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Otro lado. An inquiry into the conceptual topology of animism among the Moré (Itene) of the Bolivian Amazonia

The *-pajé* [shaman] category may also be compared to the famous Tupinambá *tobajara*, a term meaning ‘the one from the other side’, applied to both enemies and brothers-in-law (Fausto 2012: 201).

This essay is an ethnographic exposition of animism as documented during my fieldwork in Amazonia among the Moré.¹ In its most fundamental formulation animism is an “attribution by humans to non-humans of an interiority identical to their own” (Descola 2013: 129). The classical anthropological notion of animism was restored and conceptualised in a new way by the French anthropologist Philippe Descola based on his ethnographic work among the Achuar (Descola 1992, 1996).² This “new” animism is now well documented in Amazonian ethnography and has been theorized mainly as an ontology (Costa, Fausto 2010; Brightman et al. 2012). It has been explored through different ethnographic examples: shamanism, hunting, warfare, mythological corpus, cannibalism, ritual practice, narratives, as well as songs. My aim in this paper is simply to present

¹ The text is based on the ethnographic material collected during a project financed by a grant awarded by the National Science Centre, Poland – “Tradition from the Native Point of View. The present and the past in the discourse and practices of the Moré Indians of the Bolivian Amazon” (2015/17/N/HS3/00078). I would like to thank Daniela Peluso, Filip Rogalski and Kacper Świerk for valuable comments on the very first draft of this paper.

² To separate this new understanding of animism from the early, 19th c. anthropological speculations about the evolution of religion some scholars prefer to call it “new animism” (Harvey 2006, cf. Domańska 2014), although in Amazonian literature it is labelled simply “animism”.

specific ethnographic material relevant to the renewed debate about animism in Amazonia.

I will focus mainly on stories (*cuentos*) and expressions that the Moré used in ordinary discourse and that suggest an interesting topological³ quality of animism, which in my view may also be interpreted as an aspect of ethnographically recognized Amerindian perspectivism (Århem 1993, 1996; Viveiros de Castro 1998; Lima 1999) although not necessarily within ontological turn framework (Viveiros de Castro 2015).

Some theoretical considerations

I will not develop here the theoretical aspects of my own understanding of animism (and perspectivism), but I should stress some important differences in respect to the ongoing debate about animism and perspectivism in Amazonia.⁴ I intentionally avoid using the concept of ontology when referring to animism, however, not because I think animism cannot be understood as a kind of ontology. In fact, I agree it could be, especially in a way formulated by Philippe Descola (2013, 2014). I prefer not to use it because, in my opinion, focusing on ontology may generate many problems, already explored in the critiques of the ontological turn (Heywood 2012; Rival 2012; Santos-Granero 2012; Laidlaw, Heywood 2013; Graeber 2015; Candea 2017), and may distract scholars from other interesting aspects of animism. More importantly, I have many doubts concerning the basic assumption expressed by some proponents of the ontological turn (the main theoretical view in which the debate about animism/perspectivism has developed within anthropology), i.e. their rejection of epistemology (Holbrad, Pedersen 2017, cf. Viveiros de Castro 2015).⁵

Intellectually sophisticated rejection of epistemology by proponents of the ontological turn can be understood in terms of seeking a solution to the old philosophical and anthropological problem, the great dualism of idea vs. world, concept vs. thing, reframed as culture vs. ontology, etc. (Carrithers et al. 2010; Heywood 2012). In my view, this problem in anthropology (at least) can be better resolved not by rejecting epistemology, but by approaching it from the new theoretical perspectives developed mainly in cognitive science, which are indeed

³ Here, I use an analogy to the mathematical term “topology”, in the context of interchangeable (symmetric) relations of space (inside/outside, this side/other side) according to the given surface/boundary (cf. Giovanni da Col 2013).

⁴ I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for encouraging me to express more clearly my own stance toward the animism/perspectivism debate.

⁵ It is worthwhile to mention other coherent perspectives on animism which are not rejecting epistemology: Nurit Bird-David’s relational epistemology (1999, 2006), Rane Willerslev work (2004, 2007), Eduardo Kohn’s semiotic inspired approach (2005, 2013) and the cognition and culture approach developed by Bethany Ojalehto Mays and her team (Ojalehto et al 2015, 2017, 2020). Philippe Descola’s approach, even though it explicitly refers to ontology, also takes into account the epistemic mode of existence (2014).

highly relevant for anthropology (Bloch 2012; Boyer 2018). I wish to illustrate my claim with a short example.

Proponents of the ontological turn suggest that, when dealing with radical difference (alterity) during fieldwork, an anthropologist cannot possibly take seriously her interlocutor's statement, such as: "this animal is a person", i.e. take it as real – if she conceives it as a belief (or concept) (Viveiros de Castro 2011; Holbrad, Pedersen 2017). I believe that this problem is mostly resolved by an emerging new paradigm related to cognition, perception, and action (Frith 2007; Hohwy 2013; Clark 2016). Its main arguments state: first, what you perceive/experience is strongly affected by your prior knowledge and beliefs;⁶ secondly, perception is an action and engagement, so what you experience is also affected by your action and your body; thirdly, the whole process of perception is highly transparent for the acting agent. This last point is crucial and indicates that, typically, we perceive the world as if we perceived it directly. Finally, the whole process of perception is an ongoing process based on feedback loops.⁷ From the phenomenological point of view, we feel immersed in the world, and meaning is intrinsic to the very act of perceiving. In other words, at the very moment of engagement with reality, the embodied mind already generates predictions and expects the world to be in a specific way. Those expectations affect the experienced reality and there is no access to other, "more real" world.⁸ Indeed, this may interestingly resemble the ontological framework in anthropology.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that there is no epistemology here. Perception is a process that is fast and transparent but requires prior information. Knowledge, beliefs, concepts (information-bearing structures – whatever we want to call them) are mental representations and must be representations in order for them to be stored in memory. Also, they do not have to be accessible to the agent

⁶ In the Predictive Processing framework,, knowledge and belief are to some extent understood differently than in anthropology, as structures of information operating largely below the level of self-awareness, but in principle this does not exclude the role of reflective beliefs (Sperber 1997; Mercier, Sperber 2009), because they also affect perception and action (Lupyan, Clark 2015; Andersen 2017; Otten et al. 2017; Seth 2019;).

⁷ The brain continuously generates predictions and monitors those predictions for errors by comparing its own dynamic models of the environment (physical, social/cultural, and internal model of the body) with incoming information. Within Predictive Processing framework the embodied brain is not a passive receiver but to a large extent producer of the content of perception. In other words, a significant amount of perceptual information is provided by the brain itself. The loops contain: expectation formation, predictive coding, error monitoring, and back again (see Bar 2007, 2009; cf. Frith 2007; Hohwy 2013; Clark 2016;).

⁸ This is also where I see the place for a notion of ontology understood in this specific way. Ontology will refer here to whatever people experience as real. The fact that the very process of perception is transparent for the agent only strengthens the realness of sensations and sense of the direct access to the world. Nevertheless, what is (ontologically) possible to experience depends on the very process of past experiences. In Descola's terms the 'ontic mode of existence is dependent upon its epistemic mode of existence' (Descola 2014: 433–434). Of course, this is a significantly different way of understanding ontology than its classical philosophical view, but as far as I understand, it is somehow close to the way Philippe Descola is conceptualising animism as an ontology (Descola 2013, 2014). Every time I use the term 'ontological' in this article for the purpose of my own argumentation, I use it in this specific sense.

self-awareness to operate on their basis (Bloch 1998, 2012; Mercier, Sperber 2017; Boyer 2018). Therefore, I would not agree that I do not take the Moré seriously when I refer to their statements as based on structured concepts. This is also why I intentionally use the term “conceptual” about the topological quality of animism, which I wish to illustrate in this paper. I do take these statements to constitute knowledge, since they stem from the experience (mostly shamanic/hunting experience but also other forms of engagement) of the interlocutor or someone s/he knew and which they store (in personal memory) and transmit through public representations (stories, songs, artefacts, etc.). I do believe that the Moré can experience what they say they experience, see, or hear. I do believe that they experience this as part of the real world as they experience it.⁹ Actually, this article is about how they explicitly articulate this experience. I hope, this briefly sketched theoretical framework enables me to take very seriously everything that they do, say, and recall.¹⁰

In this essay I am particularly interested in a spontaneous and explicit articulation by the Moré of topologic markers such as boundaries, surface, sides and layers, as well as spatial characteristic (clear space, closed, open, reversed) or proximity markers (here, there, close, far away, etc.), and sometimes also temporal (night, day) or social and cognitive markers (alone, visible, invisible). During the preliminary analysis of my fieldwork material, I overlooked those topological idioms, but then I realized that they could have something in common with other intriguing ideas explicitly present among the Moré, namely the concept of “the other side” (*otro lado*). Before I introduce how I understand this notion in the context of the Moré ethnography, I would like to point out that inspiration for many of the ideas presented in this article stemmed from the work by Marta Krokoszyńska, focusing on social practices among the (ex)Capanahua (Krokoszyńska 2016, 2017).

Krokoszyńska, who in her PhD dissertation approached the topic from a different theoretical background and focused on slightly different aspects of Amazonian reality, has developed an interesting topology-like framework for the (ex)Capanahua ethnography (Krokoszyńska 2016). She is able to convincingly argue that topological concepts (this side/other side, inside/outside) are crucial to understanding Capanahua sociality and even the whole process of becoming (ex)Capanahua. It is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze in detail the different aspects where Krokoszyńska is making use of this topologic argument, but in my concluding remarks I will indicate more precisely its scope.

Topology is a recurrent theme in anthropology.¹¹ In this essay I propose to use topology as a heuristic device. By this I mean that perhaps many anthropologists

⁹ Nor do I think theirs any different (alter) experience is a kind of maladaptation, cognitive error, or hallucination. One can only call it hallucination in terms of Anil Seth’s claim that we all hallucinate when we experience reality (Seth 2017, cf. Frith 2007: 111–139).

¹⁰ For the purpose of clarity of this argument, I choose not to address the problem of how seriously we can take even our own memories, knowledge, and beliefs in general.

¹¹ The first explicit attempt to introduce topology-based approach into anthropology can probably be traced back to Edmund Leach’s *Rethinking Anthropology* ([1961]1966: 7–8). Elements

working in South American Lowland may find familiar some examples and utterances I present in this text. I believe that ‘otro lado’ characteristics that I recognize are more widespread in Amazonia and are present not only among the Moré. Topology is a heuristic device used to first identify these characteristics in ordinary narrations and to go beyond apparently obvious meaning for many of them – for example proximity markers like ‘here’ or ‘there’. It is also a device to identify the analytical importance of idioms such as surface and boundary in the Amazonian context. Furthermore, I do believe that topology has a huge potential to become a coherent theoretical approach in the study of human culture and sociality (Shields 2013; Hamberger 2018). Following this necessary theoretical clarification, let me now present ethnography.

The Moré

The Moré (Itene) are an indigenous people currently living in two small villages in the north of Bolivia where the Guaporé (Iténez) river enters the Mamoré river very close to the border with the state of Rondônia in Brazil. Before 1938, the Moré speakers on the Bolivian side of the border were monolingual. Nowadays, in a population of around two hundred Bolivian Moré descendants, around ten people from the oldest generation can communicate in their native language with different levels of fluency (Chyc 2017), but in general, a local variation of Spanish remains the only language used in daily communication. Moré language belongs to the Chapacura language family and the Bolivian Moré (Itene) are the last living survivors of the once numerous Chapacuran groups of Bolivia (Rokorona, Napeka, Kitemoka, Tapacura); together with the Brazilian Wari’ and Oro Win they are the only Chapacuran group with living speakers (Birchall et. al 2016). The first detailed linguistic study of the Moré language in the late 1990s identified a Moré dialect on the Brazilian side called *Kaw Tayo*¹² (Kujubim, see Duran 2000). The new linguistic data¹³ and my ongoing ethnohistorical study also strongly suggest that, historically, Moré speaking groups have been living on both sides of the Guaporé river (Snethlage 2016; Chyc 2017). Descendants of the Moré speaking groups on the Brazilian side now live mainly in the Ricardo Franco indigenous community on the Guaporé river and call themselves Kujubim. They now only speak Portuguese (Sanchez 2019).

of topological framework appear in works of major anthropologists, such as Gregory Bateson, Claude Levi-Strauss, Roy Wagner and Marilyn Strathern (cf. Da Col 2013). In the Amazonian context it was explicitly applied by Klaus Hamberger (2012, 2019) in general, and by David Rodgers in his analysis of shamanism among the Ikpeng (2013).

¹² This is the Moré word which means “people who eat tayo-fish”. All Moré words in this paper will be underlined.

¹³ Currently, I collaborate with the linguist Joshua Birchall on documenting the Moré language (*Salvaguarda do Patrimônio Linguístico e Cultural de Povos Indígenas Transfronteiriços e de Recente Contato na Região Amazônica* [PRODOC 914BRZ4019] Subprojeto: Moré-Kujubim).

Before 1938, the Moré had mostly hostile relations with other inhabitants of the area. Hostility was reciprocal – the Moré were being attacked by non-indigenous enemies, or the Moré themselves attacked Bolivians and Brazilian citizens on the Mamoré and Guaporé rivers. Between 1930–1937, there were a few attempts to establish peaceful relations with the Moré (Leigue Castedo 1957; Snethlage 2016). In 1938, as the Bolivian national project of “pacification” was being implemented the Moré had already been decimated by multiple epidemics. This could be one of the reasons why they decided to establish peaceful relations with the pacification team lead by a Bolivian indigenist and pedagogue, Luis Leigue Castedo. From 1938, he established the so-called *Núcleo Indígenal Moré* and settled there around one hundred survivors of the Bolivian Moré (Leigue Castedo 1957). During his stay among them, between 1938–1962, he introduced the Moré, among others, to the Spanish language and the Catholic Church teachings (Guiteras Mombiola 2019). Moreover, during that time, around one hundred Moré were living among dozens of *Mestizo* people (*karafo*) who worked for Luis Leigue Castedo in *Núcleo Indígenal Moré*. Proximity and a great number of those *mestizo* bodies were, according to the Moré, one of the reasons why, nowadays People (*gente*) do not speak Moré and do not live like the Moré once used to live.

I wish to introduce the ‘otro lado’ in the same way it was first made available to me – namely, through “just another hunting story”. It was by analyzing such a story that I realized that the *otro lado* idiom was also explicitly present in other utterances and narratives.

The other side *or* just another hunting story

I will start with a short story that Tuke¹⁴ (one of my Moré friends, then twenty-eight), who was generously hosting me in his family home during my stay, told me in 2016. We were sitting on a bench in front of his house in the small village of Monte Azul, discussing some recent rumors and laughing. A few days before, Tuke heard me asking his cousin a question about what it was like to go hunting. Apart from logistical and technical issues, I was asking some rather naïve questions, such as: “Do you think animals have souls?” or “Do animals have owners?” My Moré interlocutor simply replied, “Who knows?”¹⁵ or “I don’t know, I don’t think so.”¹⁶ At the time when I originally asked such questions, Tuke responded with silence. I felt disappointed.

However, this particular evening, a few days after that interview, I already forgot my frustration with not being able to so easily gain crucial information about animism, and I was simply enjoying Tuke’s company. In such ordinary

¹⁴ I use pseudonyms for my interlocutors. *Tuke* is a Moré word which means “brazil nut” (*la castaña*). For the Moré, it is a very important wild fruit, both symbolically and (especially now) also economically.

¹⁵ ‘¿Quién sabe?’ Original quotations of short sentences in Spanish will appear in footnotes.

¹⁶ ‘no sé...no creo...’

and peaceful moment, Tuke suddenly said: "I will tell you something."¹⁷ He began to tell me a story that was rather typical of hunting stories I had heard before, with one small exception, which I will reveal at the story's conclusion. He told me how, a few weeks earlier, together with his cousin and brother-in-law, they had decided to go hunting. They were hunting by night (a usual practice of the Moré hunters nowadays). Walking through the forest at some distance from each other, they remained within an earshot, even though they could not see each other. Of course, they were smoking tobacco because of the mosquitos (so they claimed).¹⁸ In the horizontal arrangement, Tuke was on the left end of the hunting *trio*, while his cousin was in the middle and his brother-in-law was on the right.

Tuke told me that at a certain point, for a few minutes, he suddenly found himself alone in the forest, unable to hear the presence of his companions.¹⁹ He explained his predicament by saying: "It was because my cousin went closer [to the right] to my brother-in-law to get some tobacco and make his cigarette".²⁰ Then, Tuke realized that something was moving in front of him in the bushes. Using a flashlight, he decided to illuminate the bushes, yet at first glance he could not see anything. Then he suddenly saw it standing before him! It was a white-lipped peccary (*Tayassu pecari*).

Tuke remarked that the peccary was unusually big, alone, and stood in place directly in front of him, looking straight at him.²¹ Then, Tuke explained that he thought: "I will shoot him to see if he is from *this* or *the other side*"!²²

As I was listening to his story, the underlying meaning of his words was not yet apparent to me, because I did not pay particular attention to his phrasing at that moment. Later, Tuke described how he was pointing his gun at the peccary and trying to take a shot, but that his gun would not work. With this, he started calling out to his cousin, but nobody answered him. Meanwhile, the peccary was still there constantly staring at Tuke and slowly moving closer to him and making sounds by exhaling loudly (*fhrrr, fhrrr*). Finally, Tuke could shoot and, according to him, he shot the animal, but the peccary did not die, nor did the bullets make him turn and run. Tuke tried to shoot again but the gun, once more, did not work. Then finally, Tuke was able to hear his cousin calling out for him. For a split second, he quickly turned his head in the direction from where his cousin's voice came, and when he looked back, the peccary had vanished. As an explanation for this unusual occurrence of the peccary, Tuke concluded: "This critter was from

¹⁷ 'Te voy a contar algo...'

¹⁸ Of course, the use of tobacco in Amazonia is embedded in a strong symbolic context. I will not develop it here as I focus on other aspects of the story.

¹⁹ Please note that in this situation 'alone' means that he not only could not see, but also did not hear his companions, even though he knew that they were still there, somewhere close.

²⁰ 'Fue porque mi primo se acercó a mi cuñado pa' pedirle un poco de tabaco y hacer su cigarrillo.'

²¹ I wish to point out another strange characteristic of the peccary, which was not mentioned here, namely its solitary presence. White-lipped peccary live in groups, and it is very strange to see them alone. Tuke did not mention sound or odour of other peccaries, which in normal circumstances should take place. I would like to thank Kacper Świerk for pointing this out to me.

²² 'Le voy a disparar pa' ver si es del éste o del otro lado.'

the other side. I shot him, but he did not die. There was not even any blood over there. But I was not scared. Did not scare me – that’s why I was able to come back home”.²³ That was it. No further explanation.

Apart from the clear absence of explicit statements about spirits or animal soul in Tuke’s hunting story, indeed, many features of this story are familiar for South American lowland anthropologists. These types of strange encounters in the forest are well known ethnographic illustrations of animism in Amazonia (Lima 1999; Viveiros de Castro 2012; Descola 2013). On another occasion, I asked Tuke why, in his opinion, this animal did not run away. He simply replied, “because this critter was from the other side”.²⁴ When I asked what it meant to him, he just responded “it was a demon” (*fue demonio*).

Misunderstandings, doubts, and strange encounters in Amazonia

Let us try to look more closely at the meaning of ‘*otro lado*’ in the context of Tuke’s hunting story. I will start with an observation that the story was spontaneously told by him and he decided how to put his experience and ideas into words. Why, when telling me this story, did he decide to emphasize that there was something amiss with the animal? Did he expect that the peccary should behave as an ordinary (animal) peccary?

Someone could argue that he decided to stress this because of me – because I (a white – *gringo* – foreigner) was present there, listening to this story, Tuke could have been trying to adjust his narrative to fit my expectations (whatever he assumed them to be). Potentially, he could have emphasized that the peccary’s behaviour was not typical because I would not automatically surmise this (due to my lack of knowledge about peccaries). Perhaps, if he were telling the story to someone else, it would have been told differently. In other words, it was simply a coincidence that he used phrase “the other side”? In my opinion, however, it was not the case. In subsequent years, following my preliminary fieldwork, I heard more hunting stories that were similar to Tuke’s and were also told spontaneously and addressed to people other than me, who were familiar with hunting. In those stories, again, the expression *otro lado* appears in the same context and seems to be used as a marker of the strange behaviour of an animal or, in other words, its demonic provenience. Yet, before I will consider other ethnographic examples of the use of the “*otro lado*” idiom, I would like to reflect on another possible scenario.

Could it be that I simply misunderstood or overinterpreted Tuke’s story? Of course, ‘*otro lado*’ literally means ‘the other side’ and is sometimes used by the Moré in this literal sense to address someone or something foreign or distant. In the local context, where the Guaporé river divides Bolivian and Brazilian

²³ ‘*Este bicho fue del otro lado. Le di un tiro, pero él no murió. Ni siquiera había sangre por allí. Pero yo no tenía miedo. No me asustó, por eso pude volver a casa.*’

²⁴ ‘*porque este bicho fue del otro lado.*’

territories, the expression '*otro lado*' sometimes refers literally to the other side of the river. In that context, people from 'the other side' will simply imply Brazilians. Certainly, this expression can sometimes be used more literally and at other times more metaphorically.

For this reason, it can be argued that perhaps Tuke just literally wanted to express that this animal was from far away. However, this too would not be a satisfactory explanation. Peccaries are common to the Amazonian ecosystem and the Moré hunters are profoundly familiar with their 'habitus', and expertly know how to hunt them. Indeed, this is precisely the point – Tuke knows exactly what a peccary's habits are, and for this reason, he can recognize its unusual behaviour. His expertise allows him to identify this particular peccary as being from 'the other side'. Finally, to fully exhaust other possible interpretations of '*otro lado*', it is also worth examining if Tuke's 'the other side' literally refers to the other side of something. In this case, I ask if it may refer to the 'other side' of something real in terms of experience? Indeed, such a question makes sense both anthropologically and ethnographically.

I realized that the '*otro lado*' expression appeared not only in specific hunting stories, but also in a different kind of stories which contemporary Moré interpret as encounters with "diabolic things" (*cosas diabólicas*).²⁵ For example, nowadays, some people tell stories about strange encounters which they (or someone they knew) experienced. Usually, such stories are about walking *alone* in the forest and hearing something or even seeing something which many of my interlocutors describe simply as 'things from the other side' (*cosas del otro lado*). Particularly, this refers to situations when sound is perceived without the visual presence of an object. Such sound could be the sound of a running horse or of a wooden wagon used to transport rubber (*la goma*) and Brazil nuts (*la castaña*) in "times of Leigue",²⁶ or a motorbike (which is a common means of transport among contemporary Moré) in the middle of the forest. Among such explanations, I have also heard a story about a phantom boat traveling along the Guaporé river, which then disappeared in the old *Puerto Moré*.²⁷

Other Moré hunters also tell hunting stories very similar to Tuke's story, where the encountered animals behave strangely or *emerge* as seen in human form by a hidden *solitary* hunter. Quite often, hunting stories about strange encounters also concern the aquatic world and refer to bizarre fish, dolphins, or anaconda (*sicuri*). Less frequently, I heard stories about children kidnaped by forest 'spirits' (*bulto, diablo, demonio*) and one story about a Moré woman, now deceased, who according to many Moré had been kidnaped by a 'spirit' (*bulto, demonio*) and then returned home after a month. These types of 'spirits' are also described as beings

²⁵ Analyzing such a „Christian vocabulary“ is beyond the scope of this paper but I see here interesting similarities between the Moré and the Wari' in respect of experiencing Christianity (see. Vilaça 2015a, 2015b, 2016).

²⁶ Between 1938 and 1963, the Moré were settled in the *Núcleo Indígenal Moré* governed by a Bolivian teacher and indigenist Luis Leigue Castedo (1957), see above.

²⁷ This is the Spanish name of first place where Leigue Castedo started building *Núcleo Indígenal Moré* in 1938.

from the other side (*otro lado*). I have also heard several stories about the deceased Moré who have been seen shortly after their death by the living Moré who were walking *alone*. All these stories are from the present times and concern people alive at the time of the fieldwork.

Considering these examples and the fact that the Moré explicitly mentioned '*otro lado*', one would expect that there is a coherent idea of what this 'other side' is. However, people do not explicitly speak about the characteristic of 'the other side'. They are rather concerned about *effects that seem to occur* on this side (their side, so to speak) *as a result* of encounters with the other side. Those effects are likely to be sickness or death, which take place on this side. It is very common for them to consider this 'other side' as being invisible²⁸ to people in normal circumstances. The Moré understand normal circumstances to be when one is healthy and not solitary.²⁹ Please note that virtually all examples mentioned above occurred when the perceiver was alone.

Beside the fact that there is no coherent theory about 'the other side', we can still find out some of its specific character and characteristics of the boundaries between different sides. Alongside mythological corpus which goes beyond the scope of this article, fragments of this conceptualization of 'the other side' are present in different and sometimes apparently not connected stories which are told by the elderly Moré people.

The elder people's stories

In addition to the already mentioned examples, I would like to introduce several stories told by the elderly Moré (*los sabios*). They usually told the stories (*los cuentos*) in Spanish about shamans (*brujos*) who only a few decades ago were able to cross to the other side and communicate with beings who lived there. Those beings are very often described as presenting themselves in a human form (sometimes with strange, peculiar characteristics) living there like the Moré used to live and speaking the Moré language. For example, from the shamans the Moré know that following death, the deceased go to 'the other side' and there to a place called Namatuke,³⁰ which is located underwater or sometimes described as hidden deep in the forest (not accessible or even visible to the living Moré in normal circumstances). From the point of view of the deceased, they live there like the Moré used to live in the past (on this side). The deceased in Namatuke have longhouses and kinship relations, they fish and hunt, and speak in the Moré language.

²⁸ It seems to me that imperceptibility is very important here. I will return to this aspect in conclusion.

²⁹ "Normal circumstances" can be expressed also by the opposition: joy/sadness (*alegría/estar triste*), peaceful/scared (*tranquilo/asustado*), pleased/complaining (*contento/quejado*), etc.

³⁰ Namatuke literally means "the place of Brazil nuts" or sometimes is translated as "a place where Brazil nuts are born".

Those stories may, in general, appear quite familiar to many Amazonianists, but I would like to focus on the specific aspects of the stories, which in my opinion reveal some of the characteristics of ‘the other side’. The following is one of the shortest examples of such a story:

Example 1 [Otro_lado/ ite_20170503_pch_RTW_namatuke]³¹

[RTW]³² Three of us went by motor [short pause] until there [short pause and gesticulation] where the namatuke stream [short pause] to see if there is more *Morese*³³ [short pause] but they were deceased [*finado*], well [short pause]

[HCh] They were dead [short pause]

[RTW] what I was saying, well [short pause] deceased [*finado*] [short pause] **but it did not give us** [let in]. **The stream, it did not give us** [short pause] **it was closed** [short pause and gesticulation] **it was closed** [*no nos dio el arroyo, no nos dio, se cerró, se cerró*].

[Long pause]

[PCh] Was nobody there?

[RTW] There was nobody, nobody! The river ended, we continued there to a stream, **beyond that** the water ended and we went overland **to see** [short pause] **we only heard the parrots**,³⁴ **which they were raising** [short pause] **but we did not see** the post [short pause] we wanted to get to the post where the Komarek³⁵ arrived. **We could not get in** [short pause and gesticulation] **there was a big bush** [*motacusal*]! Let's say and the small stream, but it goes out to the Iténez river.

[Longer pause]

[PCh] And when was that?

[RTW] That was more or less 39 [1939].

[PCh] 39?

[RTW] Yes, Leigue was there, already [short pause] He sent us to see if there is more *Morese* [short pause] but they were the deceased [*finado*], they were already devils!

[HCh] They were already dead, already [short pause]

[RTW] But they lived **in this area** [*en esta zona*] [short pause] **in this life**, better say [short pause] that is why Leigue sent us to get more *Morese*, but it was not possible, **nor did we find them**, we just went [short pause and gesticulation] **to see** [short pause] **the stream we saw**, ends the stream, ends, **there was a dense thicket**

³¹ In the annex published at the end of this paper, the reader will find original Spanish transcriptions of the interviews. All translations are my own.

³² The initials of my interlocutors are in square brackets.

³³ Nowadays “*Morese*” is an ethnonym which the Moré use when talking about themselves in Spanish.

³⁴ Historically the Moré were using parrots as pets to raise alarm if someone was coming to the long house (*maloca*) (Snethlage 2016).

³⁵ Komarek was a Czech farmer who lived close to the Moré territory between 1920s–1930s. In a longer version of the story, there is another part where the storytellers describe Komarek's earlier travel to the Namatuke. There, he met the deceased Moré, but he did not know that they were already dead.

[*motacusal*]! **But the parrots sounded**, we went further, there was their first long-house [short pause and gesticulation] there were the pillars [*horcones*], pillars no more [short pause] the main pillar was high [short pause and gesticulation] but **beyond** they made more longhouses [short pause] more longhouses, **but we did not get there, it was closed, it was closed, closed** [short pause] **we could not!** Huuuu..., we had to go back [short pause and gesticulation] What we wanted was **to see** the port, the devil's barracks [short pause] but **everything was closed** [long pause] END.

Sometimes, when telling such stories, some of my interlocutors interchangeably used expressions 'the other side' (*otro lado*) and 'the other life' (*otra vida*) but, interestingly, I have not recalled them using the expression 'the other world'. Perhaps, following this observation, we could assume that for the Moré there is no impassable distinction between separated worlds, but rather the 'otro lado' idiom evokes the crack of reality into different layers and a concept of a different life on this and the other side of the boundary? I prefer to think of those sides as experienced realities (each generated by a particular body or point of view), without considering – for now – if we are dealing here with one world or many different worlds in the framework of ontological turn.

The concept of 'the other life' (*otra vida*) requires a separate article and recalls the idea that is common in Amazonia (and elsewhere), namely, that life in some form continues after death. For the purposes of this article, I only wish to emphasize that, in my understanding, the Moré do not consider 'the other life' as something which is exclusively reserved for dead people. Beings from 'the other life' can, for instance, be the 'demons' (*demonios*) mentioned earlier. They can also be aquatic beings living underwater. Deceased Moré from the *Namatuke* are also sometimes described as beings from 'the other life', but more often they are just described as beings from 'the other side'. I would not claim that they are separate concepts but rather 'uses' of handy vocabulary, as they both are Spanish expressions that describe the existence of somehow divided (cracked³⁶) reality that is possible to experience. Perhaps, the concept of 'the other life' can also be somehow connected to the Christian discourse about reality introduced to the Moré by Luis Leigue Castedo in the 1940s–1950s, which is another interesting topic, certainly worth a separate study.

'The other side' idiom seems to indicate fragmentation of the reality at least in terms of differences in the experience from the perceiver's point of view. In other words, the reality appears to be fragmented or divided into 'sides' where 'the other side' is out of experiential reach of the agent (at least in a particular situation). The level of access to the other side seems to be, in a way, gradual

³⁶ Perhaps it is worth mentioning that the word 'shaman' in Moré is *ikat*. I always wondered what exactly *ikat* means in Moré language. The underlying meaning of this word was always difficult to grasp from conversations with the Moré, because for them *ikat* simply means a shaman (*brujo*). It was interesting to find out that in Wari' language the word [*jicat*] seems to mean divide, crack, break (Kern 1996: 59 cf. Everett, Kern 1997: 378).

depending on the state of the perceiver. For ordinary people in normal circumstances (healthy and accompanied), the other side is usually closed (and invisible). Considering the first story quoted above, we see that the reality is described as separated by the rim of the dense thicket/bush (*motacusal*) or by the surface of the water (river). The water and the forest were “closed”. The dense thicket and the water surface are rims of the reality that were closed, so can be considered as boundaries in this particular place and time, concealing the other side. Indeed, the surface of the water can be perceived by the Moré as the *boundary* between this and the other side. I would like to illustrate this observation with another short example.

Example 2 [Otro_lado/ ite_20140822_pch_RTW_ekuyuri]

[RTW] There was one, the biggest shaman [*brujo*], Ricardo’s father [short pause] he *E’kuyuri*, this one [short pause and gesticulation] that one came here from *komi pikuñ* [name of the stream in Moré] to the “eighteen” [name of the stream in Spanish]. They had their little house like that on the *pampa*, no more. From there the full stream went up [incomprehensible] and it had a little bridge like that [gesticulation], two sticks, no more and because it was not very wide [short pause and gesticulation] to this [short pause] the stream of *pikuñ*, the man crossed, crossed [short pause] halfway across the bridge [short pause and gesticulation] that was where the dolphin jumped. Taaa! eee! He dumped him **into the water and took him away**, that man [short pause] that shaman. **Beyond there**, he already told him that he was a shaman, so!

“Aaaa it’s you! [short pause] we thought it was the other people.”

“No, it’s me,” he says.

“Let’s go to the house.”

They took him to the house, many girls [there], but they were dolphins [short pause] [incomprehensible] [short pause] there he took *chicha* [short pause] ate *chivé*³⁷ [long pause].

[Pch] *E’kuyuri*?

[RTW] *E’kuyuri*, the father of the deceased Ricardo. “**There it goes**. [gesticulation] This is the way...eeeeeu, you will go **out there**, where you took off” [short pause] he said “there is the way” [short pause] **and there the shaman came out** [short pause and gesticulation] **he took the road and went well there where he fell into the water**. He crosses **over there** to home **over there** [short pause] hmm, they thought to take him, but they could not [short pause] **he learned a lot**.

END.

³⁷ *Chivé* is a beverage typical of eastern Bolivia. It is prepared from cassava (*manioc*) flour. The beverage is made by mixing cassava flour (previously dried) with water and sugar. The Moré also use the term *chivé* to designate pure dried cassava flour, which they sprinkle over fish, for example.

In my opinion, *the surface* of the water is presented here as a permeable boundary or the interface between two sides (cf. Conklin 2001: 227–228). Two things are especially interesting in this example. First, the reality below the water surface is very much the same as in the village on the ordinary Moré side. After crossing the surface, E'kuyuri can breathe and talk with dolphins in their human form. They offer him typical human food, namely *chicha* and *chivé*. This can suggest that the other side is almost the same as this side. Crossing the boundary between the sides for an ordinary human can even be imperceptible. Perhaps because of this similarity, the whole transition between sides is possible for this particular body (agent). On the other hand, the similarity (of the other side) itself may be an effect of the agent body's perspective, which transforms or creates a whole experienced reality. Either the reality is transforming, or the agent's body is under the process of metamorphosis – the Moré seem to highlight that the whole process could be, at first glance, imperceptible and that both sides have many things in common (in other words, they are symmetrical in a topological sense).

Second, the lack of specific differences between the sides is highlighted by quite extensive use of proximity markers such as “here/there”. It seems like the distance (or rather the deictic character of proximity markers) itself is a (required) marker of alterity. The dangerous sameness of ‘the other side’ conceals the crucial point that reality is different when the boundary (surface) is crossed. Therefore, there must be some way to highlight this difference between the apparently indistinguishable sides (in terms of experienced realities). *Here*, it is not the same as *there*. It is interesting that the proximity markers are perspective dependent (deictic) and, as we know from the ethnographic examples in Amazonia, the body is the source of perspective (Viveiros de Castro 1998).

Maybe it is the reality that is transforming, or rather – the point of view, but when speaking Spanish, the Moré are likely to conceptualize this transformation in *spatial* and sometimes *temporal* terms. Concerning the temporal aspect, it is worth adding that the Moré elders also tell various versions of the stories about nocturnal people from the other side. These are sometimes presented as stories about a mythical person (*Kanawan*) and sometimes about a local group of Moré (*Wariptok*) who are still living in the forest, but in a reversed temporal space. They sleep during the day (from the Moré perspective) and are active during the night. Quite often, they are considered as the nocturnal Moré people, sometimes also described as the deceased Moré.

Finally, I would like to focus on the boundaries separating different sides. The boundaries for the experienced reality are potentially present not only in the water surface or the wall of the bush/dense thicket located deep in the forest, but the rim between the forest and a cleared space of a village or a garden can also be easily expressed as a possible boundary of this/other side.³⁸ Of course,

³⁸ Also, according to some myths (and stories), the surface of a stone or ground itself can be considered as another boundary for the sides (Angenot de Lima 2002: 737). The crucial importance of the boundary between the village and the forest understood as other sides was also examined in detail by Marta Krokoszzyńska in her work about (ex)Capanahua (Krokoszzyńska 2016).

entering the forest does not mean that one is automatically entering the other side. The crossing of the rim (between the forest and a cleared space of a village or a garden) is *potentially* the boundary of the other side, in part because of the particularities of one's emotional (or bodily) state upon entering the forest. If, for example, someone is entering the forest under normal circumstances (healthy and not alone), it is less probable that she or he will be in danger of entering 'the other side'. Also, the temporal dimension is important here, because the Moré interpret nighttime as more conducive to encounters with beings from 'the other side' (cf. Vilaça 2010: 101). For now, we could just state that the Moré conceptualize different sides of given boundary, which are sometimes possible to transit because of an individual's particular *spatial* or *temporal* orientation and their *emotional* (bodily) state.

Considering the boundary created by open cleared space of a village or a garden and the dense thicket of the forest, it is worth mentioning an interesting observation made by Luis Leigue Suárez, the son of Luis Leigue Castedo. During one of my interviews with him, he recalled memories from his youth among the Moré. In the 1940s–1950s, he used to go hunting with the Moré and observed that, quite often, they stopped before entering the forest on the edge of the cleared space. Then, he recalled that some were singing a song (chant) or sometimes just taking a deep breath before they entered the forest (Chyc, ite_20170804_Leigue-Suarez).

Another observation made in the 1960s by the French anthropologist Jacques Meunier during his stay among the Moré also seems to highlight the Moré's interest in the surfaces and boundaries of space (and their constant jokes they share all the time also nowadays).

How I wish I had their eyes! And this ability to give mythological dimensions to the slightest event... Once, they surprise a webbed lizard running on the surface of the water. It looks like mounted on water skis. At the end of the race, the animal loses its balance and spreads in a dense bush. They comment on the affair in Spanish: the lizard, they call it "Jesus Christ" and the dense thicket, the leaves of which open and retract, they call it among themselves, "close your mouth". This immediately gives: "Jesus Christ fell into the arms of damned close your mouth". The younger giggle and the old one rejoices. Experts in scatology, born rhetoricians, will exploit all the possibilities of the figure ... It is up to the one who will be the grittiest. Nevertheless, after 20 years of catechism, the Moré Indians are funny parishioners!³⁹

(Meunier 1982: 128, translated from French by the author)

It is also quite interesting that many traditional hunting practices (especially involving birds and smaller animals) developed by the Moré are based on the use of hiding platforms (*chapapa*) and hiding shelters. The Moré hunters, hidden behind the surface of a shelter or on the platform, could observe animals without

³⁹ The original French version is available in the annex.

being seen themselves. Many of these practices were documented by Emil Heinrich Snethlage (2016) and Stig Rydén (1958). In my opinion, all these examples show that surfaces are boundaries between different objects/persons in space and play a specific role in the Moré's conceptualization of the experienced reality. It is worth highlighting here that such surfaces are particularly associated with the problem of invisibility for the other side. The surface (of water, forest, ground, etc.) is the only visible part of the other side and at the same time – a boundary. I will go back to those implications in the concluding remarks. The last example shows that the Moré seem to highlight the spatial conceptualization even if they do not explicitly use the term '*otro lado*'.

Example 3 [Otro_lado/ ite_20140816_pch_RTW_alma]

(...)

[PCh] Do shamans need something to talk with a dead person? Do they need to drink something or do something?

[RTW] They ask him, better say, the shaman, they **take him there** ... so he can drink *chicha*. Drink *chicha* and drink this...alcohol, awirante⁴⁰ [*aguardiente*] let's say. [incomprehensible] Tobacco, **the shamans bring from there**, [short pause] well.

[HCh] with this they work [shamans]

[longer pause]

[PCh] But, the ancestors do they knew alcohol before?

[RTW] The devils had it, so...[*chicha/aguardiente* – alcohol, tobacco]. The shamans **from there bring it here**. So that the people can approve [incomprehensible] a bottle brings, and they invite them, to the neighbors to the companions, but they do not bring enough, a bottle no more. But those are from the devils ... [short pause] **not from here** [short pause] the awirante that one.

END.

Of course, the adverbs of place, like “there” or “here” can be used to simply mark the distance, but they can also be interpreted as topological markers of different sides of experienced reality. In the story mentioned above, the distance itself highlights the otherness and, at the same time, the power of products from “there”. It was already reported that the Moré are sensitive to spatial orientation in terms of proximity and distance. For example, according to the work of the Brazilian linguist Celso Ferrarezi Junior, the native classification of animals in the Moré language (as well as hunting practice related to them) is deeply oriented by the criterion of what he calls the “geographical location”. Based on linguistic categorization, he identifies three main spatial spheres of crucial importance for the Moré classification of fauna and hunting practice. They are, respectively: tree canopy, solid ground, and water. These spheres form a kind

⁴⁰ This is a neologism in the Moré language. Derived from Spanish word *aguardiente*, which in local Spanish means: high alcoholic beverage that is obtained by distillation of wine or other substances through fermentation.

of spatial topography (or *ecozonas*) where all animals living in a particular sphere are considered to be relatives, which according to Ferrarezi Junior, linguistically locates them in the same classificatory units. Such association of animals as members of one family is based not on the morphological criteria, but the spatial (or geographical) ones. The animals live at a close distance, so they must be related (Ferrarezi Junior 1997: 94-107).

Similarly, we can look at the properties of the state of 'being alone' in terms of being prone to cross on the 'other side'. In my opinion, the Moré conceptualize 'loneliness' (*la soledad*) also as a form of spatial orientation, in terms of physical distance from their kin (cf. Vilaça 2002), where physical separation also means lack of visual or audible communication. It is noteworthy that virtually all strange encounters with 'the other side' take place when a person is alone. As we know, being alone in the Amazonian rainforest is very commonly presented in ethnographies as something (ontologically) dangerous (Viveiros de Castro 1998; Peluso 2004; Opas 2005; Santos-Granero 2012). It is likely that for the Moré, crossing to (or experiencing) 'the other side' is related to being alone (in the forest or on the water) with the inability to recognize that something is wrong with your body (or perception). Like other Amazonian people, the Moré interpret fear as a change in the bodily state that can cause sickness and even death. If you are scared because of a strange encounter, you may start to see the encountered animal as possessing human characteristics (literally, not as an ordinary animal), which is a sign that you have just started to transform and perceive those strange non-human beings as they see themselves (mainly as humans), as it is presented in the perspectivist framework (Viveiros de Castro 1998).

In the proposed topology framework, you can see them as human beings precisely because you are *there* (*yi ma*) not *here* (*yi ka*). According to the Moré elders, only shamans can control the processes of transformation caused by the distance, separation, loneliness, simply the result of being *there*. This means precise control of the body states (on *this* side of the reality), simply not to get sick *here*. Shamans can see beings *there* in their human form and communicate with them. They can return from *there* because they know how to socially navigate such situations. In contrast, for ordinary people like Tuke, such encounters are very dangerous, because they may never return from the other side and die *here*, on this side. Therefore, it is not a coincidence that Tuke was incidentally alone and at night when the strange peccary presented itself. Because Tuke was, at that moment, alone, no one would assure him that he had not crossed the thin border between the sides. Nevertheless, such 'philosophical' elaborations are not expressed *explicitly* by the Moré, they are rather 'hidden' in statements like the following conclusion, told by Tuke at the end of his hunting story: "*This critter was from the other side. I shot him, but he didn't die. There was not even any blood over there. But I was not scared. He didn't scare me – that's why I was able to come back home*".

Concluding remarks

In his seminal paper “Amerindian perspectivism in Amazonia and elsewhere” Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2012: 140) observed:

This spiritual world is sometimes tellingly referred to as “the other side” an expression that can be found among cultures as different as the Trio of Surinam, the Piro of Peruvian Amazonia, and the Kwakiutl and Tsimshian of the Northwest Coast (...).

As I was trying to demonstrate, this list could be extended to include the Chapacuran Moré from the Bolivian Amazonia. In this essay, I focus on the spatial aspect of the chronically unstable reality,⁴¹ which appears to be of special interest for the Moré. They seem to devote particular attention to the surfaces and perceptual boundaries between objects/bodies in space. Those surface/boundaries open the possibility that a particular surface divides the experienced reality into this and the other side. Such fragmentation into sides is quite topological because divided parts are symmetrical. The reality on the other side is very much like on this site. The inhabitants of the other side live there in human form and it is possible to communicate with them (at least for the shamans). Ordinary people may not even recognize that they have crossed this invisible boundary between the sides.

In the conclusion, I would like to point out some implications of these topological aspects of animism and its possible connections with other recurrent themes in Amazonian cosmologies. These could set the direction for a further elaboration of the ideas of *‘otro lado’* (and more broadly, the topology frame for the animism-perspectivism ethnographic material), which I only had a chance to briefly discuss here.

The stories presented in this article contain many characteristics of animism and perspectivism already known from other Amazonian examples, but among the Moré, they are verbalized explicitly as topological (spatial) concepts. What is not always explicitly verbalized in the narratives are (among others) the issues of visibility and invisibility. Nevertheless, it is possible to infer that in many situations those aspects are interconnected and crucial. The other side is invisible to the people in normal circumstances. This relative invisibility is, in my opinion, due to at least two reasons.

First, it is a feature of the very nature of our normal perception. In ordinary circumstances, we cannot see through a solid body/object surface. This obvious fact is not without importance also for the Moré. Moreover, for them, this is a crucial feature of our normal (healthy human person) cognition that the solid surface (of a body, object, sphere, etc.) is a boundary for our perception. Because they use this quality for the purposes of hunting (e.g., the shield trap mentioned above), we can infer that also other potential non-human persons (e.g., animals and birds) share this common limit of perception.

⁴¹ To paraphrase the famous and pertinent observation by Aparecida Vilaça (2005), concerning the Amerindian conceptions of “chronically unstable bodies”.

Secondly, the other side must be invisible because it is ontologically indistinguishable from another topological structure – basically, from the inside/outside symmetry. To further explain this, let me once again refer to the notion of the surface.

The other side in the normal circumstances is invisible at first glance. The very concept of ‘the other side’ can be derived from this quality – it is something behind the visible surface that is hidden from direct view. This logic makes the notion of the (visible) surface a crucial idiom in the Moré animism (and I think more generally in Amazonia, as indicated for a different purpose for example in Gow 1989, 1999; Lagrou 1998, 2018). Virtually every surface could be a boundary that, potentially, can divide the sides.⁴² For the Moré, the surface/boundary can be, for example, the rim of water, of a dense thicket, or the surface of a stone. Nevertheless, it can be the visible surface of a tree, the ground, earth surface, or a visible surface of any given body/form (animal, human, bird, or spirit).

We have known for decades now that the body plays a central role in Amazonian socio-cosmologies. In his seminal paper, Viveiros de Castro proposed that the body in Amazonia should be understood more broadly as “bundles of affects and sites of perspectives” (Viveiros de Castro 1998: 481). The body (of every form or shape) always has its *visible surface* that visually *constitutes its form or shape* (notions already familiar in Amazonian cosmologies, reviewed in [Praet 2009]). Thus, what we can perceive is only the visible surface of the body shape through which we cannot see *inside* the body. Therefore, the bundles of affects associated with any particular body are indeed crucial, because only through this feature we can identify a type of subject (the inside) with which we are dealing.

Now becomes possible to think of the other side as “the inside” of any given container for which the archetype will be the Amazonian idiom of the body. The skin will be its surface (a boundary between the sides) and, at the same time, the main visible part of the body. This logic leads us to flag another crucial notion, namely the concept of a container that seems to be a recurrent theme in Amazonian cosmologies, but somehow still remains outside the mainstream of ethnographic theory (cf. Krokoszyńska 2015, 2016, 2017). The inside/outside distinction also can be elaborated further in the context of Descola’s reformulation of animism. This topological aspect of animism is already present in Descola’s observation that the main mechanism of animistic ontology is operating according to the interiorities and the exteriorities of a given body (Descola 2015).

The opacity of the inside (but also of the other side) hints at another important theme in Amazonia – the problem of appearances (Rivière 1994). The typical Amazonian case, a *specific-body* in the forest looks like e.g., a particular animal,

⁴² It is not necessary to look for an explicit verbalization of ‘the other side’ in Amazonian ethnography (although I believe there is much more to it than the short list mentioned at the beginning of this concluding section). The other side conceptualization is closely linked with the notion of invisibility and appearances, which are a very common idioms in many Amazonian ethnographies. As I try to show in this section, the implications of ‘*otro lado*’ topological framework are already present in other typical Amazonian themes.

but it is only the appearance. In fact, specific-body results to be a different *somebody*. The hunting story with which I started draws attention to exactly this point. On the one hand, we could say, that the “true nature” of this body comes from its opaque inside – therefore, from the other side. On the other hand, there is also another, reverse aspect of this topology. *Somebody* who is not yet specific (exactly “visible”) because of being hidden behind the surface, can sometimes appear on this side as a *specific-body*. So, the problem of appearances can be seen (at least in the Moré ethnographic context) also as the problem of nonspecific *somebody* coming from the other side, appearing on this side (as *specific-body*). I will try to illustrate this briefly with one example. Carlo Severi (2004: 816) observed:

in many American Indian shamanistic traditions, a number of central concepts, usually translated as ‘soul’, ‘shadow’, ‘double’, and so on, possess no definite meaning, and are always surrounded by a halo of uncertainty. The semantic content of these concepts is never fully understood, or positively represented by people.

As for many indigenous cosmologies in Amazonia (or elsewhere), also in the Moré ethnographic context, we could find a native notion which somehow resembles an anthropological concept of spirit (Praet 2009). For a very good anthropological reason (Spiro 1966), it is always better for us to use a native term for this notion, which in the Moré case will be *imwikuti*. This is a general term that appears in reference to beings from the other side when stories are told in the Moré language. Interestingly, this term is used mostly in situations when a protagonist or perceiver cannot see a being itself (because of water surface, dense thicket, or night). Therefore, as Severi observed, it is quite difficult to obtain a concrete description of those beings, no matter if the story is told in the native or the Spanish language. When telling a story in Spanish, the Moré will use the term such as *demonio*, *diablo*, *cosas diabólicas* (a demon, devil, devil’s things), which are similarly fuzzy in terms of *specific-body* form. Nevertheless, when such a being emerges on this side (possible to perceive), it always appears in a specific form (human-like or animal); it is only in such instances, that the storyteller can evoke a concrete native name for the being or a concrete general name for the specific species of animal. Therefore, when referring to this visible (on this side) form of being, quite many characteristics can be offered. Especially peculiar characteristics (as big ears, too much hair, or unusual behaviour). Thus, what was already noted for a different purpose (Severi 1993, 2004: 816; Rogalski 2016, 2017), those “spirits” from indigenous narratives are almost always fuzzy (unspecific) beings (or concepts) until they appear (‘on this side’) for a concrete (usually lonely) perceiver as some *specific-body* form (usually human or animal).⁴³

⁴³ For the purpose of my argument, I am focused on visual modality here. Nevertheless, the process of “appearing” in experienced reality can be extended to other modalities, such as hearing, smelling, and so on. Francesca’s Mezzenzana’s (2018) analysis of experiencing *Supai* among the Runa through smelling is an excellent ethnographic example, although it is framed in a different theoretical perspective. In my opinion, her thesis about the importance of the process

What is even more interesting for me, very often the Moré hunters refer to their 'normal' game using terms such as "critter" (*un bicho*), "beast" (*una fiera*), "creature" (*una creatura*) or "something" (*algo*) until this *some-body* appears visible as *specific-body*. For example, until the peccary resurfaces out of the dense thicket or fish emerge through the water surface, they would typically say "there is critter over there" (*hay un bicho allá*), "there is something here" (*hay algo aquí*), or "it is coming this beast" (*ya sale esta fiera*).

I would like to conclude by making the final observation related to the notion of the boundary (surface). The main characteristic of the surface is that it is a boundary but as such is never perfect. In my opinion, it is crucial, that there must be a boundary, but at the same time, it is important, that it is possible to cross it. The problem of thus understood boundaries in Amazonia has not been fully addressed but can be explored through the idiom of the body. Penetrable versus not penetrable (not closed enough⁴⁴/totally closed) bodies appear to be a key concern for the Amazonian socio-cosmologies. Nevertheless, I hope that this sketch of a chronically unstable reality among the Moré can contribute to revisiting the notion of surface/boundaries in Amazonian ethnography, especially in the context of topology framework outlined above.

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of learning to experience *Supai* (through smell or dream) is valid also in the context of visual modality discussed here.

⁴⁴ I intentionally avoid here the term "open" because it seems that normal state of body in Amazonia is to maintain its boundaries (stay closed). Exchange of substance should be made intentionally and in adequate conditions (for example Vilaça 2002, 2005). Nevertheless, not closed enough boundaries are a chronic problem of the Amazonian socio-cosmology (Vilaça 2005, cf. Krokoszyńska 2017).

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The Anex

The original transcription of stories (in Spanish):

Example 1 [Otro_lado/ ite_20170503_pch_RTW_namatuke]

[RTW] Tres fuimos a motor [la pausa corta] hasta allá [la pausa corta y gesticulación] donde emboca el arroyo de *namatuke* [la pausa corta] pa' ver si hay más Morese [la pausa corta] pero eran finao [finado], pues [la pausa corta]

[HCh] Eran muertos [la pausa corta]

[RTW] lo que yo le decía, pues [la pausa corta] finao [finado] [la pausa corta] pero a nosotros **no nos dio el arroyo, no nos dio** [la pausa corta], **se cerró**[la pausa corta y gesticulación], **se cerró** [la pausa larga]

[PCh] no había nadie?

[RTW] No había nadie, nadie! Termino el rio, seguimos allí a un arroyito, más allá termino el agua y nos fuimos por tierra **pa' ver** [la pausa corta] **solamente se oía las parabas, que criaban ellos** [la pausa corta] **pero no vimos** con el puesto [la pausa corta] queríamos llegar al puesto donde llegó el Komarek. **¡No pudimos llegar** [la pausa corta y gesticulación] un **motacusal grande!** Digamo y el arroyito chiquitito, pero emboca al Iténez.

[PCh] Y cuando fue esto?

[RTW] Eso fue, mas o menos 39 [1939]

[PCh] 39?

[RTW] Si, ya estaba Leigue, ya [la pausa corta] Él nos mandó pa' ver si hay mas Morese [la pausa corta] pero eran los finao [finado] ;eran diablos ya!

[HCh] Ya estaban muerto, ya [la pausa corta]

[RTW] **Pero vivían en esta zona** [la pausa corta] **en esta vida**, mejor dicho [la pausa corta] por eso Leigue nos mandó pa' sacar Morese, pero no se podía, ni los hallamos tampoco, nos fuimos no más [la pausa corta y gesticulación] **a ver** [la pausa corta] **la arroyo nos vimos**, termino la arroyo, termino, **¡allí un motacusal!** Pero sonían las parabas, fuimos más allá, allí había su primera casa de ellos [la pausa corta y gesticulación] habían los horcones, horconcito así no más [la pausa corta y gesticulación] lo principal era alto [la pausa corta y gesticulación] pero más allá hicieron más casas [la pausa corta] más casas, pero no llegamos allí, **se cerró, se cerró, se cerró** [la pausa corta] ;no pudimos! HUUU, tuvimos que regresarnos [la pausa corta y gesticulación] Lo que queríamos era ver lo puerto, la barraca de los diablos [la pausa corta] **pero se cerró todo** [la pausa larga]

END

Example 2 [Otro_lado/ ite_20140822_pch_RTW_ekuyuri]

[RTW] Había uno, el más brujo, el padre del Ricardo [la pausa corta] él *E'kuyuri* ese [la pausa corta y gesticulación] ese venía acá de *komi pikuñ* [nombre de arroyo en moré] al dieciocho [nombre de arroyo en español]. Tenían su casita así en la pampa no más. De allí subió el arroyo lleno [incomprensible] y tenía un puentecito así, dos palitos no más y cómo no era ancho [la pausa corta] a este [la pausa corta]

al arroyo de pikuñ, cruzó el hombre, cruzó [la pausa corta] a medio puente [la pausa corta y gesticulación] **allí lo brincó un bufeo** ¡Taaa eee! **Lo tumbó al agua y se lo llevó, ese hombre** [la pausa corta] **ese brujo**. Ya **más allá**, ya le conversó que era brujo, no!

“¡Aaaasos vos! [la pausa corta] nosotros pensábamos otra gente”

“No, soy yo” le dice

“Ya, vamos a la casa”

Lo llevaron a la casa, puro peladas, muchachas, eran bufeos [la pausa corta] [incomprensible] allá tomó chicha [la pausa corta] comió chive [la pausa larga] [PCh] *E'kuyuri* ?

[RTW] *E'kuyuri*, el padre del finado Ricardo. “Allí se va. [gesticulación] Por este el camino eeeeu, **va salir por allá**, donde te largaste” [la pausa corta] le dijo” allí sale el camino” [la pausa corta] y allí salió el brujo [la pausa corta y gesticulación] tomó el camino **y salió bien a donde cayó al agua**. Cruzo allí a casa allá cerquita [la pausa corta] hmm, pensaron llevarlo, pero no pudieron [la pausa corta] aprendió harto

END

Example 3 [Otro_lado/ ite_20140816_pch_RTW_alma]

(...)

[PCh] ¿Los brujos necesitan algo para hablar con los muertos? ¿Tienen que tomar algo o hacer algo?

[RTW] Ellos le preguntan, más bien lo brujo, **lo llevan allá** [la pausa corta] pa que tome chicha. Toma chicha y tome este...alcohol, *awirante* [aguardiente] digamos. [incomprensible] Tabaco, **de allá** traen los brujos, pues.

[HCh] con eso ellos trabajan [los brujos]

[la pausa larga]

[PCh] Pero los antiguos conocían alcohol antes?

[RTW] Los diablos lo tenían pues [chicha/aguardiente – alcohol, tabaco]. Los brujos **de allí** traen **pa' acá**. Pa' que aprueben la gente [incomprensible] una botella trae y los invitan, a los vecinos a los compañeros, pero no traen harto, una botella no más. **Pero son de los diablos** [la pausa corta] **no es de aquí** [la pausa corta] la *awirante* ese

(...)

Jacques Meunier (1982: 128) (the original transcription in French)

Comme j'aimerais avoir leurs yeux! Et cette faculté de donner au moindre événement des dimensions mythologiques... Une fois, ils surprennent un lézard palmé qui court à la surface de l'eau. on le dirait monté sur des skis nautiques. En fin de course, l'animal perd l'équilibre et se répand dans un buisson. Ils commentent l'affaire en espagnol: le lézard, ils le surnomment «Jésus-Christ» et l'arbuste dont les feuilles s'ouvrent et se rétractent, ils l'appellent entre eux, «ferme-toi putain». Ce qui donne aussitôt: «Jésus-Christ est tombé dans les bras de ferme-toi putain.»

Les jeunes gloussent et les vieux jubile. Experts Es scatologie, rhétoriciens nés, ils exploiteront toutes les possibilités de la figure... C'est à celui qui sera le plus graveleux. N'empêche, après 20 ans de catéchisme, les Indiens morés sont de drôles de paroissiens!

SUMMARY

Otro lado. An inquiry into the conceptual topology of animism among the Moré (Itene) of the Bolivian Amazonia

This paper is based on ethnographic fieldwork among the Moré (Itene) who, together with Wari' and Oro Win, are the descendants of the last Chapacura speaking groups in Amazonia. I analyze, hunting story and elderly people stories (*los cuentos*) where the Moré explicitly conceptualize the notion of "the other side" as the realm of reality inhabited by non-human persons (the Dead, Spirits, Mothers of game, etc.). I focus on some topological aspects of Moré animism, such as conception of surface, boundary, space-time, distance markers, inside/outside distinctions. In conclusion I sketch some possible directions for further research in this topological framework for animism. I hope this paper can contribute to the renewed debate about animism in Amazonia and more broadly to the ontological turn in anthropology.

Keywords: animism, perspectivism, ontology, topology, Amazonia