Tupinambá or the other Tupi groups, they focus progressively on Guarani-speaking groups from Brazil and Paraguay. In the works of Egon Schaden (1913–1991), a founding father of Brazilian ethnology of German origin, the "myth of paradise" continues to be one of the "fundamental aspects of the Guarani culture." Nevertheless, although taking eschatology as his starting point, like M1, Schaden opts for a sociological approach in his exegesis. By initially citing a Ñandeva Indian stating that "all Guarani Indians are Catholic," he builds his argument around analytic factors such as "acculturation," "*mestizaje*," "acculturative crisis," or "detribalization" (Schaden, 1998 [1954]: 169).

In this novel discursive context, the "land without evil" appears as a utopia where this world's unfulfilled wishes may be met. Schaden approaches it as a "last resort" that emerges from a resilient set of mixtures, borrowings, and tensions between tribal "cataclysmology" or "heroic mythology," "Christian" apocalyptic preaching of the final judgment attributed to Jesuit catechism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,[5] and a residue of "alien elements" such as the dances, alcohol, smoking, football, and excess fat in the diet attributed to *Caboclos* (people of mixed Indigenous and White descent) (Schaden, 1998 [1954]: 207–208). All of these synthetize a state of *deprivation* that reveals the frustrating experience of interethnic contact.

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Schaden persists with the thesis of a "basically mystic orientation of the Guarani culture." Religion has both a symbolic and a political role as "a core of resistance of tribal culture." For modern Guarani people, the "land without evil" means "the restoration of tribal customs in their original purity," and it is above all a pragmatic ideology: a tool of resistance against acculturation in the manner of the *Ghost Dance* of North American Indians (1998 [1954]: 178, 190, 214).

Although his ethnohistorical footnotes abound in comparisons with other Tupi-Guarani groups, Schaden reintroduces the more rigorous geographic and temporal frame of M1 by considering the specific differences between representations of the "land without evil" among the Ñandeva, Mbyá, and Kaiowá of Mato Grosso "as a result of the many different historical situations they underwent," and particularly among the tribal groups that attempted to migrate and others that opted to seek salvation in their own land (195). Even if tentatively, M3 thus reintroduces the historical factor and a specific sociological analysis, which can germinate the seeds of further critical readings.

M4. LEÓN CADOGAN: MYSTIC POETICS

León Cadogan was the son of Australian migrants who arrived in Paraguay at the beginning of twentieth century to live their own version of the land without evil at the socialist colony called "El Paraíso del Trabajador" (The Labourer's Paradise). A self-made linguist and ethnologist, Cadogan stands out in Paraguayan culture for his detailed studies on the Guarani Indians, which were funded with underpaid work at a meat processing plant or as an English teacher, as a *yerba mate* plantation manager or even as a Chief of Investigations at the Guairá Police Department.

He was finally appointed "Curator of the Mbyá Guarani Indians" (Cadogan, 1998) in the Guairá region, and his major contribution to Americanist literature materialized in 1959, with the publication of the classic *Ayvy Rapyta: Mythical Texts of the Mbyá-Guarani of the Guairá* (Cadogan 1992 [1959]. As a reward for negotiating the release of Mario Higinio, a Guarani Indian who was in prison at Villarica for homicide, the wise men of the tribe decided to teach him "The first beautiful words." It is a corpus of baroque texts filled with metaphors and symbolisms that narrate the origin of the earth, of God, and of *Ayvu Rapyta* itself, which is the word-soul constituting the foundation of Mankind. His patient notes take us through a "thinking where one doesn't know what to admire more: its inherent metaphysical depth or the sumptuous beauty of the language expressing it" (P. Clastres, 1974a: 8). Abounding in puns and uppercase letters, the Guarani saga conveys a mystique oozing with sadness for the ailments of this "imperfect" land and a longing for primordial times: "The true Father Ñamandu, the First, begot flames and a tenuous mist from part of its own divinity, from the wisdom contained in its own divinity, and by virtue of its creative wisdom" (Cadogan, 1992 [1959]). Here eschatology and the land without evil are no longer mere "foundations" of a religion, or even a culture; now, by means of a rather unique rhetorical flow, they become the synonyms of that very religion or culture, and even of the people themselves who dream and chant with them.

M4 thus propounds a secret and esoteric myth transmitted from generation to generation in the depths of the Guairá rainforest. The sociology and history of M3 are left behind. On the one hand, the Mbyá are shown as an isolated group, with an

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untarnished oral tradition, sheltered from the missionary agenda. On the other hand, meditation and words replace the physical migration to the land where no one dies (P. Clastres, 1974a: 9). One cannot but wonder whether this "verbal inebriation"—as Clastres puts it—truly constitutes the Indigenous version of the myth, or whether the myths are being conceived among themselves through languages and even through people. Indeed, it is remarkable that the Mbyá who sang their cryptic narratives to Cadogan did not specifically mention the expression "land without evil." When they narrate the adventure of the Great Father across the seas, it is Cadogan himself who assumes that it is the last stage of the pilgrimage of the soul, and that "it is Parakáo (the parrot) which finally decides if the candidate is worthy of entering the land of the blessed, *Ywy mara ey*" (Cadogan, 1992 [1959]: 141). The narrator only uses the expression to describe the asceticism of the virtuous man who adjusts his behavior to the moral precepts coded in the myth, performs his spiritual exercises, and sticks to a strict vegetarian diet in order to lighten his body and free himself from the burden of *teko achy* (human imperfections), and to thus be able to reach Paradise without going through the ordeal of human death (chap. 6). Despite the singularity of his paraphrasing, and by injecting an unusual dose of enthusiasm—in a strict etymological sense—into the myth, *Ayvy Rapyta* has left a deep mark on Guarani studies (Viveiros de Castro, 1987: 29–30; Fausto, 2005: 391).

As a minor detail, which is nonetheless important for its consequences in Chiriguano studies, the expression *oñemokandire* also figures in his text, translated as "the bones that stay fresh":

> With this expression, they describe the passing to immortality without undergoing the ordeal of death, that is, ascending into heaven after purifying the body by means of spiritual exercises […] It is quite striking that a non-Guarani nation should have been named Kandire in times of conquest. Were they perhaps considered immortal for possessing superior culture?
>
> (Cadogan, 1992 [1959]: 101, our translation)

With this assumption the original sin becomes sin, pure and simple. Cadogan—and after him Hélène Clastres and Thierry Saignes—link a specific Mbyá notion of immortality to the migration of future Chiriguano to the Andean piedmont in search of "the Kandire," the "masters of metal" mentioned by the Guarani Indians in the sixteenth century. The Kandire legend—which is not referred to as such by the historical sources—thus starts with Cadogan and his successors, as a synonym of a sumptuous land which is never alluded to either by the Mbyá.

M5. PIERRE AND HÉLÈNE CLASTRES: THE MYTH AGAINST THE STATE

Pierre and Hélène Clastres draw extensively on the texts published by Cadogan (and on his translations and comments) in their renowned research on the Tupi-Guarani Indians, as well as they rely on the classic works by Alfred Métraux.[6] The imaginary of "the land without evil" is placed within the frame of ancient Tupi-Guarani prophetism, which depicts a profound religious crisis arising from the

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Figure 5.2 Chiriguano.
Source: Photograph by Villa Montes, 1906. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum.

ongoing emergence of powerful chieftainships during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Prophetism acts as a sort of antibody generated by the Indigenous society itself against the rise of a centralizing political power that will break up the traditional order and change relations among men in an irreversible manner; or else, in Clastres's more cryptic but recurrent language, it constitutes an endogenous antidote against "the One" (social stratification, hierarchy, and the State) (P. Clastres, 1974b; H. Clastres 1975). At times, however, the longing for redemption becomes more than a mere defense against hierarchy and even manages to anarchically dissolve sociability as a whole:

> The quest for the Land without Evil is, therefore, the active denial of society as such. It is a genuinely collective asceticism which, precisely because it is collective, dooms the Indians to failure; if the migrations were bound to fail it is because the intention that prompted them –the dissolution of society– amounted to suicide.
>
> (H. Clastres, 1975: 84, our translation)[7]

As with Métraux, and in sync with the generalizing pretensions of French ethnology, the line of argument falls into a comparative abstraction, moving abruptly from the sixteenth-century Tupinambá to the present-day Mbyá or Chiripá in Paraguay, or from the Apapocúva of São Paulo to the Chiriguano of the Andean piedmont:

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> If we compare the content of this ancient prophetic discourse with the word of contemporary Guarani shamans, we may note that they say exactly the same, and that today's Beautiful Words repeat the message of former times. There is, however, a difference: as it is currently impossible to realize the dream of reaching *ywy mara ey*, the Land without Evil, by means of a religious migration, the Indians now wait for the gods to speak, to announce the coming of the time of things that do not die, of accomplished plenitude, of that state of perfection wherein and whereby men transcend their condition. If they no longer set out on their journey, they stay to listen to the gods, and continually pronounce the Beautiful Words that question the deities.
>
> (P. Clastres, 1974a: 9, our translation)

The Clastres thus evoke recurrent themes, implying seemingly mechanical laws and unquestionable statements:

> The desire to abandon an imperfect world has never ceased among the Guarani. Throughout four centuries of painful history, it has never failed to be a source of inspiration for the Indians. Moreover, it has become almost the sole central feature around which they organize the life and thought of society, to the extent that it is clearly defined as a religious community.
>
> (P. Clastres, 1974a: 9, our translation)

From "migrant activism" to "contemplative wisdom," M5 thus displays an underlying logic whereby "metaphysics replaces mythology," such as "Our last, our father the first, making his body rise from the primeval night, the divine sole of his feet, the small round base, in the heart of the primeval night, he unfolds them by unfolding himself" (Clastres, 1974a: 18). Previously magnified by Métraux, the myth's ethnic factor expands again to comprise all Amerindian peoples (as a whole and even "primitive society," insofar as "society against the State" and at times even a society fighting against itself) (P. Clastres, 1974b; H. Clastres 1975). From this point of view, the land without evil appears as a pretext—a colorful but, after all, a local one—for a logic that becomes almost transcendental.

M6. BRANISLAVA SUSNIK: THE SILENCED MYTH

An uneasy silence preceded several subsequent questions about the myth. First, and most importantly, is that of Branislava Susnik, a key, if often ignored, figure of the Americanist canon. During the 1960s–1970s, when Guarani mysticism was at its peak, Susnik wrote very little about the topic, even if she dedicated a pioneering text to the "prehistoric Tupi-Guarani scattering" and analyzed the ancient prophetic movements of the Chiriguano in another book (Susnik, 1975, 1968, respectively). However, the "land without evil" is not a recurrent theme in her work. With her characteristic abstruse jargon, she mentions it in passing in one of her later works:

> The scattering mobility of the Tupi-Guarani is characterized by conscious expansive anthropodynamics with three specific purposes: the quest for the "good earth" with either dominated or peaceful peripheries, trans-conceptualized in the

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Figure 5.3 Hélène Clastres in South America.
Source: © Collège de France, Archives Laboratoire d'anthropologie sociale/Fonds Archives photographiques Pierre Clastres et Lucien Sebag, Mission 1963.

> "land without evil," when migratory movements meant fleeing or seeking refuge; intercommunal festivals as a symbol of productive-subsistence abundance; and the ethnocentric consciousness of ethnocultural superiority and of warfare assurance manifested in the anthropophagic rite.
>
> (Susnik, 1994: 81, our translation)

The rest of Susnik's work reveals an unresolved tension, along with a marked uneasiness, regarding the "land without evil," at times giving the idea too much attention, and at others too little. Sometimes, the Slovenian scholar puts forward an explanation based on a generalized logic, which dilutes the typical consistency of the Guarani (or Tupi-Guarani) mytheme by reducing it—or heightening it—to a sort of archetype: "The quest for a magical paradise on earth is as old as man," and in fact all

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the peoples have endeavored to find it, like the Ona, who "migrated from the Bering Strait in the north of the continent down to Tierra del Fuego searching for this paradise" (Susnik 1991). At other times, she gives in to particularism, and the conscious pursuit of the "good earth" seems to be linked with regional interethnic contexts rather than with any motivation of a symbolic nature. Without directly alluding to the narrative, Susnik deactivates its reverberations in the Kandire imaginary in an almost anecdotal way. In her writing, the actors' motives are practical and the epic accomplishment is demystified. The Guarani migrate to the west in search of Andean metal and of people known as "the Kandire" simply because there was an Inca mine exploited by a character called Condori: "the use of the name 'Kandir/Kandire' referring to the Inca was limited to the area behind the Guapay River; 'Kandire' may possibly be identified with 'Condori'" (Susnik, 1961: 163). Far from any kind of fabulation, in M6 migrations only seek out riches and precious metals; if there is an inspiring myth, it is then that of the "land of metal," and Cadogan's mysterious "bones that stay fresh" are ignored.

M7. BARTOMEU MELIÀ: TOWARD EQUILIBRIUM

We find a fairly moderate effort to achieve interpretative balance in the work of the Spanish Jesuit Bartomeu Melià (1932–2019). A prominent figure in Guarani studies, his investigations attempt to reconcile history, ethnology, and linguistics, and seem to be therefore closer to Cadogan's and Schaden's detailed exegeses than to the Clastres's ambitious generalizations. Melià draws on Ruiz de Montoya's classical Guarani dictionary, where the *yvy marãne'y* expression is translated as "unblemished soil" (Ruiz de Montoya, 2011 [1640]: 298). The moral and religious meaning is rather the result of a subsequent play of resignifications; in fact, revisiting Schaden's thesis, Melià traces the perennial Jesuit and colonial influence to the old Apapocúva or Mbyá texts. He also contemplates a variety of causalities at stake, and does not present the most "idealist" or "materialistic" interpretations of the myth as necessarily contradictory:

> What did or does a Guarani Indian seek when he says he searches for the land without evil? The answer is not unambiguous, and probably includes several levels of understanding, and entails several historical moments.
>
> (Melià, 1995 [1987]: 291–292, our translation)

However, his interpretation insists on the unresolved issue of the pan-Guarani validity of the myth. The subtitle of his study is "economics and prophecy" because the imaginary of "the land without evil" alludes, precisely, to the quest for a physical territory where the economics of reciprocity—allegedly typical of "all the Guarani Indians of all time"—is viable (Melià, 1995: 315). Hence, his rereading of M7 does not bring into question the amazing diffusion of the narrative. Although it attempts to differentiate itself from previous extrapolations in a more explicit manner than Susnik, agrees that the reasons for the migrations are probably manifold, and it also states that "the search for the land without evil is—at least as far as we know—the fundamental and sufficient reason for the Guarani migration" (Melià, 1995: 291).

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M8. DECONSTRUCTING THE MYTH

By the 1990s, anthropological re-readings of the myth had multiplied. On the one hand, Tupi-Guarani ethnology reconnects it—as did Métraux or Clastres in the past—with modern ethnographic data and, at the same time, with the cosmology of the ancient coastal Tupi. Now, however, the comparison is placed on a specifically structural plane, focusing on the play of oppositions, inversions, and permutations. Thus, the *teka kati we* ("site of good existence"), abode of the Araweté cannibal *maï'hete* gods, is said to be characterized by beauty and abundance, where crops grow themselves, there is perpetual rejuvenation, and death does not exist. This utopian space is projected onto the celestial plane as a function of a clear vertical axis, unlike many other Tupi-Guarani utopias that are displaced to the east or to the west, which relates to the cosmological precedence of a horizontal man/animal relationship over the vertical man/deity relationship found in the Araweté case (Viveiros de Castro, 1992: 69–70, 85–86). Viveiros de Castro's description appears as an ethnographically updated variant of "the land without evil," formulated in eschatological and even utopian terms. At the same time, it swiftly functions as a structural variant of the old Tupi theme that juxtaposed utopia and eschatology in that otherworldly destination that brave warriors can reach by dying gloriously in the anthropophagic ritual.

At the same time, the strongest questioning to the mythologization of "the land without evil" comes from historical studies. The first wave of criticism stands out for its rigorous deconstructive zeal. The archaeologist Francisco Silva Noelli was the first to explicitly speak of the "Land Without Evil" as an "academic myth" originating with Nimuendaju and later consolidated by Métraux, which should be questioned on the basis of concrete archaeological and historical evidence (Silva Noelli 1999). Cristina Pompa, for her part, challenges Métraux and the Clastres, rather than at Nimuendaju himself, when questioning the "original sin" of postulating a "Tupi-Guarani civilization" identical to itself above and beyond the centuries and the huge distances that separate the different groups of this linguistic family (Pompa, 2004). Later on, Catherine Julien and Isabelle Combès attack the myth from a different angle. Starting from the historical sources, they develop Susnik's silent intuition to its fullest extent and demonstrate that the Guarani migrations to the Andean piedmont had the sole objective of searching for metal: there was no "Kandire" but "Kandires," the "metal masters" rather a "Kandire" equivalent to some kind of earthly paradise (Julien, 2007; Combès, 2006).

Recently, more judicious interpretations reconstruct the legend's multiple causes by tracing some Guarani migrations in light of historical data, while not fully dismissing the mystical side of the quest. When analyzing the "utopian spatial images" of the Guarani Indians of Mato Grosso do Sul, Graciela Chamorro returns to significant elements of M3: just like Schaden, she insists on the sociological and historical differences between Guarani groups, even reporting a certain "mbyaization" of the "Guaranilogy": this reflects the permanent mark of Cadogan's unsurpassed publications. Without ignoring the current sociological processes, she does not deny the religious dimension: "the image of the 'land without evil,' apart from being a utopia, a poetical horizon, and a rite, is what impels the exiled peoples to struggle for their re-territorialization" (Chamorro, 2010: 25). Pablo Barbosa, in reviewing

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the migrations of Nimuendaju's Apapocúva during the second half of the nineteenth century, places them in the context of Barao de Antonina's reports. In circumstances marked "by a policy of colonization of empty lands in the south of the Empire," he then interprets the famous Guarani mobility within the framework of the colonization of São Paulo, Paraná, and Mato Grosso, which appears as a sort of "negative" dimension of those legendary migrations reported by Nimuendaju (Barbosa, 2015).[8]

M^{N}. BEYOND THE ACADEMIC SEAS

Undoubtedly, this rapid overview is as brief as it is incomplete. Many more authors could be mentioned. But these examples are enough to give us an idea of the academic trajectory of the narration: too many pompous impressions, some reciprocal criticism, and a few uncertainties, limited after all to a handful of experts in Tupi-Guarani issues. However, if we intend to shed light on the different ways in which the myth is conceived through the Indigenous individuals, and even on how the myths relate between themselves, we must also consider the repercussions of the narrative on the collective imagination.[9] We thus encounter a discursive universe filled with simplified, and often dogmatic, reverberations with little attention to nuance, which combine and re-combine a series of recurring elements; the utopian ethnicity, an existential Manichaeism, the exuberant imagery, the moral imprint, and several avatars of a metonymic equation: Tupi-Guarani = Land without Evil. Indeed, at a popular level, many narratives conceive of it as a ritual, a decontextualized myth more celebrated than reasoned; a floating signifying imaginary, a programmatic leitmotiv that does not require a logic beyond the vague appeal to a concrete opportunity for happiness. By eliminating ambiguity, the popularized variants of the myth—which naturally are as valid as the academic ones or as our own interpretation—reveal the argumentative trends by distorting, caricaturing, or systematizing them, or even leading the narrative into absurdity.

A typical example of the myth's popularization beyond academic literature relates to "Theological indigenism" (Melià 2004: 183). A paradigmatic case is the "Mass of the Land without Evil" celebrated in Brazil on April 22, 1979. Written by the Catholic bishop Pedro Casaldaliga, a poet, activist, and political writer, the Mass brings to the forefront "an accusation against colonialism and a Mea Culpa from the Church itself." Indians are represented as custodians of the Faith in its most authentic state, while settlers—including the missionaries—are seen as agents of destruction. The "land without evil" is envisioned as a "possible utopia" by the oppressed, and the native belief is transformed into the unmistakable terms of the universalist Judaeo-Christian theodicy. Criticized and even suppressed by the Church at the time, the Guarani migrations are accounted for in light of Exodus, of the flight of the chosen people from Egypt, and their tireless search for God: "Amerindian America, you are still living your Crucifixion, someday your Death will end in Resurrection. We, the poor people of this world struggle to create The Land without Evil that is born every day" (Shapiro, 1987: 134–136).

More poetic and perhaps more faithful to the myth's cosmological background, albeit no less romantic, is the comic book *La Terre sans Mal*, published in France by Emmanuel Lepage and Anne Sibran. Sibran explicitly dedicates the text to Clastres and explains that "it has no ethnographic pretensions, or perhaps just

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Figure 5.4 La Terre sans Mal
Source: Photograph by Emmanuel Lepage & Anne Sibran, Paris, Dupuis—Aire Libre, 2001.

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Figure 5.5 René Castro draws Nordenskiöld's pictures of his Chané ancestors in 1908.
Source: Photograph by Diego Villar, Campo Durán, 2012.

one: to pay tribute to a discipline of extreme change, centered on the gaze of the other." However, by going far beyond the statement of modesty the plot forces a parallel between the heroine's jungle misfortunes (a young Jewish linguist who in 1939 joins the last Mbyá pilgrimage to the land without evil, during which she gives birth to a son christened Nimuendaju) and the tragic story of her relatives killed by the Nazis: "The world has become bad … that is why we search for the land without evil," claim the Guarani in this story. The feat thus becomes social condemnation, and the land without evil a universal statement that a better world is possible (Lepage and Sibran, 2001: 2, 33).

The version written by the lawyer, writer, and indigenist Adolfo Colombres is even freer in his novel *Karai, the Hero: Mytho-epics of a Rascal that went in search of the Land Without Evil* (*Karai, el héroe: mitopopeya de un zafio que fue en busca de la Tierra Sin Mal*, 1988). It is a variegated hotchpotch that, at the pace of the classical courtly literature, merges baroque turns of phrase, basic rhymes, folkloric allusions, tango jargon, and colorful vignettes of Guarani mythology:

> The light was already retreating when Paí Cuimbaé appeared, and finding him in a suspicious conversation with his lady he started screaming like a hysterical magpie, fearing that the trashy woman should ruin his masterwork. Our hero

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> reacted like a flighty carancho (bird of prey), and the delicate vision vanished. Feeling more collected, the master pronounced the words the scoundrel needed. He had to set out for the west, drifting along the roads, to finally reach the Land without Evil. Because that land did exist, and was eagerly waiting to be trodden under his feet to make him immortal.
>
> (Colombres 1988: 55, our translation)

With an exasperating and disrupting tempo, the novel unfolds the tortuous saga of Karaí, a clumsy womanizer, slightly naïve but also lovable, who seems to be a hero rather than a trickster and whose adventures include Cadogan's words-soul, the Great Original Father or the Discreet-talking Parrot, along with the *Lobisón* (werewolf), the cosmic tree, the toothed vagina of the primordial women, some enraged Republican soldiers, Añá, the Devil, and at times even the Christian God himself.

On the other hand, it is not surprising that the natives themselves should figure among the myth's enthusiasts. In 2004, an Indigenous scholar in Bolivia published a story "based on Isoso-Guarani myths" entitled *Arakae: The Myth Made Reality*. The text mentions the Kandire: the place reached by the souls of good men after death, situated in the east, where "happiness reigns" (Yandura, 2004: 20). Together with other members of the leadership of the *Guarani* (Assembly of the Guarani People, APG), a powerful political organization of Jesuit origin, the same author usually evokes the imagery of the land without evil in speeches and demonstrations. In 1992, during the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Kuruyuki (the last open Chiriguano battle against the colonizers), some signs read "Kuruyukɨ casualties: rise from the trenches and march with us to the Land without Evil" (Pifarré, 1992: 8). In addition, the current Guarani winter solstice festival—a recently (re)invented rite with the consent of local piedmont population and tourism authorities—is celebrated with the rise of the Morning Star, which announces the imminence of the land without evil.

There are many more instances of such bricolage. What is striking, though, is not the modern nature of the references but the limited number of people using them: when reading the story published by Yandura, many Isoso locals stated that Kandire "must be something he has read." Therefore, it is fair to wonder why, unlike the Guarani-speaking groups of Mato Grosso do Sul, before the 1980s there are no records of "Kandire" or of the "land without evil" among the Chiriguano of the Bolivian Chaco. Neither the Swedish ethnologist Erland Nordenskiöld nor Métraux—who was one of the first scholars to relate the idea of "Kandire" to the Chiriguano—recorded any reference to it in the field: the Indians only spoke of Ivoka (lit. "dirt yard") or Aguararenda (lit. "land of foxes"), two names for the destination where the posthumous souls traditionally migrate (Nordenskiöld, 2002 [1912]: 235–237; Villar, 2008: 341). Furthermore, these are the names mentioned by the Franciscan friars in the nineteenth century, who also did not record any references to Kandire or the land without evil. But the Chiriguano are "Tupi-Guarani" and therefore it is not surprising that the myth should have been recycled by local anthropologists.

Just like other Indigenous peoples, today there are Indigenous Guarani scholars who read university theses and are true professional experts, some with PhDs. The dialectics of the exchange cannot be ignored: the "informant" is above all an

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"informed" person whose "data"—in the etymological sense of the word—are strongly influenced by academic sources (Combès, 2006). Hence, Nordenskiöld's "Indians as historians" are the offspring of the "historians of Indians" (Nordenskiöld, 2002 [1912]: 155). As Umberto Eco writes:

> On my way to Mali I discovered the country of the Dogon, whose cosmology was described by Marcel Griaule in his famous *Dieu d'Eau*. The critics say that Griaule invented a lot. But if you ask an old Dogon about his religion, he tells exactly what Griaule wrote—i.e., what Griaule wrote became the historical memory of the Dogon … I asked a boy if he was Muslim: "No, he answered, I'm Animist." But for an Animist to be able to say he is Animist he should have studied four years at the École Pratique des Hautes Études, because an Animist simply cannot know that he is one, just like the Neanderthal man did not know he was a Neanderthal man. Here is a case then of an oral culture defined by the books.
>
> (Carrière and Eco, 2009: 130, our translation)

On the basis of these representations, which simplify rather than betray the legend, unprecedented and unimagined variants appear. They continue to nourish the myth in a dizzying intersection of oral traditions and written words. In this sense, the inclusion of the notion of the "Land without Evil" in the Constitution of the Bolivian State, along with other Andean "ethical and moral principles" that support the Indigenous—or at least indigenist—nature of the new "Plurinational" State, is not ingenuous. At the other end, a book like the one written by the intellectual Álvaro Jordán, from Santa Cruz, plainly assimilates "the Kandire" to Bolivia's eastern half, known as the separatist "Media Luna" (half-moon), politically opposed to "Andean" and "centralist" state policy (Jordán, 2005; cf. a critical review in Combès, 2005). However, it is not only a matter of strategic interests playing out in the political arena. Recently, anthropology students described the Guarani request to create a ninth department in Bolivia (the "Chaco" department) as an age-old wish of the Indians to finally reach the land without evil: the economic issues (i.e. the royalties for the exploitation of natural gas) were left aside. And it is unlikely that this young scholar, Jordán, nor the authors of the Constitution, have ever heard of the Apapocúva, of Nimuendaju or of Métraux.

But the greatest creator of hydra heads certainly is the Internet. A first search in Spanish of "the land without evil" (give Spanish translation) shows four pages of results. The first five websites refer to the subject as a Guarani myth, but only one mentions the names of Nimuendaju, Melià, and Clastres; in the others, "the land without evil," assumes an autonomous existence that does not need any reference, context, or justification. As for the fifth website, it relates to a publication about a wind park producing clean power that is dubbed "Land without Evil." A search in Portuguese shows another three pages claiming a *terra sem mal* in an ecological sense, and others depict tourist destinations, including a place apparently located in Paraguay. In searching for "land without evil" in English, we find "a timeless message to our universal soul" and even an outcry to end the genocide in Burma. Finally, lost in the midst of other pages in French, the Wikipedia article on "Pierre Clastres" is the only one to refer to the myth. The next three sites are announcements

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of the Lepage-Sibran comic, of a musical creation, and a novel on Africa. The fifth site speaks for itself: *Terre Sans Mal: Les extraterrestres arrivent!* (Land Without Evil: The Aliens arrive!).

EPILOGUE: THE NAKED MYTH

A world in its final death throes, a withered body, a society that becomes corrupt and commits mass suicide. The quest for the land without evil is a sorrowful, emotional story, with ups and downs marked by disappointment and even tragedy. It is also a plot full of coincidences, paradoxes, and ironies. The first and perhaps the most obvious is the ubiquitous exile and perceptions of uprootedness. This is not only the case for the Guarani overwhelmed by the vastness of the ocean, but also for Nimuendaju, a German that tries his luck in South America; of Métraux, a Swiss man who lives in Argentina, France, and the United States and dies scribbling "*Adiós Alfredo Métraux*" in Spanish; of Schaden, a grandson of Germans who pursues a career in Brazil; of Cadogan, the son of Australian settlers who is isolated in the midst of Paraguay's rainforest; of Susnik, a Slovenian refugee, or even of the biographical journey of a Spanish Jesuit like Melià. It is equally striking that the land without evil should have been a goal sought by young spirits: Nimuendaju was 31 in 1914, and Métraux 25 in 1927 (Noelli, 1999: 125–140).

In this sense, it is rather unexpected that while seeking a utopia that denies work, suffering, and essentially death, many of its pursuers have died too early: Nimuendaju, sick as a result of his jungle adventures, poisoned by the *criollos*, or even murdered by the Indians themselves; Métraux, killed by a barbiturate overdose; Clastres, in a car accident (Laraia, 1988). To end with this series of coincidences, just before his death Métraux was planning to write a book that would precisely be titled *La Terre sans Mal* (Krebs, 2005). If we relate these facts to the Guarani distress upon viewing the endless sea, to the Apapocúva soil that becomes old and depleted, to the Mbyá's longing for the gods' primordial times—alongside Schaden's gloomy acculturative crisis and the Clastresian concern about impending state oppression—the fatalistic chronicle of finitude and disillusion seems to impose a nostalgic and almost existentialist grid.

A possible way to avoid sinking into pessimism would be to re-read the myth specifically in terms of its utopian component; that is, underscoring the meaning of "nowhere" implicit in the very etymology of "utopia." In the fantasy of another society materialized in an unknown location, the collective imagination has a fruitful tool to attain exile, opening up the field beyond what is currently to be possible, and thus questioning sociability as is taken for granted every day (Ricoeur, 1989: 58).

But at the same time, we know that the Guarani insist on the fact that the land without evil can be physically located, even though neither the *pajés* nor the diverse scholarly interpreters reach a consensus on its exact coordinates. It is therefore hard to avoid the impression that an interpretative grid is being introduced which, in the end, somehow manipulates the data. The task, then, is to think beyond the mythemes and go back to its structure: the multifaceted set of variants. Progressive theology, messianic utopia, novelty, poetry, comic books, political activism, environmentalism, and indigenism. Polysemy is perhaps the inevitable fate of scientific notions once they become public knowledge. The fact is that from Paraguay to Burma, and even through

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interstellar space, the land without evil lives an autonomous existence of its own. In the academic world and beyond, the saga has cut the cord with its creators and, like any social fact, assumes a *sui generis* existence. While myths are conceived among themselves, the critical readings that seek to restore the land without evil to "its real place and time" are certainly a reaction to the disturbing proliferation of prophets. By using the elements that make up a myth sparingly and differently, and combining them with the unsuspected contributions of national policies—whether in reference to environmental protection or the universal soul—in the end each variant constitutes a new interpretative layer of its narrative stratigraphy. With its explanations—ours included—the sum of all these variants make up what we might call the myth of the land without evil. A hundred years after the publication of *The Legends of Creation and Destruction of the World*, part of the doctrine may be lost, but something makes us presume that in every new variant Nimuendaju's spirit is somehow present: the demiurge that unknowingly forged the myth.

NOTES

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2 Nimuendaju (1987 [1914]: 38) writes: "Terra sem Mal, *Yvy marãey*. *Marã* is a word no longer used in the Apapocúva dialect; in old Guaraní it means 'sickness,' 'evil,' 'slander,' 'mourning,' 'sadness,' etc. *Yvy* means 'land,' and *ey* is the negative."
3 *Ñandereko* and *teko kavi* are Guaraní expressions; the other terms come from the Andean Quechua and Aymara languages.
4 From now on, as in the four volumes of *Mythologiques* (Lévi-Strauss, 1964–1971), M is short for "Myth."
5 Schaden even states that some Mbyá call the land without evil "Jesuit Land," though the hypothesis of the Jesuit influence on cataclysmic myths and the ensuing hopes of salvation did not have a big impact on regional scholarship (Cadogan, 1992 [1959]; P. Clastres 1974a: 15).
6 Much of Clastres's book *Le Grand Parler* "basically is a translation into French of Cadogan's texts" (Melià, 2004: 177). However, Clastres never concealed his deep debt to the Paraguayan researcher (e.g., P. Clastres, 1974a: 8).
7 The thesis of "ethnical suicide" had a profound impact on Chiriguano studies (e.g., Saignes, 2007: 158).
8 For further studies on the multiple relationships of historicity and memory and the analytical links between anthropological issues, ethnohistory and archaeology, see Hill (1988), Fausto & Heckenberger (2007), Hornborg and Hill (2011) and High (2015).
9 It would be fascinating, for instance, to relate the formal structure of discourse on the land-without-evil to other colonial utopian syncretisms like "El Dorado," "Paititi," the "land of the Amazons," or the "City of the Caesars."

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