Looking Like the Land: Beauty and Aesthetics in Amazonian Quichua Philosophy and Practice

Tod D. Swanson* **and Jarrad Reddekop**†

This article offers an account of Quichua thinking about beauty in the Ecuadorian Amazon: how it is grounded in a philosophical tradition that conceives the world and the self in "perspectivist" and relational terms, and how experiences of beauty play specific roles and attain a particular kind of sense within that context. In particular, we show how indigenous Quichua ideas about beauty inform a range of everyday practices and are intimately connected to distinct ideas about what it means to live a good or mature life. This maturity involves cultivating the self as a body shared with the land, taking on its styles, and responding empathetically to it. But it also means leaving space for others, respecting the boundaries of privacy that emerge through the differentiation of species and the formation of distinct aesthetic communities within particular territories.

"HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE that fruit?" Tod Swanson asked an Amazonian Quichua woman, hoping to elicit a term for the particular shade of purple in the berries of an *anthurium*. Her answer offered not a description of an object so much as expressed an experience of beauty felt in relation to it. "How I would like to look like that fruit!" she said. ("*Ñuka imasnara chi muyu kwinta rikuirij ashai!*")

*Tod D. Swanson, School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies (Religious Studies Faculty), Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85281, USA. E-mail: tod.dillon.swanson@gmail.com.

†Jarrad Reddekop, Centre for Studies in Religion and Society, University of Victoria, PO Box 1700 STN CSC, Victoria, BC, Canada, V8W 2Y2. E-mail: jarradr@gmail.com.

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Her response is striking because it points to fundamental differences between Quichua and Western understandings of beauty. The latter, of course, carries the traces of its own distinct philosophical heritage, framing the problems of aesthetics through its own basic conceptions about the nature of existence and the best means of apprehending this. Thus we might see beauty as connected with the rational intelligibility of form; with an aesthetics of harmony, order, and symmetry of mathematical proportion; with the majesty of a Creator's awesome works; with the experience of an object removed from our own willful interest, and so on. But for Quichua people, operating on the basis of a different philosophical tradition, beauty means looking like the land. More particularly, it means responding to the attractive species that comprise it by becoming more like them. Looking like the land does not mean simply imitating its designs however. It means adapting the body to the land through habitual patterns of aesthetic response, like dancing adapts bodily movement to a partner. Thus a person comes to look like the land much like a husband or wife comes to resemble their partner, sharing mannerisms and so on, after decades of living together.

Examples of this process are the many ritual songs through which women take on the attractive qualities of sweet-smelling or sweet-tasting trees. In the following song, Clara Santi sings to the *Pasu* (*Eschweilera longifolia*), a tree whose flowers and fruits give off an extraordinarily seductive aroma.

> The *Pasu* tree is a man
> who stands bathed in the [smell/taste] of the *Pasu* [flower/fruit]
> When I see him I take him by the arm.
> Splitting open his fruit I stand bathing in his oil, taking the *Pasu* man in his oil,
> I am the woman who stands bathing herself in the fragrance of the *Pasu* flower.
> Remembering and reflecting everything Clara Santi bathes herself with his *Pasu* oil.
> If he loves me I will bathe myself with the heavy fragrance of pure *Pasu*.
> When I had still not bathed [my body with his fruit] then *Pasu* Man gathering [his fruits] gave them to his woman, the beloved orphan (*wakcha*),
> saying "Go and take these [fruits] with you."
> I am the woman who stands blowing the *Pasu* fruit on every path
> running to stand on the *Pasu* hill.
> If the *Pasu* Men love me I will take them from there to my house.

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> If he does not love me then I am the woman who stands full of sadness just seeing his face.
> (I am) *Pasu* Flower Woman, *Pasu* Flower Woman
> I am the woman who stands smelling the *Pasu* flower.
> [I am a] strong Santi woman
> Who can defeat me? I am the woman who stands hitting harder than anyone
> When I take *Pasu* man, take him to town
> When I carry *Pasu*, carry him in my *ashanga* (basket),
> Then, from behind he moves my head
> I am the woman who stands throwing (swinging) my hair back and forth.
> . . .
> I am the woman who stands falling in love with the *Pasu* Man.
> I will eat that. Splitting the *Pasu* open I will eat it.
> Now I will bathe Don Tomas in *Pasu* oil.
> I am the woman who stands quieting/taming him by bathing him in its oil.

By singing a kind of love song to the tree while contemplating his beautiful color and aroma, Clara enters into an intimate relation with the tree man. Through this communion the tree's attractive qualities become a part of her body to such an extent that her breath gives off its aroma. She herself becomes the "*Pasu* flower woman" who "stands blowing the *Pasu* fruit on every path." The attractive qualities transmitted to her body from the *Pasu* tree go beyond aroma and taste to include her hair and sensuous swaying movement. *Eschweilera longifolia* has long beautiful leaves that are said to be the hair of the tree. When she goes into town carrying the *Pasu* fruit in a basket on her back the tree man moves her head from behind throwing her hair back and forth in a sensual dance-like movement.

The charisma imparted to her gives her a persuasive strength (*shinzhi*) that allows her to triumph over her enemies. "Who can defeat me?" she says. "I am the woman who stands hitting harder than anyone." Finally, this charisma shared between her body and the body of the tree is passed to other relatives, friends, or collaborators who feel the beauty of the tree imparted through her song and character: "Now I will bathe Don Tomas in *Pasu* oil," she says at the end of the song. The persuasive power of Clara Santi's personality is not due to this one tree alone but to many other species to whom she also sings. Thus her body is comprised of relations to many local species.

The sense of beauty expressed in these examples is grounded in an understanding of the self as a network of relations that we will call a shared

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body. This is a self physically connected to a network of plants, animals, rivers, and mountains such that it shares in their bodily and behavioral qualities. The relations that comprise this self are held together by empathic bonds that motivate responses of reciprocal empathy. At the heart of this bond is a mutual recognition of beauty. From the human side this means recognizing the beauty in other species and responding to it in ways that heighten resemblance. This empathy is grounded in the assumption that plants and animals were once human. The manner of responding to the beauty in the land that arises from these assumptions pervades the fabric of the everyday, and is central, we think, to the character of Quichua thinking as a lived tradition.

Our aim in this article will be to show something of the fullness and distinctness of Quichua thinking about beauty: how it is grounded in a philosophical tradition that conceives the world and the self in relational terms, and how experiences of beauty make sense within that context. To this end, we will show how experiences of beauty are a crucial part of what it means to live a good or mature life. This maturity entails a particular kind of play between distance and proximity, between heightening closeness and leaving space and privacy. But we will also have to consider broader contexts, limits, and collective structures that shape Quichua aesthetic experience that individuals must navigate in coming to look like the land. Thus we will also discuss the phenomenon of what we call closed or bounded aesthetic communities. As an extension of this analysis, we will conclude with a brief account of the further limits posed by contemporary globalization and the distinctive threat this presents to traditional Quichua aesthetics.

We will begin, however, by examining Quichua origin stories to see how the distinctive beauty of other species arises out of an alienation from a previously shared human sense of beauty. We can then examine how contemporary human beauty emerges as an adaptive response to the beauty of these other species.

THE PATHOS OF DISTANCE AS A QUALITY OF BEAUTY

Quichua tradition posits that the beauty of plant and animal species emerged through a painful process of estrangement or distancing from a previously human condition. This original state of common humanity, as recounted in origin stories about *kallari uras* or "beginning times," was one in which a much greater degree of transparent communication between human beings and those who later became plants and animals was possible. Not only did everyone speak the same language, but they also had the same taste in food and the same taste in sexual partners. In this

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undifferentiated world, life came to feel overcrowded and claustrophobic. There was no privacy. When anyone spoke, everyone could overhear. Too many people wanted the same things. Under these conditions, lovers became estranged. Families fell apart. People felt slighted. When hurt feelings became unbearable, some of them withdrew from their relations. As they withdrew, their voices and physical appearance changed into the bodily forms that mark the various plant and animal species we recognize today. These forms still bear the scars of the particular suffering that triggered their withdrawal, as illustrated in the following example.

When walking in the forest on the banks of the Tiputini River we encountered a small tree whose unripe berries were bright pink. In the middle of these were one or two ripe berries whose black color and shape evoked the iris of a human eye. Bélgica Dagua expressed delight at their color and taste. "This is called the spirit eye tree," she said, and told the story of its origin. The tree was once a human man who could not stop loving a girl. Although the girl did not love him he kept following her. One day in response she poked his eye out. The eye fell to the ground and then sprouted into a beautiful tree with bright black berries that look like eyes. As he cried out in pain and sadness he said to the girl, "You did not love me. Now you can eat me. I will stay here growing on the edge of your garden." As a human man, his presence was too much for the girl. But now that he is a tree, she can enjoy the beauty of his eyes and the sweetness of his taste from a distance without feeling that her space is invaded. So it is with all the species of nature, each in its different way. Their beauty, whether the graceful movement of an otter, the aroma of a flowering tree, or the taste of a berry, has an element of pathos because it emerges out of the particular heartbreak that caused its estrangement (Tod Swanson, 2016c).

As Eduardo Viveiros de Castro has helpfully argued, the new body that each species took on through this process can be seen as a kind of *habitus*, an assemblage of affects or modes of being and seeing that become distinctive of different species: "what it eats, how it moves, how it communicates, where it lives, whether it is gregarious or solitary" (Viveiros de Castro 2003, 474–75). Accordingly, we might say that the body, in Quichua thinking, delineates a perspectival way of being relative to others in an environment, a unique mode of apprehending, adapting, and interacting with them. This bodily differentiation forms barriers to transparent communication and envelops each perspective within a kind of privacy. Within the boundaries of particular species, individuals continue to share tastes in food and experience their own kind as beautiful in the intense way associated with sexual attraction. Their bird or animal music moves them just as

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our music moves us, and they experience their own speech as eloquent. But speech and taste become opaque across species lines—which also means, opaque to us. The attractiveness felt between individuals also becomes less "transparent," and so the beauty we might see in a tree impacts us differently than that of a desirable man or woman. There is a distance and a strangeness that changes the relationship.

Because this differentiation of aesthetic perspective is so central to understanding how the beauty of other species arises, many origin stories also explicitly mark the moment of a species' withdrawal as a change in taste. We will illustrate this through the origin stories of two strikingly beautiful birds, the hummingbird and the red-crested woodpecker.

The hummingbird narrative tells how a previously human man lost his taste for manioc *chicha* and instead came to prefer flower nectar, the defining food of the hummingbird species. At that time, Hummingbird lived in the same house with three women and a rival man, Acangau, who later became the bird species of that name. Over a period of time each man cleared an area of forest to make a garden for the women. Every morning Acangau got up before dawn and seemed to go out to clear trees while Hummingbird only went out after sleeping until noon. For this reason, the women admired Acangau as the more manly of the two. As a result they flattered him, giving him good, thick *chicha* to drink and insulted Hummingbird, offering him only a thin and watery *chicha*. Days later they discovered that Acangau had actually cleared no forest at all but had only expended his energy in unproductive displays of masculine bravado. By contrast, Hummingbird had used his fast movements to clear a large area in a short time. When the women discovered their mistake, they offered Hummingbird the thick *chicha* they had previously denied him. But by this time it was too late. His hurt and resentment over not being valued had reached a point where he could no longer live with these women. "No sisters," he said, "give me watery *chicha*, I am (have become) a watery liquid eating man." With these words his human voice changed into that of hummingbird. Crying "*pis pis*," he flew away.

Instead of planting manioc gardens for women who do not love him, Hummingbird now tends his own gardens of nectar-bearing flowers. Accepting the gift of thick *chicha* would have been a part of keeping up bonds of caring and empathy amongst relatives, but instead Hummingbird has moved away and developed a different kind of aesthetic taste. He comes to find watery food alluring and appetizing, as evidently hummingbirds continue to do as they fly through the forest, attracted by the nectar of flowers. And it is this taste for nectar that defines the private perspectival sphere unique to hummingbirds.

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The story of the woodpecker portrays a similar change in taste. One morning, a man goes out fishing to a forest creek and then returns to his wife carrying a small leaf bundle used for packing fish. When she opens the bundle, expecting the fish, she finds that it is filled with grubs of the kind eaten by birds. "*Manzharika*" (she grew frightened), says the narrator (Orr and Hudelson 1971, 58). We can well imagine the mix of unease and surprise she might feel at such a moment. As the story continues, she learns that on his supposed fishing journeys, her husband has been turning into a woodpecker hunting for grubs in the trees along the creek. Seeing this, she transforms into one herself. We might infer from this that it is only by also becoming a woodpecker that she is able to remain close to her husband, and continue the mutually binding relations of reciprocal food exchange with him. That is, it is necessary for her to follow him into this new horizon of aesthetic taste in order to be able to experience the grubs he gathers from a woodpecker perspective: not as disgusting, but as appetizing food analogous to the food she previously enjoyed from her human perspective.

These three origin stories also recount how the withdrawal of species into different bodily forms begins with feelings of repulsion: the threatening and uncomfortable behavior of the spirit eye tree, the mutual resentments and misunderstandings between Hummingbird and the women, and the strangeness of the woodpecker husband's changing appetite. Once their transformations have occurred, however, those of us from outside perspectives can see something beautiful in the sweet black berries, the flitting movements of the hummingbird as it drinks its nectar, or the distant sound of a woodpecker drilling on a hollow tree. There is, however, a limit to our ability to respond to this beauty of other species. Their coloring and calls may fill us with a certain longing. And yet haunting as their beauty may be, they do not attract us as intensely as does the beauty of a human woman or a human man. It is as though we come up against a limit to our ability to empathize. While a human love song causes us to empathize with the vulnerability of the singer, the plaintive song of a bird is suggestive but falls short.

In Western thinking this limit to empathy is simply due to the fact that a bird does not have the emotional complexity of a human being. We cannot empathize with "heartbreak" in a bird song, because we do not believe that a bird feels heartbreak. But according to Quichua thinking the reason is different. Behind the bird song is the full complexity of human heartbreak or anger, just as there is heartbreak behind the bright berries of the spirit eye tree, or anger in the "*pis pis*" of the hummingbird. In other stories, such as that of the *jilucu* bird, the call is a transformation of human crying. It is as though in their raw forms these sounds cause too

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much discomfort to allow normal relations to continue. Transformed into birdcalls, these emotions are more like plaintive music.[1] Although the emotion gives pathos to the beauty of the song, its origination in a changed bodily form also serves as a barrier to empathy and thus also as a veil of privacy. Because we can no longer hear its raw crying, the bird can cry in private. If the veil was not there, we would see the other species as human, and the attraction as well as the hurt would be raw; instead we now see a sign of something deeper yet hidden.

These limits also arise with tastes in food. Although nectar is attractive we cannot imagine living on it. Because our taste in food is so central to who we are, our inability to imagine living off nectar limits our ability to empathize with a hummingbird. Nectar is the new form of watery *chicha* and by normal standards, watery *chicha* is precisely *not* appetizing and is *not* anyone's preferred food. The aesthetic disconnect one has in contemplating such peculiar tastes is an important element in the complex of emotions associated with encountering the beauty of other species. We can say that hummingbirds must view nectar in a way analogous to how we view our favorite foods (such as *chicha* in Quichua tradition). But what must it actually be like to eat like *that*, to find such things appealing? How strange that must be! How can they be like me and yet enjoy that kind of food?

We have seen, then, how species in course of withdrawal/transformation develop distinct senses of the beautiful, how this is part of what encloses them in spheres of communicative opacity, and how this alienation and withdrawal are also part of what allows the distinctive beauty of forest species to arise. Although these transformations originate in breakdowns, they also make possible the kinds of productive relations with the forest and between nonhuman species that we might know today (such as the production of edible berries by the spirit eye tree). The barriers of speciation create a distance that is good and allows for the aesthetic appreciation of what might otherwise be threatening if still crowding in on us, or what would overwhelm us with a crush of cacophonous and overly raw emotion. Speciation, in other words, strikes a kind of balance that allows for new forms of cohabitation, even it if brings with it a certain pathos of distance.

PRECARIOUS BOUNDARIES AND THE DANGERS OF ATTRACTION

If Quichua origin stories ground the possibility of empathizing with other species by reminding us of a human viewpoint "inside" these

[1]Clara Santi offers a longer description of the sad beauty of this birdcall, and the feelings of empathy this arouses in her, in Swanson 2012.

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different bodily forms, they also gesture to the perils of empathizing too strongly and collapsing these boundaries of distance and opacity. To do so means undoing the delicate balance that has been struck, and is immensely dangerous because it means that we ourselves might be pulled or attracted across a species barrier and altogether into a different mode of being.

This danger is possible because in Quichua thinking bodies are not permanently stable or fixed, but composed through relations susceptible to change. The origin stories also model how this bodily change is connected to the life of the emotions and feelings of both repulsion and attraction – and thus to the whole problem of aesthetics and the appreciation of beauty. Hummingbird transformed as he did not only because he was angry with the women but also because he was attracted to a different kind of food. Woodpecker's wife however is pulled into transformation through her attraction and love for her husband. Indeed, part of the shock and unease felt by Woodpecker woman in unwrapping the worms may well have to do with her own ontological status: if I am in love with a man who eats such things, then what must be happening to me? Feeling the kind of intense conjugal attraction and empathy for someone who is himself sliding across a species barrier points to her own precarious and liminal position. A relative dissonance, perhaps opening a moment of "decision" as to which direction to go in, arises in the "gross-out" of seeing the worms. The choice to follow her husband occurs when, in maintaining her emotional closeness with him rather than breaking ties and establishing distance, she allows herself to be pulled into another mode of being, adopting another set of tastes. In this case, it is attraction and communicative ties with a family member that pulls her across the species barrier.

Attraction, then, can be understood as a transformative force; and the feeling of being moved by the beauty of another can be seen to exist along a continuum of emotional intensity that also tells us something about our own position relative to others. To be deeply moved by the pathos of a birdsong requires a degree of empathizing that is also limited—a sad beauty that requires a certain distance so that the emotional impact does not grow too great. Feeling that emotional impact too strongly, moreover, would be a sign that the barriers of distance constituted through speciation were collapsing—that one was becoming a bird and coming to occupy its perspective. Feeling moved and attracted by the beauty of the *Pasu* tree is part of a continuum of possible mutual attraction whereby Clara Santi empathizes with the *Pasu* man. At the high end of this continuum would be the kind of intense sexual attraction felt between men and women. She sings to him and addresses him as a human to draw him into

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a stronger relation of mutual empathy with her. But in this she is playing carefully along a precarious line she is careful not to overstep.

Being pulled over a species barrier and thus collapsing the distance it provides is dangerous not only because this threatens the resolution of privacies and distance that sustains the productive relations of the present world. It is also more generally associated with death—broadly conceived as a transformational threshold. On a sliding continuum with death is also sickness more generally, which is often conceived as a kind of uncontrolled becoming-other, that carries the threat of being pulled away from one's human relatives, likely unable to return. Additionally, for us who live in the speciated world, being pulled across a species barrier is also a kind of moral fault, an instance of what is called in Quichua being *quilla*. This is an important term that connotes at once laziness and lack of discipline, but also sexual looseness—being too easily distracted and attracted away by others, abandoning one's responsibilities and wanting to become someone else, to assume another's relational position (Swanson 2009, 48–50).

The challenge taken up by Quichua thinking is rather to open communicative and empathetic windows in a disciplined and limited way across species barriers. It is through such processes that one grows and cultivates the shared body of the self. As we will elaborate in the next section, this is what allows people to take on the beauty of the land, and learn skills or capacities from plants and animals that are manifest in their bodily modes of being.

But as in any relationship involving degrees of intimacy, it is a question of managing such disciplined attractions—of not rushing in and collapsing all boundaries, distinctions, and privacy, or merging into undifferentiated oneness. It is rather a matter of finding an appropriate balance between distance and proximity that allows for learning, responsiveness, and empathy while still giving space for the respectful reciprocities of a good relationship. When the species barrier is opened appropriately through dance, song, and other (beautiful) inducements to empathy, the distinctive power of the other species can be borrowed.

As a way of conceptualizing this kind of restraint, it is useful to note that ritual songs like Clara's song to the *Pasu* man are often conceived as dances modeled on the retreat and advance in dances between men and women. In Quichua dance style the movements seem designed to heighten this dual awareness of both the dangers and the excitement involved in crossing the boundaries of privacy. To accentuate the dangers, Quichua dancers do not make eye contact and do not touch as they move in response to the unpredictable retreats and cautious advances of their partners. At first they dance slowly toward each other. At some point one partner feels their space crowded and begins to dance backwards. The

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other follows suit. For a while each may seem to dance alone though mirroring their partner's steps at a distance. Then one or the other moves slowly forward. Although they seem never to make eye contact the dancers pay acute attention to each other's moves. This kind of dancing amplifies awareness that the powerful beauty of other people or species is also a barrier of privacy that is dangerous to breach. Although the goal of the dance is to open this barrier a little so as to share in intimacy, it is also an expression of the awareness that breaking the barrier too much could be annihilating.

RELATING IN A SPECIATED WORLD: CULTIVATING THE SHARED BODY

Let us now turn directly to the question of looking like the land. How is this possible, and what does it mean to do so?

The possibility of looking like the land, of taking on its beauty and qualities, is grounded in the idea of what we call the shared body. This refers to a conception of the self that is constituted through relations. Through empathizing with others, including different species, it is possible to take on something of their attributes, their bodily affects, and modes of being—which means, also, their beauty. In better coming to know various species, in opening communicative and emotional windows with them just a little, one learns to become like them and to receive their gifts. The self in this sense is comprised of a body that is shared with the land, and that reflects the distinctive diversity of species within a particular territory. Through this process, a group of kin who live in relation to the same land are thought to develop a bodily similarity to each other that is also mediated by similarity to the land.

We see this idea expressed in the anecdote about looking like a piece of fruit. In this case, the aesthetic appreciation of something beautiful in the environment is tied at once to a desire to be able to take on such beauty (and the understanding that this is a real possibility), *and* an implicit sense of the personhood "within" the given species who manifests a particular aesthetic orientation and style. The underlying idea is that the fruiting plant is a person who looks in such-and-such a way, who expresses a mode of being that I could also learn to inhabit. Wanting to look like a particular fruit shows admiration for the aesthetic style of the person within the plant.

This anecdote about fruit recalls a common set of associations that are articulated in everyday interactions with different species. Hanging fruit is sometimes likened to the earrings of a beautiful woman. Similarly, the flowers of different species can be described as the distinctive clothing of

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the people inside particular plants. This is seen in instances where plant-people appear more transparently *as people*, such as in dreams or under the influence of hallucinogens like *ayahuasca* or *wanduj*.

Crucially, however, this connotation of style in a plant or animal should not be understood as something "merely" aesthetic, in the sense of being superfluous ornamentation. The beauty of a particular species does not just reflect its retreat from a previously human condition, but also its effective adaptation to a new series of preferential relations that partially exclude us. Thus, although its acquired taste for nectar is the result of being denied more substantial food by human women, the hummingbird's distinctive form actually develops in response to the new species on which it feeds. Its mouth lengthens to match tubular flowers. Its arms sprout feathered wings and, fueled by nectar, its body becomes lighter and faster. All of this creates the stunning new beauty of a hummingbird—a beauty built both out of the scars of its broken relations as well as adaptations to new ones. Its appeal lies both in the elegant effectiveness and well-timed reciprocity of its interaction with flowers, and in its apparent lack of interest in us. Hence the beauty of the hummingbird cannot be separated from the beauty of the flowers, or for that matter, from all its relations. It is the beauty of a new shared body. And so the beauty of a species also cannot be separated from the perceived effectiveness of its specialized form; and when Quichua men and women admire the beauty of a species they are in part admiring its effective skill. Thus the beautiful style of a species is a kind of lived, practical artistry—a style of existing developed through processes of response and adaptation to others in the environment.

The idea of encountering the forest and its myriad species as sources of elegant adaptations that one might want to take on is pervasive within everyday life for traditional Quichua people. The Quichua word for such a shareable capacity is *paju*, and examples of such *pajus* abound. For instance, the discovery one day of a fluorescent blue-green centipede, with legs that moved in ripping waves as though they were playing scales, prompted Daniel Andi to let it crawl over his fingers. The elegant and precise dexterity of the centipede's many legs was understood to express a *paju* that aided in playing the guitar, and it was this *paju* that Daniel was hoping to learn and absorb through his interaction with the insect. In an illustration of this point, Daniel subsequently modeled the motion of the centipede with his own hands in a way that blended together this style of the centipede's movement with the technique of a guitar player.

In a similar way, Quichua hunters are said to imitate (or rather evoke, actualize) the power of the red-tailed boa (*pishku amarun*) when out hunting. In one interview, Luisa Cadena described this power. Asked about the boa's ability to attract or gather birds as prey (*pishkuta*

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tandachin), Luisa immediately comments on the snake's beautiful appearance. It has a white line extending back from his nose and mouth, and it is beautifully "painted" (*gustu pintashka*) all over its body. It sits up in a tree and waits before striking, "gathering" birds from all over who are attracted and not afraid. Luisa also says that this boa sings. From far away its song sounds just like the toucan it attracts (Swanson 2016a). The boa's beautiful painting and singing is the power that allows it to occupy its arboreal bird-eating niche in the ecology of the forest, and it is this power that human hunters want to be able to employ to some degree. In this, the emotional impact of its beauty is felt across species barriers—not just by humans but by other animals.

When out in the forest, a general pattern of traditional Quichua people we have interviewed and accompanied is to be continuously engaged in attentiveness towards the diverse expressions of beauty and aesthetic qualities within the landscape. Part of this involves a continual questioning of the land with regard to analogies or likenesses between bodily modes of being within it. This is a way not only of wondering about the possible connections between different species to each other, how they have become like one another and thus share qualities. It is also a way of wondering how the various aesthetic qualities present within the forest might affect their own human mode of being, if taken into their bodies as a medicine, or applied as a kind of cosmetic enhancement. This process of acquiring *pajus* from many forest beings occurs through a great diversity of connections and becomings. And all of these, as we might well imagine, entail a process of empathizing—of trying to imagine and understand what it might be like to move or feel or sound like such-and-such a (non-human) person, emotionally imagining an overlap between one's own body and theirs. This empathizing tends to also involve interactions with the beings in question under conditions of dreaming or plant-induced visions—as though growing the aesthetic and imaginative capacities of the self and learning new ways of moving and being were facilitated and intensified under such conditions. There is also a distinctive challenge and wonder about this process, of coming to feel and inhabit somewhat the strange beauty and style of speciated forms.

BEAUTY, POWER, AND DIVERSITY

Why, then, do traditional Quichua people take on the qualities of other beings? In part it is a matter of survival. The human body like all bodies is a shared body that can exist only in relation to the land. The land that gives it food, water, and air is a conscious ecology of elegant relations that works with those who respond to it by adapting their beauty to

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its own. Like the hummingbird adapting the style of its beak to the elegant form of specific flowers, human beings must adapt their beauty to that of other species in order to survive. In this way the body comes to share in the physical skills, the *pajus*, which allow them to survive.

It is not a question of "mere" survival, however, but of cultivating and enriching the self, of growing the affections of the heart in response to others, of achieving a particular ideal of maturity. One way to think of this is in terms of drawing power from one's relations, since the human apprehension of another species' beauty is also an apprehension of its power.

We are likely accustomed to the idea, featured across a variety of ethnographic sources on indigenous peoples throughout the Americas, of developing friendly relations with the land in order to receive gifts of power from it. But perhaps more important than the idea of "power" as an abstract "stuff" is the way in which distinct adaptive skills are present in the varied bodies of the land. The color, sound, and smell of a particular body are inseparable from the capacities that adapt that particular species to the niche they have come to inhabit relative to others in the environment. And these qualities are of distinct situational importance in living with the other species that comprise the land: in counterbalancing or disrupting their qualities, in cultivating desirable attractions, effecting certain ends, in partaking successfully and sensitively in the complex qualitative play of emotional life with others.

Accordingly, it is not surprising that a powerful, mature person in Quichua thinking is also an attractive person. To achieve this mature strength they must have opened many windows of attraction and empathy, and taken on *pajus* through engagement with a great variety of species—all without being *quilla* and being seduced away. They carry themselves very much like an assemblage that reflects the smells, colors, patterns, sounds, and movements of the territory with which they are bonded: trees, centipedes, boas, and more besides. The word for this kind of powerful maturity is to be *shinzhi* (strong). Clara Santi models some of the connotations of being *shinzhi* in her *Pasu* song—standing, able to hit harder than anyone. But the general conception is that this kind of strength reflects precisely a responsiveness to the diversity of bodily forms presented by the land within a particular territory.

This association of attractiveness and diversity plays out in such everyday matters as alimentary preference. For example, David Dagua and Pedro Andi explained to us that their favorite kinds of fish were those gathered from small forest streams. This was because such streams are

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overhung with a great variety of plants and fruits that drop into the water and on which the fish feed. In other words, the fish are aesthetically preferable because they have taken into themselves a greater diversity of qualities and modes of being. They *taste like the land* and the range of (nonhuman) persons within it, which in turn is taken in by the person consuming the fish.

But this general valuation of diversity is also consequential in the framing of general life ethics and conceptions of maturity or good living. It corresponds to a significant difference between being mature and the kind of dangerous attraction described earlier: the former entails being attracted and friendly *in a grounded and limited way* with a range of species/perspectives, whereas the latter entails losing that groundedness and being distracted or pulled over into *one* other vantage-point that is not one's own. Thus groundedness and diversity mutually enforce one another, in that diverse ties prevent one from relating too intensely in any one direction. Rather, one relates to the appropriate distribution of aesthetic styles and perspectives that emerged after the "beginning times" at the dawn of this world and that sustain it in coproductive interrelations and mutually necessary privacies. Relating to this diversity means not only cultivating emotional closeness but also maintaining the distances that separate out these mutually differentiated vantage points: respecting the privacies that speciation creates rather than collapsing them. Indeed, we might say that it is the distances between such vantage points that make a relational world, properly speaking, possible.

To a significant degree, Quichua aesthetic sensibility and the practice of good style reflects this orientation towards discipline and restraint—that is, maturity in relationships with both human and nonhuman others. Living appropriately thus means maintaining distance, not stepping on the toes of others, and leaving space for one's various interlocutors. For example, cross-species comparisons and analogies (as described above) are typically made in a sparse, suggestive, and often joking way that leaves room for the explorations of others. This leaves room for others to feel out such relations and possibilities for themselves and on their own terms without overstating the case. Good speech in this regard aims to say enough to invite others to make possible connections without saying too much—such elegance of economy and restrained openness being a matter of admirable and mature skill as well as the occasion for playfulness.

Similarly, the "abstract" designs painted on Quichua pottery frequently evoke a particular concrete memory: a part of a trail, or the movement of an animal encountered there at some particular time in the artist's life. The "abstractness" of a design leaves room for a kind of guessing-game that it would be poor style to collapse by either asking for

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or giving a definitive answer. Perhaps this is the pattern of *X* tree? Perhaps the potter was thinking of *that spot* in the path by her house—I wonder? The designs used in face paint work in a similar way.[2]

LIVING WITH BEAUTY: THE ATTRACTIVE AND ATTRACTED FOREST

The Quichua term for living well, *sumaj kausana*, can also be translated as living beautifully. Adapting to the beauty of the forest is not something that can be done in a day or two. Rather it occurs over a lifetime of responding to the forest as a company of species that conceal human-like beings.

In doing so human beings traditionally model their dress on that of the spirit owners of the forest (*sacha runaguna* or *warmiguna*). The dress of these spirit owners is an assemblage of the beauty of the many species with whom they live. Their faces are adorned with the patterns of many animals, their smell is a blend of forest flowers, and their beads the seeds of many plants. In a sense these beings represent the local forest itself. Hence their beauty is the beauty of the local economy of species in a more transparently human form. The sight of their beautiful beads and feather crowns is said to cause a swell of *kariyana* (a Quichua word that describes the rush of joy felt in response to beauty) to a much greater degree than human adornments do. The species with which these beings adorn themselves are also said to be moved by these ornaments, which serve as a tribute to their kind of beauty. For humans also, being clothed in the beauty of the forest does not mean looking like one particular species but like a person whose beauty mirrors all the relations of the forest. In so doing they become adorned *with the forest's kind of beauty*. This in turn is the key for a further deepening of relationships, through which additional kinds of beauty may be learned and assimilated. Sometimes this occurs in dramatic ways, as illustrated by the following example.

One day while walking in the forest with a Quichua woman named Bélgica Dagua and a number of others, we came across a place along a forest stream where plants called *akcha waska* (literally, "hair vine") grew abundantly. This plant (in the *Pitcairnia* genus of *Bromeliaceae*) attaches itself to trees and sends down long hanging aerial roots coated with a slippery liquid, which is gathered and applied to women's long hair to enhance its beauty. These elegant roots are the "hair" of the plants. As we

[2]This aspect of Quichua aesthetic sensibility is not unlike the kind of restraint and conscientious employment of silence and distance that Keith Basso (1970; 1996, 85) found in Western Apache speech: to avoid smothering the thoughts of others, demanding that they see things (and experience the same relational couplings with the land) exactly as you do (Basso 1996, 85).

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walked along the stream Bélgica stopped repeatedly to gather some of these roots, working their slippery liquid into her hair as well as into the hair of her niece. In doing this, Bélgica was following a broader pattern in which the beauty of women's hair is cosmetically enhanced with qualities from the "hair" of various trees (which we saw as well in the example of the *Pasu* tree). Although her intent may have simply been cosmetic, the mingling of her hair with the hair of the forest in this way created a bridge of intimacy that caused her to dream.

That night, Bélgica had a dream in which she found herself back at that spot in the stream. Whereas during the day that place had looked to all of us simply as a forest stream populated with the usual variety of plants and animals, in her dream she could see that it was a city or town (*llakta*) full of houses piled next to one another. As she passed that place, she was approached by a woman who had seen Bélgica during the day and now wanted to convince her to stay and marry her son. This woman was a *sacha warmi*, a forest woman or "spirit." While such an offer from a forest woman would likely have been flattering, we can also appreciate the danger in this situation if we recall the transformative power of attraction modeled in the origin stories. For the *sacha warmiguna* and *sacha runaguna* (forest women and men or "spirits") also are separated from us by a kind of species barrier. Bélgica's nocturnal visitor sought in a sense to pull her into their world and away from her own in which she is enmeshed or rooted in a network of human relatives and obligations. Bélgica's response was emblematic of someone who is not *quilla* (lazy or easily distracted). She was not at liberty, she said, since she has a son herself whom she must stay and care for. She suggested that the woman's son, if he was good-looking, might come and live with *her* in *her* community, where we expect that she would be able to remain who she is by virtue of maintaining her relational situatedness amongst her relatives and in her dwelling-place.

The *sacha warmi* wanted Bélgica to marry her son because they had seen her the previous day, and noticed her attractiveness as she washed the *akcha huasca* into her long hair. Seeing a beautifully adorned human person in the forest, a *sacha runa* or *warmi* might take notice, and point to them, causing that person to dream; and it is just such an event that we can infer would have happened that afternoon with Bélgica in the forest stream. Here, Bélgica was adorning herself with another expression of the forest's kind of beauty as manifested in the *akcha huasca*, with its long and glistening aerial roots.

Though such attractions are dangerous, they can also be desirable if managed appropriately and in a disciplined way. The theme of developing intimate relations with the powerful spirits of the forest as sources of strength and capacities is a familiar one. But it is also the case that

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through dreaming of the *sacha runa*, and seeing them in their glorious dress, it is possible to learn in turn how to further enhance one's own attractiveness to the forest and to other humans bonded with it—to make even more beautiful beads, to learn how to make different patterns, and so on.

AESTHETIC COMMUNITIES AND THE PLAY OF BOUNDARIES

Over the course of spending time in a particular territory—eating its foods, taking its medicines, walking attentively on its paths, participating in the kinds of empathizing and "becoming" relations we have detailed—individuals come to be accustomed to (become *yacharishka* with) that place. Accordingly, their bodies come to be shared with the forest, taking on its various aesthetic qualities and forms of beauty in a disciplined and limited manner. In the process they come to be part of a relatively bounded aesthetic community, whose boundedness produces simultaneous effects of inclusion and exclusion.

The existence of such boundaries reflects differences in relational and aesthetic networks comprised by the beings within different territories. Someone on the inside, in other words, will have a different relational selfhood compared to someone on the outside, and will have developed different kinds of attractions and attractiveness. Such boundaries enfold spheres of internal and mutual attraction, of "this particular forest's kind of beauty," compared with that which is alien or felt as intrusive by this forest and the beings that comprise it. In other words, there is an idea here of something like an aesthetic integrity of places that human beings must respect, negotiate, and adapt to.

We can think of the *Pasu* tree example here. The song depicts Clara Santi bathing in the heavy fragrance of the tree, taking on its aesthetic qualities and powers. It also ends with her bathing others in that same fragrance, "taming" them. With this action, she encloses others within a community of shared internal attractions: those "inside" this community take on and exude this same flavor or register of attractiveness, but also come to feel attracted to it through learning and appreciating its distinctive qualitative style. In such a way we can see how the aesthetic content of the emotions comes to be inextricably bound up with dwelling-place and ways of responding to it. At the same time, such forms of beauty are likely to appear strange and exotic, or parochial and quaint, for people outside this aesthetic community.

Taking on the beauty of a particular territory also changes how that land relates to you. This transition is often discussed with reference to

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smell: one comes to smell like that place and thus is no longer regarded as alien or an outsider by it. For example, if people go into the forest smelling like town (for example, like beer, or town food), the forest will notice: it will recognize such people as outsiders and will likely be annoyed. The *amus* or spirit owners of the forest might call up a rainstorm to drive people away; or the trees might shoot sickness at intruders. This is why, if someone wishes to become *yacharishka* with the forest, a particular regimen of aesthetics is necessary. They must avoid town foods in favor of forest ones.

The avoidance of town foods does not reflect a simple dichotomy between civilization and nature however. It is likely more correct to see this as one example of a broader pattern in which the governing logic is not a nature-culture distinction but a differentiation between communities that have their own distinct and interrelated aesthetic integrity—to which one is either familiar or a stranger. For this reason, it is also the case that traditional Quichua people who are *yacharishka* with a particular forest or territory also emphasize that they are *not yacharishka* with forests elsewhere that they have not come to know through living there over a period of time. This would seem to be the case even where most of the species present in the one area are the same as the other. Thus, on trips into the forest along the *Rio Napo*, elders from the *Rio Pastaza* who are accustomed to forest forty miles to the southeast expressed the feeling that the *Napo* forest regards them as strangers. Indeed, it would seem to be in part *because* they are so well-attuned to the place where they are from that they feel all the more sharply the nuances of difference between this territory and their own. *This* particular species is missing; we don't have *this* back home.

In this connection, we can also appreciate the dual meaning of *paju*. A *paju* (the shareable capacity evinced by a particular species) is an enlivening gift to those who have passed inside the aesthetic boundary of a particular territory. But *paju* is also used to denote sickness. The process by which trees or animals make people sick is called *pajuyachina*, a verb meaning to give *pajus* in a way that is sickening or harmful. What seems to be at stake in this difference is not two kinds of *paju*, however, but rather the way in which the same *pajus* have different effects depending on the relational position one occupies with regard to them. Those who have grown *yacharishka* with a place over time develop a relation to it, which makes them immune to its sickness-causing potential and allows them to assimilate its *pajus* in a measured way through an attraction and empathy that remains grounded. Those who are new to a place, either because they are young or because they are from far away, lack that immunity. Accordingly, Luisa Cadena describes how there is an especial danger

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that the forest will make children sick, through an action that is simultaneously an uncontrolled contagion of *pajus* and a seduction that lures their souls away. Similarly, a grown person is in danger of being seduced or stolen away in a heterosexual, cross-gendered way by a forest far from home: female forest spirits might steal away attractive men, while male trees and spirits steal women. Neither the child nor the person far from home has the immunity that comes from having become a mature friend of the forest in a place they know intimately.

In another idiom, the forest attacks outsiders with wind or *waira* that makes people sick. This *waira* is comprised of the *samai* or breath of the many different species. But fanning (*wairachina*) is also used to heal through a controlled blowing of the *samai* or breath that carries the qualities and aromas of different species. The difference is that the healer dispensing the forest breath is a mature individual whose body is adapted to the forest. Such aromas are olfactory expressions of plants' styles of being, of their healing adaptations or qualities, which can be breathed in and assimilated by patients, and people generally trying to deepen their knowledge of their dwelling places and their constitutive aesthetic intensities. In other words, *waira* and *samai* express the same duality we saw with *paju* because wind is the primary way in which *pajus* are transmitted.

In developing immunity, in passing from the outside to the inside of this aesthetic "boundary," a general expectation is that this will involve becoming sick—which furthermore seems consistent with the tendency to view at least certain kinds of sickness as uncontrolled becomings (relative to a range of other species). If one emerges from this sickness, however, a kind of aesthetic immunity enabling more balanced and limited becomings is developed. (This also gives a different contextual gloss to the idea, frequently noted within the literature on indigenous medicine, that healers are often people who have first had to overcome a serious illness.)

A number of precautions can mitigate both the irritation of the land and dangerous contagions for unaccustomed people. For example, sweeping with tobacco would mitigate the aesthetic traces of smell carried by forest wind. Sweeping a child with leaves upon exiting the forest both removes *waira* and allows for a child's soul to return if it had been seduced away. Such measures, we might speculate, mitigate excessive attractions and becomings and help enable a more gradual coming-to-know the land. Similarly, children within a community that is bonded with a particular territory come to inherit the relationships their parents have cultivated. These relations have then to be owned and cultivated in turn by these individuals throughout their lives. But by being enmeshed within the shared body of their relatives—and the rich network of relations with the land

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that these express—they are already, in some sense, inducted into a more measured and diversified set of relationships to the land.

The vocabulary of "boundaries" enclosing aesthetic communities no doubt inclines us to think in terms of lines drawn on a map such as between nation-states, neatly demarcating one from another, an inside from an outside. We might then want to pinpoint exactly *where* such lines are drawn, *here* but not *there*, encompassing this but not that. This no doubt would be an overly literal way of thinking about the boundaries of aesthetic communities that risks reductively obscuring the way Quichua thinking moves in this regard. But to make this point leaves us fumbling through a question not unlike one Gaston Bachelard (1994, 212) posed with regard to Western habits of conferring a certain kind of "spatiality upon thought": "if a metaphysician could not draw, what would he think?" If we do not think about boundaries between species or aesthetic communities primarily in terms of lines drawn in space, how might we think them? Our suspicion is that the boundaries between aesthetic communities, at least, seem more to reflect transition-effects between complexes of feeling and understanding, and interconnected communities of actors, than cartographic lines. Such boundaries are felt in the changes undergone in the self when passing them and relate to the rhythm of relationships: in the gradual process of coming to feel more "at home" in a place, of gaining a deeper, more attentive, and more intuitive and affective understanding of others (human and nonhuman). Conversely, they are felt in the gradual process of becoming less emotionally and empathetically "attached," of not caring and feeling ever-greater distance open up, of feeling one's ties of interest and attraction and concern take root elsewhere. In a connected way, these boundaries are also felt when the timing of developing relationships is rushed: when one comes crashing in, oblivious and disruptive, or too overtaken by attractions and curiosity to maintain a conscientious balance of intimacy and distance.

Throughout this article we have presented the idea of a closed aesthetic style that creates an exclusive barrier of privacy—both with regard to individual species, and more collective "closed aesthetic communities" of species interacting in a particular place. In doing so we do not however mean to suggest that the aesthetic orientation that accompanies such a vision of the world is static. On the contrary, it is always changing because it is a dialogical response to the beauty of unpredictable encounters never repeated. Furthermore, it is a response to the pathos of a world constituted through distance and subject to change. This pathos pulls at the heart in hearing the nocturnal cry of a curassow one will never see, in smelling the perfume of a vanilla orchid whose pod has just burst too high in the canopy to collect, or in finding the tender shoots of a

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bromeliad just chewed by a hungry sloth far above. Seasons change, trees fall and die, species become locally extinct while others undergo hardship in adapting to changing circumstances. Relatives traveling through the forest respond to these things together in humorous wordplay or song, representing their patterns in face paint or on pottery. In these responses the pathos or vulnerability of the species is compared to the human pathos of the responder, through shared experiences of mourning relatives who have passed away and of caring for those still present, of being alone, and so on. All of this heightens awareness that the shared body is continually undergoing loss and change. Thus the awareness of impermanence is also central to this aesthetic.

CONCLUSION: CHALLENGES TO LOCAL BEAUTY

In this article, we have tried to show how Amazonian Quichua conceptions of beauty make sense in the context of the distinct philosophical worldview in which they arise. Beauty here means looking like the land. The attractiveness and elegance of the land does not reflect the sublimity of a universal and intelligible design, but a process of estrangement in which each species withdrew into the mysterious opacity of its own world. These worlds are however not completely closed and inaccessible because they are a transformation rather than a complete break from an initially common human taste and manner of being. In its withdrawal, each species develops its own distinctive beauty as a responsive adaptation to others. In this, its own sense of beauty must be partially adapted to that of other communities to attract pollinators, prey, and symbiotic collaborators across species lines as well as to be attracted into collaboration with them (recall the hummingbird's adaptation to nectar-producing flowers). Together, the mutual adaptation of all the local species, each with their own privacy and peculiar attractions, makes up the beauty of a particular territory as an interrelated but bounded aesthetic community. And as we have seen, human communities also become beautiful by responsively adapting to the beauty of their local land. Like other species, they do so to survive and to flourish by sharing in the skillful adaptations (*pajus*) of others. By adapting themselves to the beauty of the land, humans too enter into partially closed aesthetic communities comprised of people who share a common look because each, in their different way, have adapted the beauty of their body to a common land.

Accordingly, Quichua senses of beauty are strikingly different from the Western aesthetics with which many readers will perhaps be more familiar. It is not a question of transcending the limits of this local forest to

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fix one's mind in True and Unchanging Beauty,[3] but of navigating the immanent matrices of a perspectival world. Beauty is experienced in the strangeness of speciation. And the experience of beauty is oriented around ethical problems that bear the signature of that relational perspectivism. It transpires in the play of distance and proximity in direct relations with the land and its species. At stake in the experience of beauty is not mathematical proportion, or the harmony of a God's-eye "big picture" in which confusion is resolved into unity or order, or the contemplative self-elevation achieved through appreciating beauty "for its own sake" in a manner autonomous from sensible attraction, the hunger for food, or sexuality.[4]

Reflecting on what has been said, it might well be asked: if Quichua aesthetics is a response to the changing relationality of the land, what happens as the land and peoples' relations to it change? Most particularly, what are the challenges encountered by Quichua aesthetics under the conditions of shifting lifeways due in part to globalization and related changes in patterns of mobility?

The examples we have used throughout this article are taken from the narratives of older people or people from relatively remote communities who have limited contact with the outside world. Beauty as understood by these communities is particularly vulnerable to the threat of globalization. Beauty is the adaptation of a person's body to the body of a local forest by regularly consuming a large variety of its species and by responding to it through song, dance, bodily movement, and visual and verbal arts. All of this creates the closed aesthetic communities of relatives we have described who share a common style of music and dress. The beauty of the world is dependent on these closed communities. In the old days at least, there was something of a moral duty to live in a way that is faithful to this closed aesthetic of the land where you were born.

This moral duty is exemplified in an anecdote told to Tod Swanson by a woman who grew up in the first half of the 20th century. As a young woman her family would walk into Quito from Llano Grande (now a

[3]As, for example, in Plato's *Symposium*, in which the experience and love of beauty is described as gradually raising us from a love of beautiful things to the contemplation of Beauty itself. Quichua thinking is markedly different from Kant's (1987) approach to form, which invites us to investigate beauty in terms of a structure of aesthetic experience, effects, and judgments given the transcendental, formal structure of subjective experience. A crucial difference here lies in ontology: Kant thinks the subject and its formal constitution on the basis of an atomistic ontology that presumes the existence of bounded, fixed, self-subsisting entities (things-in-themselves), whereas Quichua thought is *relational*: it takes *relations* rather than *atomistic entities* as prior and constitutive of what "things" are.

[4]As in Kant's (1987) aesthetics, where the entire problem of beauty is posed as that of a higher form of pleasure, which is then sought in the formal structure of judgments of beauty and the feeling produced by this operation in the subject.

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suburb on the north side). The community of Llano Grande had its own distinctive *traje* or dress with women's blouses embroidered in patterns of the potato flower, one of their key crops. As they walked into the city they passed through various other Quichua communities each marked by its distinctive dress reflective of its mini-environment. Even in the first half of the twentieth century these local *trajes* were not equal in prestige. The traditional style of a community closer to the city center was more "chic" than that of a community farther out because it marked the wearer as more closely connected to the city center and thus as being more "with it."

One day a girl from a community closer to the city invited Maria to a fiesta where she hoped to dance and meet boys. To look more cosmopolitan Maria borrowed a dress from her friend that made her seem to be from a land closer to the city. But when her father found out he got angry and hit her. He told her that she should be faithful to the land she was from and should dress like that land. To dress like another land was to be *quilla*.

This incident from the first half of the 20th century foreshadows the problem that globalization would later pose to the indigenous aesthetic. Globalization and related forms of mobility threaten fidelity to a homeland by creating a new norm where people move to jobs across great distances. In these new environments young people are separated from the land. They listen to new forms of music, eat food from all over the world, and wear whatever fashions appeal to them. By contrast the older native look of their grandparents can appear rural and old-fashioned. Like their counterparts everywhere, Quichua young people tend to be more at home in their time than their elders. And like grandparents everywhere, Quichua grandparents seek to adjust to their grandchildren in various ways.

But for traditional Andean-Amazonian thinking this breakdown of barriers between closed aesthetic communities augurs the breakdown of species barriers and the return of conditions signifying the end of time or a change of worlds—what in Peruvian Quechua is called the *pachakutik*. The *kallari uras*, as we saw, was associated with a lack of privacies and boundaries. Now, with the increased mobility of globalization, Quichua communities are experiencing the collapse of distances between peoples and the aesthetic communities through which they have been bonded to their various environments. Such developments match the expectation that this world-age too will end, to be eventually followed by a new configuration of distances. This is a movement that exceeds individuals'—and even individual communities'—powers to control, since it is the relational matrix itself that is changing.

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To construe the challenges and the dynamics of our present in such terms also changes how we might think about the kinds of responses to it that are possible and meaningful. If globalization in some sense invites individuals to be *quilla*, then at some level the obvious problem becomes what it might mean to not be *quilla*—even under conditions where changing land-use patterns and mobility make adherence to traditional lifeways more difficult (Swanson 1992, 288). More broadly, the philosophical tradition we have been describing enables a complexity of ethical thought (and as it were, principles applicable to new cases) that will no doubt be taken up in a variety of ways by those responding to changes in a new generation.

At the same time, the bounded quality of aesthetic communities challenges those who, because of globalization, are able to come to a local tradition from the outside to think through its lessons for what it might mean to live a good life. For to do so is to play across a boundary between peoples analogous in Quichua thinking to the boundaries between speciated perspectives. An obvious lesson to draw here is that it would be wrong to simply seek to efface such boundaries, to artificially adopt native modes of dress or other facets of the relational nexus that is longstanding and living between local peoples and their specific territories. Nevertheless, an interesting question continues to be: what kinds of communicative windows might be appropriately opened between immigrants and the lands to which they or their ancestors have moved, which means also coming to understand empathetically what it is like for the people who have lived there longer to be bonded to the land in such a way. Perhaps more broadly, it is a question of opening philosophical possibilities for rethinking and experiencing the self and our interactive possibilities in the world differently. Above all, the problem points us back to our own situatedness, to the communities and lands with which we dwell.

If we are troubled by globalized society's alienation from place and land, and its separation of "nature" and "culture," the appropriate response need not be to simply collapse all distance between species or territories, becoming "one" with "nature" in general. Rather, the Quichua tradition might help us imagine a different, more nuanced and responsive terrain of play, which requires a judicious economy of distance as well as intimacy. In all of this, the problem would seem to be that of appropriately responding to the thinking of other local traditions in a way that gives space and remains true to the distances between us, and the relational and local matrices in which we as selves take root and shape.

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