CARLO SEVERI

Memory, reflexivity and belief. Reflections on the ritual use of language

In a recent article devoted to the relationship between social memory and history, Kristof Pomian (1999) has expressed, with great clarity, a traditional conception of the kind of social memory that characterises 'oral' traditions: 'In a society where only an oral tradition exists, social memory is always the memory of someone. As such, it is always subjected to the destiny and arbitrary will of an individual.'

Anthropologists have objected in various ways to this conception, still well alive among historians and other social scientists. One of the most common arguments opposed to this point of view runs as follows: if the social memory of these societies was so exposed to the arbitrary will of individuals, we would find the 'oral' cultures in a state of incessant instability and constant disorder, and it has been repeatedly shown that this is empirically untrue. Fieldwork shows on the contrary that the transmission of cultural knowledge in oral societies is never really left to the arbitrary will of the individual. What makes a representation part of a tradition is, first of all, its form. Shared knowledge is everywhere transmitted following traditional patterns as, for instance, in the form of a story or group of stories, untiringly recounted from one generation to the other. While being subjected to constant variations, these stories appear to be sustained by a number of underlying patterns of narration (what J.Goody [1977, 1987] has called the 'plots' of oral tradition) that acquire a certain stability through time, and thus preserve the general identity of a tradition. From the works of V. Propp (1972) to the present day a great number of specialists have shown, for instance, that certain narrative structures characterise European folklore. These patterns, or typical forms of narration, while tolerating a certain amount of re-invention, are far from being unstable, or entirely reducible to the will of this or that narrator. It can be remarked, on the contrary, that a typical feature of these narrative patterns is precisely to be largely independent of the identity of their narrator. In folklore, a story can be told by anyone, without losing its character or its effectiveness. One can trust or distrust this particular way to transmit knowledge, but it is indisputable that a certain form of cultural (i.e. not simply individual) memory is operating in this familiar example of an oral tradition.

However, if we are able to give a satisfactory answer to the question posed by Pomian in the case of narrative traditions, this task seems much more difficult when cultural knowledge is not formulated in narrative terms. What happens, for instance,

when 'cultural knowledge' is expressed in the form of ritual performances? Here, the situation is, at least at first sight, much more similar to the one described by Pomian. It is well-known that in ritual performances, and in particular in the ritual use of language (as, for instance, in chants, spells or other forms of ritual speech) individual improvisation can play an important role. If we consider, for instance, the domain of American Indian shamanistic chants, we find all sorts of very different situations, ranging from the recitation of very long and complex texts committed to memory, as is the case of the Kuna (Severi and Gomez 1983; Sherzer 1983), or the Zuni (Tedlock 1983), to the relatively free use of a set of esoteric metaphors as in the Yaminahua, Arawete, Parakana and other Amazonian traditions (Viveiros de Castro 1989; Townsley 1993; Fausto 2001), to the apparently casual emission of meaningless sounds, as among the Guajiros (Perrin 1976). Narrative structures are far from being present in all these shamanistic traditions, and even when we find them, they seldom account for the complexity, and the particular style of ritual chants. How then could we describe the kind of 'cultural memory' that characterises the transmission of ritual knowledge in these cases? How can we understand the process by which a certain number of representations become part of a tradition? How could we argue against Pomian's idea of a transmission governed by no rules, and entirely entrusted to individual free will?

A first answer to these questions has been, as in the case of folklore, of an empirical nature. An American Indian ritual chant is always the result of a learned technique of enunciation (of which parallelism is the most obvious example), even when a certain kind of improvisation is used. Almost everywhere in American Indian shamanism, improvisation is only one of the rules of the ritual game. Many anthropologists have described ritual performances where a certain equilibrium is established between what is subjected to variation and a certain number of crucial points (that we could call the *foci* of ritual performances), where improvisation plays a much less important role. To learn a shamanistic chant may not mean memorising all the details of a particular fixed text. It would mean, rather, acquiring a certain technique of enunciation, be it a certain way to 'sing', or to manipulate a certain linguistic form. As Townsley has written about the Yaminahua, 'Learning to be a shaman is learning to sing, to intone the powerful chant rhythms, to carefully thread together verbal images couched in the abstruse metaphorical language of shamanic songs, and follow them' (Townsley 1993:457).

A certain number of these forms: ritual dialogues, a particular kind of 'singing' (which Tedlock has defined as a particular way 'to bring stress and pitch and pause into a fixed relationship to the words.' (Tedlock 1983:234), and a certain form of *parallelism* (a term which designates the use of a limited number of repeated formulas, constantly modified with slight variations), are very widely spread in American Indian shamanism. However, the use of a special linguistic form is not sufficient to define the *ritual use* of language. Dialogues, 'singing' techniques and above all 'parallelistic structures' can be used in non-ritual, (for instance, narrative) situations, as the famous studies of James Lord on Serbo-Croatian epics have shown (1960). There is thus no reason to consider them as inherent to ritual communication.

Shamanistic recitations, as any other ritual performance, cannot be seen as entirely dependent on the arbitrary will of an individual (the shaman) because they are oriented by a special context of interaction and communication, which is seen as radically different from ordinary social life. For a shaman, to sing is obviously to perform

an action, and all the American Indian shaman's claims of power to cure and kill rest on the idea that, while operating a certain transformation on the use of language (using a 'twisted language' (Yaminahua) or 'raising his words right' (Zuni), etc.) he becomes able to understand, see and name things in an exceptional way.[1] The simple, and very general fact that shamanistic recitations are seldom understood by non-specialists suffices to prove that the kind of linguistic communication involved in these cases is far from being obvious. In fact, to pose simply that a 'special' form of communication exists, affirming that chants are incomprehensible because they are 'understood' only by 'non-human spirits' (Townsley 1993: 459) or to provide, as many ethnographers have done, for good empirical descriptions of shamanistic language and metaphors, is not a satisfying definition of the formal context which gives to ritual communication its exceptional character.

How is this special context constructed? Under what conditions does it operate? How does it influence or modify ordinary forms of communication? It is clear that, in so far as we have not found a satisfying answer to these questions, we shall not be able to provide for a good solution to the problem posed by Pomian: Whose memory is working in this context? How far goes the cultural elaboration of a ritual speech? To understand what kind of cultural memory operates in this case, one needs not only to describe the kind of linguistic technique used in shamanistic chants, but also to propose an interpretation, in formal terms, of the context which characterises ritual communication.

In a book devoted to the study of ritual action (Houseman and Severi 1998), Houseman and I have claimed that one of the essential clues for understanding ritual communication is to study the way in which, through the establishment of a particular form of interaction, a special identity for the participants is constructed. In the example we have analysed, the Naven (a transvestite ritual of the Iatmul of Sepik, Papua New Guinea), the study of a first interaction between a mother's brother *acting as* a mother (and a wife) on the one hand and, a sister's son *acting as* a son (and a husband) on the other, has led to the analysis of a series of rites involving larger social groups where the competition between men of the maternal side and mothers of the paternal side of Ego plays a major role. One of our conclusions has been that the identity of each participant is built up within the ritual context from a series of contradictory connotations (being, for instance, at once a mother and a child, a sister's son and a wife).

This process, of symbolic transformation realised through action that we have called ritual condensation gives to the ritual context of communication a particular form, that distinguishes it from ordinary life interactions. In this paper, I would like to extend this approach, until now based almost entirely on the analysis of sequences of actions, to the study of ritual situations of a different kind, where action seems to play a less important role, and is replaced, through the recitation of chants, by a special use of language. How is it possible, in a context where only special words are used as means of intervention, to build that special definition of the identity that characterises ritual interactions? In order to understand the particular way in which, in these cases, a context of communication typical of ritual is established, let us start by some reflections about the concept of reflexivity.

---

1   Since the case of women-shamans is very rare in America, I will use in this paper the masculine term he rather than she.

Reflexivity, ritual and belief

Many anthropologists have remarked that rituals have a paradoxical relationship to belief. On one side, as sequences of symbolic actions, rites have been often defined as attempts to generate a mental state of belief in a fictive, or supernatural dimension of reality. Pierre Smith (1979, 1991) has, for instance, convincingly argued that this close link to the establishment of a belief should serve to distinguish 'real' rituals from other contexts of social interaction (as feasts, celebrations or dances) that only resemble them . Yet the kind of belief generated by ritual ceremonies never really seems to rule out disbelief and doubt. As Hojbjerg, Rubow and Sjorslev (1999) have rightly remarked, in daily social life rituals never fail to generate comments about themselves. This does not only mean, as every anthropologist knows, that traditional societies in Europe and elsewhere are far from being societies of believers. It means, more generally, that a reflexive attitude about religious 'truth' or about the existence of supernatural beings seems to be always, or at least very often, associated with the performance of a ritual action.

Ritual action may not only aim to confirm the existence of supernatural beings. It can also challenge them, or be performed in order to test the effectiveness of their powers. If this is true, we should consider religious doubt 'as a condition that sustains the existence of religious ideas and practice … and as an essential element in the process of acquisition of religious ideas' (Hojbjerg, Rubow and Sjorslev 1999). I agree with this way to approach rituals, and would like to illustrate in this paper some aspects of reflexivity (and its relation with belief) as it appears in American Indian shamanism. In order to do so, I will consider some aspects of the Kuna shamanistic tradition.[2] However, before examining the Kuna ethnography, let me make an attempt to clarify the meaning of the notion of reflexivity as applied to ritual action and to the particular context of communication that it implies.

In fact, if we want to consider reflexivity as a universal fact (as a thing present 'everywhere in the world' and as 'a way to study how doubt relates to ritual action' as Hojbjerg, Rubow and Sjorslev (1999) invite us to do), we should not limit reflexivity to the mere exercise of an episodic doubt about the effectiveness of ritual performances. I think that we should go further, and try to find how far this notion can lead us in the attempt to grasp some universal facts about the nature of ritual itself. If doubt, as well as the attempt to establish a belief, is always linked to ritual contexts (and if we want to include a reference to reflexivity into the definition of ritual itself) then the study of reflexivity should lead us to explore an aspect of ritual action that has not been yet entirely understood.

2 Kuna Indians live today in the San Blas archipelago of Panama. Kunaland (Tule Neka or Kuna Yala) numbers from 27,000 to 30,000 persons, who speak a language traditionally associated with the Chibcha family (Holmer 1947, 1951) . A small Kuna group, which still rejects all contact with the white man, lives in the Chucunaque region of the Darien forest, near the Colombian border. Essentially, the Kuna are tropical farmers. In his brief historical survey, Stout (1947) speculates that Kuna society, one of the first to come in contact with white men after the discovery of the American continent, was 'heavily stratified, and divided into four classes: leaders, nobles, citizens and slaves'. Political power today is held by the *onmakket*, an assembly of all the adult males in the village, supported by a varying number of elected leaders (*sailakan*). The Kuna kinship system is bilineal, uxorilocal and founded on strict group endogamy (Howe 1976, 1986). A general survey of the Kuna litterature is to be found in Kramer 1970; Chapin, Howe and Sherzer 1980; Sherzer 1983, 1990; and Severi 1993a, 1997, 2001.

A first step in this direction could be to recognise that the reflexive stance – the comment on the nature of ritual actions – is not always *exterior* to (independent from, or subsequent to) the performance of a ceremony. Actually, ritual performances can *include* reflexive aspects within their own scope. Reflexivity is there not only to make people 'objectify' ritual performances, or take a reflexive stance about them in daily life. It can become a constitutive part of ritual itself. A certain way to look at ritual action *per se*, and to make inferences starting from its performance may be seen as an essential part of the basic pattern of ritual behaviour itself. As Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw have argued in their book on Jainism (1995), the paradigm of ritual action should not be thought of as the unambiguous expression of a common cultural background, as for example Turner suggests in his descriptions of Ndembu rituals. Neither does a ritual performance necessarily entail a close community sharing a single culture and symbolic code. The effectiveness of a ritual is not necessarily to be understood as the establishment of a symbolic consensus. It is on the contrary much more realistic to describe ritual as a context that can involve a range of more fragmented, divided and historically self-conscious social situations. For Humphrey and Laidlaw a good example of this more realistic view is provided, for instance, in the description given by the Indian–Caribbean novelist V. H. Naipaul of his return to Trinidad to attend a 'Hindu' funeral rite for his sister. Naipaul describes 'the plurality of social experiences which the participants brought to the funeral rite; the fragmented and overlapping cultural and ethnic identities they drew upon; their more or less conscious desire to recover, reform and reinvent their traditions'.

As Humphrey and Laidlaw have remarked, 'the participants were united in performance even if their notions of the meaning of the rite were both incomplete and contradictory' (Humphrey and Laidlaw 1995: 80). Ritual is not to be seen as the static illustration of a traditional 'truth', but rather as the result of a number of particular inferences, of individual acts of interpretation, involving doubt, disbelief and uncertainty. The acts performed during a rite regularly appear to demand a commitment from the actor, even when the actor does not understand them. For this reason, these acts become the screen upon which a number of different, even contradictory meanings, may be projected. As Humphrey and Laidlaw put it, 'ritualised acts are apprehensible, waiting to be apprehended and, possibly, given meaning' (1995:101).

Reflexivity appears no more, in this perspective, as a 'comment' on ritual effectiveness made from the point of view of daily life. It becomes rather an essential part of the way in which ritual actions are made to become meaningful for the participants of a ritual celebration. Reflexivity is, in this case, situated *within* the ritual context. We can conclude, then, that the concept of reflexivity, as it applies to ritual contexts, goes far beyond the mere existence of an attitude of scepticism toward ritual belief. A kind of reflexivity exists that can be described as a way for ritual action to represent (or comment upon or even test) itself – its effectiveness as well as its meaning. All these cases, however, while being already instances of an inclusion of reflexivity within the ritual context, have yet another point in common. They all concern the result of a ritual performance. They are *post hoc* celebrations, and can be understood as mere addenda to the performance of other rituals. I think that we could proceed even further, and identify cases where reflexivity (or a certain kind of self-representation) stands as the premise, and not as the final result of ritual action. I will argue that, in

American Indian shamanism, first, the ritual use of language is one of the more effective ways to achieve the process of self-representation, which can concern the performers and the actions performed in a ritual context and, second, that reflexivity as self-representation is one of the most important ways of marking the special kind of communication that distinguishes ritual communication and makes it radically different from daily-life situations.

The case of Kuna shamanistic tradition is particularly relevant to this discussion. In this tradition there is a sharp contrast between the 'vague' definition of some of the central concepts used in shamanistic discourse (such as 'spirit', 'soul', etc.), and the very precise instructions concerning the *act of singing* therapeutical chants (Severi 1993b). The ritual procedures required by the practice of ritual chanting are in fact always very precisely defined in this shamanistic tradition. Nonetheless, this obsessive and very accurate attention to the technical procedures to be applied in the ritual performance of a chant (the orientation 'toward the east' of the chanter, the preparation of his brazier, the preliminary dialogue with the ill person etc.) always coexists with an abundant room left for doubt and disbelief. Actually, any therapeutical intervention of a specialist may be submitted to public debate and shamans themselves are often the most supercilious judges of each other. However, in the Kuna case there is probably more than what Hojbjerg, Rubow and Sjorslev (1999) have called an 'inner iconoclasm'. Reflexivity is not present here only in the form of doubt. In this case, as in many American Indian 'shamanistic' situations, reflexivity (as we have defined it, namely as a way for ritual action to pose the problem of the definition of its own meaning and effectiveness *within* the context of ritual communication) lies at the core of the traditional knowledge and of the belief system implied by it.

Language and ritual transformation

In the anthropological study of ritual symbolism, great attention has been devoted to the various ways in which language, as it is used in ritual performances, transforms the usual representation of the world, and constructs its own truth-universe. A typical way to do so in American Indian shamanism is to establish a metaphorical link, a set of analogies, or a group of 'mystical' relationships between ritual objects and living beings. A splendid example of this way to proceed is to be found in the Mu-Igala, a Kuna shamanistic chant devoted to the therapy of difficult childbirth (Holmer and Wassén 1953), where the baby 'coming out' from the body of the mother is progressively transformed into an hybrid being, called the 'bleeding pearl' (or 'bead'). Let us follow briefly the phases of this transformation. In a first moment (Holmer and Wassén 1953: 56, vv.184–5), the body of the mother is progressively transformed into a tree . First the chant starts mentioning the 'roots' of the mother's body:

> Your stems grow
> In the pure golden stratum of the earth (your) root supports you
> As far as the golden stratum of earth your root stands firmly planted …
> The animals climb every single one of your spotted branches

This description is followed by one of the suffering mother's body as a tree bending its branches as the wind blows (Holmer and Wassén 1953: 57, vv.186–8, 58 v.213):

> When the north wind blows through you
> Your branches bend down with the wind, they are reclining
> with the wind. the wind whistles through them
>
> Towards the East, your silver branches are spreading

Then, the chanter starts to refer to the mother's body as a 'bleeding tree', and to the baby as a 'fruit' coming out from this 'tree'. The chanter sings (v.184):

> Every single one of your spotted branches emits juices,
> they drip all like blood

This series of transformations (based on the analogy mother's body–tree/ and baby /fruit, is followed by another, constructed through the implicit establishment of another analogy, based on the axis fruit/pearl. In this way, after mentioning a 'bleeding fruit' as a symbolic equivalent for the baby, the chant draws to a conclusion this series of symbolic transformations, and starts to mention 'bleeding pearls'. We can thus, later in the chant come across statements like this one, (Holmer and Wassen 1953, 59,vv.227–8):

> Your striped necklace beads open up inside all red
> Your necklace beads are all reeking of blood

Without further referring in detail to the text of the chant, we can say that this equivalence established between the pearl and the baby, supposes a series of (implicit or explicit) statements such as these:

> The mother is a tree
> The baby is a fruit
> The body of the mother is bleeding
> The tree is bleeding
> The fruit of the tree is bleeding
> The fruit is a ritual bead
> The bead is bleeding

By the progressive extension of this way of transferring analogical connotations to other objects and other beings, an entire transformation of the world, formulated in ritual terms, is thus symbolically achieved in Kuna shamanistic tradition. As elsewhere, the linguistic instrument of these metamorphoses is parallelism,[3] a 'way to thread together verbal images', as Townsley (1993:457) has called it, present virtually everywhere in American Indian shamanism that Kuna shamans can practice with great virtousity. Let me underline, however, that parallelism is not only a linguistic technique. When ritually applied to the description of the experience of an ill person, it becomes a way to construct a supernatural dimension that is thought of as a possible world, possessing an existence parallel to that of the ordinary world. In this context, for instance, for the shamanistic chant to refer to a 'bleeding fruit' is to refer to the real experience of the woman giving birth to a child and simultaneously to a mythical Tree-Mother

---

3 Fox (1988) contains a wonderful group of case-studies of the use of parallelism in eastern Indonesia.

bearing fruits. I would like to show now that the same instrument, parallelism, can also be used in a reflexive way, in order to define not only the world described by the ritual language, but also the identity of the person enunciating it. I will argue that it is in this way that in the case of American Indian shamanistic practices a special context that characterises ritual communication is established.

Let us try to get further in our analysis of the Mu Igala. Like many other chants of the Kuna healing tradition, this chant begins with a sort of introductory part, which contains an extensive and painstaking evocation of the ritual gestures and procedures necessary for enunciating the chant. In this 'introduction' we see how the shaman moves around the hut, asks his wife to prepare a meal of boiled plantains, goes and washes in the river, returns to the hut, sits next to the ceremonial brazier, starts in total silence to burn cocoa beans in the brazier, gathers the statuettes that will assist him in the rite, sits down again and begins to sing. In the Mu Igala, this preliminary part (which Lévi-Strauss [1958] analysed to other ends in his famous essay on symbolic effectiveness) takes up a considerable share of the transcription of the chant (Holmer and Wassén 1953) and periodically alternates with an account, more usual for anyone studying shamanism, of the ups and downs of the 'soul snatched away by the spirits', whose absence has triggered the illness. Let us take a look at a passage of this part of the chant:

> The midwife opens the shaman's hut's door.
> The door of the shaman's hut creaks.
> The midwife is about to go in through the shaman's door.
> The shaman is lying in his hammock, in front of her.
> The shaman's first wife is also about to lie down next to the shaman.
> The midwife approaches the shaman.
> The shaman asks: 'Why have you come?'
> The shaman asks: 'Why have you come to see me?'
> The midwife answers: 'My patient says she feels dressed in the hot clothing of illness.
> The shaman says 'Your patient says she feels dressed in the hot clothing of illness? I too feel it'.
> The shaman asks the midwife: 'For how many days does your patient feel she has been wearing the hot clothing of illness?
> The midwife answers the shaman: 'For two days my patient feels she has been dressed in the hot clothing of illness'.
> The shaman says: 'Your patient feels she has been dressed in the hot clothing of illness for two days'.
> The shaman says: 'Since I have no light to see through, I shall enter the dark, secret place through you'.
> The midwife moves one foot forward to walk.
> The midwife touches the ground with one foot.
> The midwife moves the other foot forward.
> The midwife is about to go out of the shaman's door.
> The midwife moves one foot forward.
> The midwife touches the ground with one foot.
> The midwife moves the other foot forward.
> The midwife is about to enter the woman's door.
> The shaman sticks one leg out of the hammock.
> The shaman gets out of the hammock.
> The shaman grabs his stick.
> The shaman goes in and out of the hut.
> The midwife moves one foot forward.
> The midwife touches the ground with her foot.
> The midwife moves the other foot forward.

The shaman reaches the door of his hut.
The shaman opens the hut door.
The door of the shaman's hut creaks.
When he leaves the hut, the shaman stops and looks about him, looking lost.
The shaman starts walking in the direction of the path leading to the woman's hut.
The shaman places one foot on the path leading to the woman's hut.
The shaman rests one foot on the path leading to the woman's hut.
The shaman moves the other foot forward along the path leading to the woman's hut.
The shaman is about to enter the door of the woman's hut.
They place a small golden chair underneath the sick woman's hammock.
The shaman sits on the golden chair.
They place a brazier underneath the hammock, a bowl-shaped brazier.
The shaman looks for cocoa beans.
The shaman puts the cocoa beans in the brazier bowl.
The cocoa beans are burning.
The cocoa beans give off smoke.
The smoke given off by the cocoa beans fills up the hut.

In order to understand the paradox implied by a description of this type, we must remember that what the shaman is describing in this passage (the dialogue with the midwife, the encounter with his wife, the recognition of the illness, the meeting with the sick woman, the preparation – fundamental for the rite – if the brazier) is always something that has already occurred by the time he starts chanting. In other words, if we go from a simple reading of the text to a description of the conditions of the rite, we find each time that the chanter refers to himself in the third person, a kind of *regressus ad infinitum*: a shaman, sitting next to his brazier at the foot of the hammock where the woman about to go into childbirth is lying, talking about a shaman, sitting next to his brazier, at the foot of the hammock where the woman about to go into childbirth is lying, talking about a shaman. . . . and so on. Before starting to sing the chant, the chanter describes himself.

For a long time I have seen this as a relatively simple mnemonic device: as an example of a special genre of the Kuna ritual 'ways of speaking' (Sherzer 1983) the Mu Igala possesses its own conditions of enunciation. It seems natural that tradition would need to preserve not only the text, but also its 'instructions for use'. And the more natural way to do so is, understandably enough, to verbalise them, and just store them in the chant 'before it starts' (Severi 1993). However, I have now come to see that this interpretation only accounts for a superficial aspect of the shamanistic ritual enunciation. We have already seen that the 'move' consisting in describing 'someone speaking about someone preparing to speak' has a first consequence: it short-cuts time. If we keep in mind that (with minor exceptions) the only tense used in this part of the chant is the present, this will appear clearly. We have seen that the enunciator says he is approaching to the ritual seat, to the hammock, to the door etc, when he has already performed such things, and is seated, as it is required, 'toward the East' and facing the sea. The immediate consequence is that what is formulated in the present tense refers here to the past. This has many effects, but one of them is particularly relevant to the definition of the enunciator. When this present-meaning-past tense meets with the real present, in other terms, when the linguistic description of the situation becomes an accurate one ('the shaman is now seated there and is saying this') we have a situation where 'someone is speaking about someone speaking (now)'. We should remember an essential point: it is precisely this description of the position of the speaker that

characterises , in the Kuna perspective, the 'special kind of communication' that is appropriate for ritual chanting. It is only when this part has been enunciated that the journey of the spirits into the supernatural world can begin, and the chant becomes ritually effective. The simple narration of travel in the supernatural world would not be expected to have any therapeutic effect.

Why is it so? What has changed here? Actually, this definition of a speaker 'speaking of himself speaking' appears to be paradoxical only as far as we do not understand that it illustrates another way to apply parallelism. The shaman is actually using the same technique that we have seen used in the text concerning the baby progressively constructed as a 'bleeding fruit'. That technique of transformation of a real body, or person, into a 'supernatural' presence described by the chant, is here applied to the enunciator himself. This transformation is never explicitly described in the chant, as in the case of the mother 'becoming a tree', or of the baby being transformed into a fruit. However, from the moment the singer starts to mention a chanter about to begin to recite his chant, from the point of view of the definition of the enunciator, (well before the beginning of the narration of the shamanistic journey) an entirely new situation is established: the enunciators have become two, one being the 'parallel' image of the other. There is the one who is *said to be there* (in the landscape described by the chant, preparing his travel to the underworld), and there is the one saying that he is *here* (in the hut, under the hammock where the ill person lies), chanting.

This first, elementary pattern of the process of 'making the enunciator plural', attributing to the enunciator a plural nature, is not an episodic detail. On the contrary, this way to 'double the presence' of the chanter illustrates only the most simple way to define a plural enunciator in the shamanistic speech. Actually, we shall see that this process of constructing a complex identity can take a much more developed form in American Indian shamanism. It could thus provide for a first answer to the question that we have posed about the ritual context of shamanistic communication: how is it possible, in a context where only words are present as means of ritual action, to build a special identity? Let us, before examining another example of a Kuna shamanistic chant, briefly describe the relational context in which this construction of a complex enunciator takes place.

Shamanistic discourse and ritual speech

To summarise and discuss the recent developments of the anthropological research about American Indian, in particular Amazonian shamanism would lead us far beyond the limits imposed to this paper. Let us focus only on one point: shamanistic 'therapy' of illnesses is often in America represented as the result of a confrontation between two rival beings: the pathogenic spirit (often said to be a threatening animal such as a jaguar) and the shaman or his auxiliary spirit (represented in most cases as a plant or a vegetal spirit) who has the power to heal. This kind of ritual has long been considered mainly in terms of the supposedly widespread 'general model' of Siberian shamanism. According to this model, the aim of the specialist's intervention is to 'reintegrate' a 'missing soul' into the body of the ill person. For this reason, the argument goes (for instance, Eliade 1974), the symbolism of the rite is based on the representation of a 'cosmological voyage' undertaken in order to find the spirit who has stolen the soul.

A number of case studies (Crocker 1985; Descola 1993, Descola and Taylor 1993; Severi 1993, 2001; Wilbert 1993, Townsley 1993, Carneiro de Cunha 1998) and elsewhere (de Sales 1991; Humphrey 1996), have shown that while this approach is undoubtedly based on indigenous discourse about shamanistic activity, it in no way accounts for the complexity of a shaman's ritual behaviour. In particular, the performative aspect of the shamanistic discourse, that is, the characteristic way whereby a series of symbolic transformations are effected through ritual speech, has often been recognised as far more important than its 'narrative' aspect (Tambiah 1985; Tedlock 1983). In the light of this new perspective, the primary issue at hand is no more to interpret the basic categories of shamanistic discourse (often understood as a mere comment to cosmology) but rather to understand that which is realised through a particular use of language during the shaman's ritual intervention.

Edmund Leach wrote once that in ritual language 'it is not the case that words are one thing and the rite another. The uttering of the words itself is a ritual' (Leach 1966:407). This is certainly true in the case of American Indian shamanistic traditions. Still more recently, it has also been recognised that the main focus of ritual action in the case of shamanism is not 'cosmological exploration', but rather a particular process of metamorphosis implied by the 'travel pattern', as well as a symbolic predation of the evil spirit ritually enacted by the shaman. Thus, to sing in order to cure a person is, in many Amerindian traditions, to hunt the most dangerous hunter of human beings, often incarnated, as we have mentioned, by a supernatural animal (for instance, a jaguar or an anaconda).

This new perspective has, without a doubt, brought about significant progress in our knowledge of shamanistic traditions: the ritual word is seen no more as a fragment of an imaginary discourse about the nature of the universe, but as an instrument of this magic predation (Descola 1993). However, while it is surely helpful to stop considering the shaman as an isolated figure in order to appreciate his activity in relational terms as a case of 'symbolic predation', the nature of the relationship which is established between the shaman and his supernatural adversary is far from being fully understood. Clearly the ritual identity which the shaman assumes cannot be seen as a simple inversion of the representation of his supernatural adversary. Indeed, in many ethnographies, the shaman appears as a highly paradoxical being, represented sometimes as the chief enemy of the evil spirit and at other times as an actual (or possible) incarnation of it. Consequently, the shaman's ritual identity may oscillate between an incarnation as a healing spirit and the threatening image of a predator (Crocker 1985; Viveiros de Castro 1991). The clearest illustration of this appears among the Jivaro, where every case of illness treated by a shaman is thought to have been caused by another shaman (Descola 1993).

Let us focus on this ambivalence. Almost everywhere in America, one point seems to be clearly established: becoming the adversary of a supernatural being in no way represents a permanent symbolic status or a stable social function. To be able 'to act as an effective shaman' is a very special, temporary 'state of body and mind' which must be acquired anew each time a ritual intervention is required. In order to become able to hunt the ultimate predator, the shaman must, each time, undergo a ritual transformation himself. His symbolic status is thus inherent to ritual action in two senses: it must be ritually constructed, and it can disappear once the ritual is over. It is for this reason, I suggest, that the paradoxical representation of the shaman often found in these traditions does not simply reflect an ambiguous conception of his powers. Seen

from this relational point of view the shaman's ritual identity appears to be founded upon a condensation of contradictory connotations, thus revealing the characteristic complexity of a ritual relationship. It is in this perspective that the construction of the shaman's identity as a complex enunciator (of which we have seen a first example in the 'introductory part' of the Mu Igala) reveals its meaning.

Let us consider a particularly well-developed example of such a construction of the shaman's ritual identity, the *Nia Ikala*, the shamanistic chant used for the treatment of what the Kuna today call *locura*, 'mental illness'. The background of the ritual performance is that the supernatural Jaguar of the Sky has attacked a human being. As a consequence, the crazed person is obliged to imitate the supernatural animal, and always becomes himself or herself a dangerous predator: a 'hunter of men'.[4] This state of madness (*locura*) is described as an act of imitation of the spirit, progressing from occasional crises of uncontrolled actions, to a complete identification with the Jaguar and the latter's dangerous behaviour. At that point, the ill person is seen as having become a spirit him/herself. The interpretative pattern that we have outlined above would lead us to expect in this case a straightforward confrontation between a 'good' (vegetal) spirit allied with human beings and a 'bad' (animal) spirit, in which the Jaguar's hunting of the ill person is countered by a further act of 'magical hunting' directed against the Jaguar.

However, in Kuna tradition as in many other Amerindian cases, the situation is much more complicated. First of all, the Jaguar the shaman has to confront is not a common one. It is represented as a special being, possessing an ontological status very different from that of 'everyday' jaguars. In the Kuna case, the ways in which this exceptional status of the Jaguar is represented are many. First of all, the Jaguar of the Sky always appears in shamanistic chants as a double being. It is both hunter (as a being of the forest) and singer (as a bird, a being of the sky). When it appears in the chant, he is never wholly himself: now a bird sounding like a jaguar, now a jaguar sounding like a bird. In a characteristic parallelistic way, 'birds' and 'jaguars' are progressively assimilated in the chant:

> 149 Hanging from an umbilical cord, the bird calls; hanging from an umbilical cord, just like a jaguar of the sky, he is calling
> 150 The bird roars; hanging from an umbilical cord, the bird roars like the jaguar
> 151 Over there, at the place of the Dark Village, the Village resounds, the Village trembles, from afar one can hear it resound, over there, at the place of the Dark Village
> 152 The jaguars of the sky move through the air
>
> 168 At the end of the Dark Village, clinging to an umbilical cord, the bird calls, the bird roars out; clinging to an umbilical cord, the bird calls, the bird roars: clinging to an umbilical cord, the *askokoar* bird calls, the bird roars (Severi 1993: 126–9).

A threatening incarnation of death and madness, the Jaguar of the Sky is above all defined as an animal of metamorphosis. It is precisely this partial ontological coincidence of two animal species (bird and jaguar) which represents its supernatural status. Secondly, it is always said to be an invisible being. The Jaguar of the Sky is made present only through sound, its only visual manifestations being either the blinding light of the sun, or exceptional dream images that may appear when the eyes are closed.

---

4   The kuna term is *tulekintakket*. On this point, see Severi 1993: 49–69.

Furthermore, its presence cannot be perceived through its own 'voice', but only through the cries of other animals. When the Jaguar passes through the forest, it manifests its presence by means of a particular sequence of animal cries. A bird, a monkey, a boar, a deer will be heard by the hunter walking in the forest, but none of these animals will appear. A threatening incarnation of death and madness, the Jaguar spirit that brings illnesses to human beings is thus represented as possessing a multiple and exceptional identity. It is precisely this exceptional nature which represents its supernatural status. In order to confront this special being, the shaman must achieve a similar metamorphosis: he too must transform himself into a multiple and exceptional being. This symbolic transformation is achieved in the ritual performance through the establishment of a complex, higher-order relationship between him and the spirit. Specifically, in keeping with the definition of the Jaguar, the Kuna shaman acquires a multiple nature by acquiring a complex voice, in which a variety of different beings (even enemies) are evoked together.

We have seen that, in Kuna terms, the 'madness' of the patient is interpreted from the very beginning in acoustic terms: it is seen as the presence of the 'voice of the Jaguar' in the ill person's body. The crazy person 'contains' the invisible jaguar, and is thereby forced to speak its language. The Kuna shaman-chanter counters this emergence of 'animal speech' in a human being by means of two parallel strategies. In a first part of the recitation of his chant, he explores the way leading to the abode where the patient's missing soul is hidden. In doing so, he begins to 'speak the tongue of the vegetal spirit' (the special language in which the chant is composed), thereby progressively identifying himself with a seer spirit of the forest: the trunk of the balsa wood. A simple human being no more, he thus incorporates the power to heal (and the power to see the invisible) that is normally possessed by vegetal spirits.

However, this transformation is only a first step in the ritual definition of the shaman's identity. Once the shaman has reached the supernatural 'village' where the lost soul of the patient is to be found and where the evil spirits are identified and attacked, his symbolic relationship to the ill person changes radically. At this point the shaman must, through the ritual recitation of the chant, not only incarnate the vegetal spirits of the forest, but also conjure up the presence of the animal spirits who dwell in the body of the ill person he is curing. Describing the place where these evil spirits are hidden, he suddenly starts uttering a long series of the hunting cries shouted by the animals into which the Jaguar is transformed: a bird, a monkey, a boar, a deer, etc.

251 Here the *nias* ('spirits') are transformed into peccaries, the peccaries are there with their black clothes, they cry '*ya-ya-ya-ya*'
252 The peccaries are now changed into *nias*, they are transformed into *nias*, the *nias* are transformed
253 They are transformed into lords of the animals with the striped fur; above the trees the *nias* with the striped fur cry '*turku-turku*'
254 The animals with the striped fur are now changed. They are transformed into deer, the *nias* are there, at the foot of the trees, with their black clothes, with their antlers intertwined, with their great pointed antlers, they cry '*me-me*'
260 The peccaries are now changed into *nias*, they are transformed into *nias*, the *nias* are transformed
262 At the foot of the trees the *nias* cry '*tatta-tatta*', out there, at the foot of the trees, the *nias* cry '*we-we*'
270 Into monkeys the *nias* are transformed; up there, above the trees, the *nias* cry '*ti-ti-ti-ti*'

272 Into *uli-ulika* monkeys the *nias* are transformed, they are up there, above the trees, with their black clothes, and they cry '*uli-uli*'
273 The *uli-ulika* animals are changed into *nias*, they are transformed into *nias*, the *nias* are transformed
274 Into *uma-umaka* animals the *nias* are transformed, they are up there, above the trees, with their black clothes, and they cry '*uli-uli*'
(Severi 1993: 138–140)

The shaman sings then, in this crucial part of the chant, not only as a 'spirit of the forest's trees' (using their 'vegetal' language), but also, and so to speak simultaneously, as an 'animal' spirit. Indeed, at that point, through the sequence of animal cries that appear in the chant of the shaman, the 'multiple voice' of the Jaguar of the Sky itself is made present. The shaman becomes then a novel sort of enunciator, constituted by a long series of connotations, including both the evil and the therapeutic spirits. The reflexive use of parallelism, which characterises the chanter that we have seen in the Mu Igala, who starts to sing about himself singing, is only the first (and, despite appearances, crucial) step in the same process that here becomes spectacular of accumulating contradictory identities of the image of the enunciator. The shaman then becomes a complex enunciator, a figure capable of lending his voice to different invisible beings. What in the relative simple case of the Mu-Igala was a simple way to 'double' the presence of the chanter, has become here, by a process that we could call a cumulative inclusion, a way of concentrating on the chanter an entire series of contradictory identities. From a relational point of view, we can conclude that shamanistic therapy is founded upon the symbolic opposition of two terms: the patient-as-an-animal spirit and the shaman-as-a-vegetal-spirit. However, the kind of ritual identity realised in this context is based on a process of progressive cumulation in which features characteristic of one pole of the opposition, that of the ill person-Jaguar, are gradually included in the other pole, that of the shaman-vegetal spirit. The ritual identity achieved in this way by the shaman – by symbolically manifesting the coexistence of the 'cries' of different beings in his single voice – thus acquires a logical status comparable to the one attributed to the supernatural Jaguar. It subsumes a series of contradictory connotations located at different logical levels:
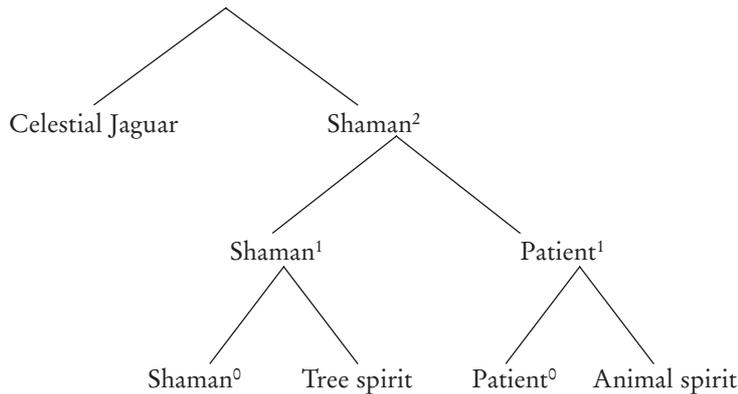

Figure 1. *The ritual identity achieved by the shaman*

We should not forget that the only means of effecting this transformation is ritual speech. In this context, however, the spoken word is treated not only as a way of designating (and transforming, as in the case, of the 'bleeding pearl' in the Mu-Igala) objects in the world, but above all as a way of defining a *voice*, a complex voice indicating the exceptional nature of the speaker. Through the appearance of the animal cries within the language of the vegetal spirits, both the supernatural predator and its adversary are made present. I would like to suggest that this particular use of language, relatively independent from the meaning of the chant, is what characterises shamanistic rituals. Language is used in this context as way not only of conveying meaning, or as a magical way of performing a therapeutical act, but also as an acoustic mask: a reflexive means to enact the ritual identity of the speaker.

Reflexivity and the ritual use of language

The study of the particular kind of reflexivity illustrated in American Indian shamanistic traditions leads to a first general conclusion concerning the 'special context' which frames ritual linguistic communication: ritual enunciation always involves the metamorphosis (or definition in ritual terms) of its enunciator. We can then answer the first question that we have posed (How can we describe, in formal terms, the special context that makes ritual communication different from ordinary life?) as follows: the ritual context, illustrated here by the example of shamanistic Amerindian performances, is different from ordinary communication because it brings the pragmatics aspects of communication to the foreground, through a reflexive definition of the enunciator. It makes the enunciator a complex figure, made up by the condensation of contradictory identities.

At the beginning of this paper, however, we have also argued that, if reflexivity really is so often to be found in ritual contexts, then its analysis should also lead us to elucidate some universal aspects of ritual itself. In order to answer this second question, let us try then to look from another perspective at the context of communication that we have characterised until now. In fact, there is at least one other way to analyse the particular context of communication that we have been describing as typical of shamanistic chants. We have seen that what is transformed is, first of all, the *premise* of any spoken word, the identity of the enunciator. After trying to elucidate the premises of this context, we can now try to characterise its consequences on the addressee. In other words, we should look at what is called the 'perlocutionnary' effect in the theory of speech acts (Austin 1962).[5] Let us thus try to look at its relationship with the establishment of a belief, or, to be more accurate, to that particular tension between doubt and belief which seems to be typical, as we have seen, of any reflexive stance implied by ritual performances. A complete analysis of this question would no doubt require too long a development, well beyond the limits imposed by this paper. Let us then focus only on the *fictive* nature of the enunciator and the ways in which it can be interpreted. The Kuna shaman, we have argued, transcends his ordinary identity and acquires a new, complex one, which is the result of a series of metamorphoses.

We can now contrast this way of defining an enunciator with other, interactive situations where a fictive (or complex) identity is also involved. Let us consider, for

5 Austin calls perlocutionnary any effect on feelings, thoughts and actions of the recipient realised through the enunciation of a speech act (Austin 1962).

instance that, at a performance of Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine,* an actor, impersonating the cruel emperor, fiercely says these words:

> I hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains,
> And with my hand turn Fortune's wheel about
> And sooner shall the sun fall from his sphere
> Than Tamburlaine be slain or overcome
> Draw forth thy sword thou mighty man-at-arms,
> Intending but to raze my charmed skin
> And Jove himself will stretch his hand from heaven
> To ward the blow, and shield me safe from harm (Marlowe 1950:11)

Let us study the appearance of the actor from a formal point of view, the same point of view we have adopted until now in our attempt to define ritual enunciation. What is typical of this situation is that, since the public, by definition takes for granted that the actor is playing the role of Tamburlaine, the identities of the acting person and that of the character he is impersonating are always *mutually exclusive*. The actor is identified either as 'Tamburlaine, the emperor' (while acting), or as Mr X, the famous interpreter of the Elizabethan theatrical repertoire. The sentiments and the thoughts he expresses, and even such features of his body, as the 'charmed skin' he proclaims to have, are obviously attributed to the emperor, not to the person acting as Tamburlaine. On a theatre stage, these two identities can only alternate, as mutually exclusive, because the context allows no confusion between them. The perlocutionnary effect of this situation is clear: even during the most effective performance no doubt is possible about the identity of the enunciator. As we enter the theatre, we accept the kind of fiction which a performance of this kind implies.

Let us come back now to the case of the shaman, and compare it to the representation of Marlowe's drama. The first difference is of a formal nature: the shaman does not *alternate*, as the actor does, between different, mutually exclusive definitions of his identity. On the contrary, he progressively accumulates a series of non-exclusive definitions (first as the 'other chanter, the one designated by the chant', then as the 'vegetal spirit', and then as the deer, the monkey, the peccary etc.). His definition as an enunciator is then, like that of the actor impersonating Tamburlaine, still a complex one. But the context of communication and the kind of fiction involved here are radically different from those of the actor performing on a theatre stage.

Actually from this first formal difference (cumulating instead of alternating contradictory definitions of identity), another important difference follows that concerns the generation of a belief, the perlocutionnary effect of the shamanistic performance. By cumulating on himself contradictory, yet non-exclusive and simultaneous identities (as tree, as deer, as monkey, etc.) the image of the shaman entertains a doubt about the always possible assimilation of his ordinary identity into a supernatural one. His image progressively becomes a paradoxical one, and therefore raises unanswerable questions: Is he a 'vegetal' (positive) or an 'animal' (negative) spirit? Is he boar, deer, monkey or jaguar? Was he really transformed into a spirit during the recitation of his chant? Will he be able, as he claims, to perform that transformation again and again? Ritual action builds a particular kind of fiction, a special context of communication, where any positive answer will imply doubt and uncertainty, and vice versa. Everybody is supposed to believe it, and yet no one can really be sure. The result of the complex definition of the enunciator, in this context, is thus always a certain kind

of uncertainty. If we remember Pierre Smith's proposition, that we should consider 'real' rituals only the ceremonies leading to the establishment of a belief, we can get a step further and conclude that linguistic communication becomes ritualised when a particular way to elaborate a complex image of the enunciator is made to unleash that particular tension between belief and doubt that defines a ritual–reflexive stance. The context of the ritual use of language is not defined solely by the use of any specific linguistic form, but rather by the reflexive elaboration of the image of the speaker, and by its perlocutionnary effect: that particular tension between faith and doubt that characterises any belief.

Carlo Severi
Laboratoire d'Anthropologie Sociale
Collège de France
52, rue Cardinal Lemoine
75005 Paris
France
carlo.severi@college-de-france.fr

References

Austin, J. A. 1962. *How to do things with words*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Carneiro de Cunha, M. 1988. 'Pontos de vista sobre a floresta amazonica. Xamanismo e Traduçâo', *Mana-Estudos de Antropologia Social*, 1998: 7–18.

Chapin, M. 1988. *Pap Ikala.* Quito: Abya Yala.

Chapin, M., J. Howe and J. Sherzer, 1980. *Cantos del congreso cuna*. Panama: Universidad de Panama.

Crocker, C. 1985. *Vital souls*. Tucson: Arizona Univesity Press.

Descola, P. 1993. *Les lances du crépuscule*. Paris: Plon.

Descola, P. and A. C. Taylor, 1993. *La remontée de l'Amazone, L'Homme*, special issue, 126–8.

de Sales, A. 1991. *'Je suis née de tes coups de tambour'. Sur le chamanisme Magar, Népal*. Paris: Société d'Ethnologie.

Eliade, M. 1974. *Le chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'extase*. Paris: Payot.

Fausto, C. 2001. *Inimigos fiéis. Historia, guerra e xamanismo na Amazonia*. Sao Paolo: Editora da Universidade de Saö Paulo.

Fox, R. 1988. *To speak in pairs. Essays in the ritual languages of eastern Indonesia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Goody, J. 1977. 'Mémoire et apprentissage dans les sociétés avec et sans écriture. La transmission du Bagré'. *L'Homme,* 1977: 29–52.
1987. *The interface between the oral and the written*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hojbjerg, Rubow and Sjorslev. 1999. 'Introductory Paper', Conference on *Religious reflexivity. Anthropological approaches to ambivalent attitudes to religious ideas and practice*. Institute of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen, 15–17 September 1999.

Holmer, N. 1947. *A critical and comparative grammar of the Cuna language*. Göteborg.
1951. *Cuna Crestomathy*. Göteborg.

Holmer, N. and H. Wassen, 1953. *The complete Mu Ikala*. Göteborg: Etnografiska Museet.

Houseman, M. and C. Severi, 1998. *Naven, or the other self. A relational approach to ritual action*. Leiden-Boston-Köln: Brill.

Howe, J. 1986. *The Kuna gathering*. Austin: Texas University Press.
1976. 'Communal land tenure and the origin of descent groups among the San Blas Kuna', in M. W. Helms, F. O. Loveland, *Frontier adaptations in lower central America*. Philadelphia: ISHI Publications.

Humphrey, C. 1996. *Shamans and elders. Experience, knowledge and power among the Daur Mongols*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Humphrey, C. and James Laidlaw. 1995. *The archetypal actions of ritual*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Kramer, F. 1970. *Literature among the Cuna Indians*. Göteborg: Ethnographical Museet.

Leach, E. 1966. 'Ritualization in man in relation to conceptual and social development', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* B, 251: 403–8.

Lévi Strauss, C. 1958. 'L'efficacité symbolique', in *Anthropologie Structurale I*, Paris: Plon.

Lord, J. 1960. *The singer of tales*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Marlowe, C. 1950. *Tamburlaine the Great*, in *Plays*, edited by Edward Thomas. London: Dent.

Perrin, M. 1999. *Le chemin des Indiens morts*. Paris: Payot.

Pomian, K. 1999. *Sur l'histoire*. Paris: Gallimard.

Propp, V. 1972. *Les racines historiques du conte de fées*. Paris: Gallimard.

Severi, C. 1993a. *La memoria rituale . Follia e immagine del bianco in una tradizione amerindiana*. Firenze: La Nuova Italia. Spanish translation, *La Memoria ritual*. Quito: Abya Yala, 1996.

    1993b. 'Talking about souls. On the pragmatic construction of meaning in Kuna ritual language', in P. Boyer (ed.), *Cognitive aspects of religious symbolism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

    1997. 'The Kuna picture-writing. A study in iconography and memory', in M. Salvador (ed.) *The art of being Kuna. Layers of meaning among the Kuna of Panama. Catalogue de l'exposition*. Los Angeles: Fowler Museum of the University of California at Los Angeles: 245–73.

    2001. 'Cosmology, crisis and paradox. On the image of white spirits in Kuna shamanistic tradition', in M. Roth and C. Salas (eds.), *Disturbing remains. A comparative inquiry into the representation of crisis*. Los Angeles: Getty Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities.

Severi, C. and E. Gomez, 1983. 'Nia Ikala. Los pueblos del camino de la locura. Texto cuna y traducción española'. *Amerindia. Revue d'ethnolinguistique amérindienne* 8.

Sherzer, J. 1983. *Kuna ways of speaking. An ethnographic perspective*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Sherzer, J. 1990. 'The grammar of poetry and the poetry of magic. How to grab a snake in the Darién', in J. Sherzer, *Verbal art in San Blas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Smith, P. 1979. 'Sur quelques aspects de l'organisation des rites', in M. Izard and P. Smith, (eds.), *La fonction symbolique*. Paris: Gallimard.

    1991. 'Rite' in *Dictionnaire de l'ethnologie et de l'anthropologie*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Stout, D. 1947. *San Blas Cuna acculturation*. New York: Viking.

Tambiah, S. J. 1985. *Culture, thought and social action*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Tedlock, D. 1983. *The spoken word and the work of interpretation*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Townsley, G. 1993. 'Song paths. The ways and means of Yaminahua shamanic knowledge', *L'Homme* 126–128 (1993): 449–68.

Viveiros de Castro, E. 1989. *From the enemy point of view*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Viveiros de Castro, E. 1991. 'Spirits of being, spirits of becoming: bororo shamanism as ontological theatre', *Reviews in Anthropology* 16 (1991): 77–92.

Wilbert, J. 1993. *Mystic endowment. Religious ethnography of the Warao Indians*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.