



VIBRANT - Vibrant Virtual Brazilian
Anthropology

E-ISSN: 1809-4341

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Associação Brasileira de Antropologia
Brasil

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VIBRANT - Vibrant Virtual Brazilian Anthropology, vol. 13, núm. 2, 2016, pp. 58-77
Associação Brasileira de Antropologia
Brasília, Brasil

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Village ornaments: familiarization and pets as art(ifacts) in Amazonia¹

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Abstract

The objective of this article is to discuss some reasons the Karitiana (Rondônia, Brazil) evoke to explain their ever-present desire to maintain familiarized or domesticated animals in their villages. Based on the ethnography of the relationships among the Karitiana and these animals, this paper enters into dialogue with the hypotheses formulated to explore the Amazonian people's fondness for the company of non-human species. It also provides insights for rethinking these debates, advocating that Indians are particularly looking for beauty represented by the diversity of animals and by the arts of domestication, just like the aesthetics of conviviality as proposed by Joanna Overing. This aesthetic dimension of human-animal relations seems to be overlooked by theorists of domestication or familiarization because they consider these phenomena to be more *techniques* or *technologies* than arts. Renewed perspectives on human-animal relations can be opened by addressing the "arts of domestication" and avoiding an *a priori* opposition between technique and art.

Keywords: human-animal relations; domesticity; familiarization; art; aesthetics.

Enfeites de aldeia: familiarização e mascotes como arte(fatos) na Amazônia

Resumo

Este artigo discute o desejo sempre presente, entre os Karitiana (Rondônia), de ter animais domesticados ou familiarizados em suas aldeias. A partir da etnografia de seus animais de criação, dialoga com hipóteses formuladas para investigar o gosto dos povos indígenas pela companhia de seres não humanos, e defende que os povos indígenas procuram especialmente a beleza, representada pela diversidade de animais e pelas artes envolvidas na sua familiarização e na realização de um bem viver doméstico, que se traduzem em uma estética da convivialidade (Joanna Overing). Esta dimensão *estética* da relação com animais parece ter sido esquecida diante de trabalhos que abordam a familiarização e/ou a domesticação de animais como *técnicas* ou *tecnologias* e não como *artes*. Novas perspectivas para a análise da relação entre humanos e não humanos podem ser abertas com o tratamento das "artes da domesticação", evitando-se oposição apriorística entre técnica e arte.

Palavras-chave: relações humano-animal; domesticidade; familiarização; arte; estética.

¹ This article was made possible by reviews, comments, and suggestions from various partners on the two occasions when the preliminary results were presented. I especially would like to thank Carlos Sautchuk, Guilherme Sá, Ciméa Bevilaqua, Jean Segata, Bernardo Lewgoy, Caetano Sordi, Lady Selma Albernaz, Geraldo Andreello, Clarice Cohn, and Marcos Lanna. Marcy Norton sent me some of her texts, which were fundamental to the arguments developed herein.

Village ornaments: familiarization and pets as art(ifacts) in Amazonia

Felipe Ferreira Vander Velden

A arte de viver é simplesmente a arte de conviver
[The art of living is simply the art of living together]
Mário Quintana

The main village of the Karitiana people, *Kyōwã* (also known as *Aldeia Central* [Central Village] or *Aldeia Nova* [New Village]), is inhabited by a large number of animals that live with the human inhabitants on a long-term and continuous basis. Dogs, chickens, ducks, horses, parrots and macaws, coatis and monkeys, sometimes trumpeteers and even tapirs and rabbits (and at times even snakes, electric eels, and other animals) can be found everywhere, moving about in the spaces between and within houses, pestering people as they go about their daily tasks or just wandering as they hunt for food or shade in the scorching heat of the Amazonian afternoon. In this aspect, *Kyōwã* is no different from most indigenous villages in Brazil and neighboring countries, some of which have even more familiar or domesticated animals; this clearly shows the interest that the native populations of the South American lowlands have in these non-human companions.

In this article I attempt to discuss some of the reasons the Karitiana use to explain their ever-present desire to accumulate more and more of these companion animals. The motives the Karitiana use to explain this love for the variety of animals living in their villages can, in my opinion, help reopen the debate about the ubiquitous presence of these creatures among Amazonian indigenous populations. This may be accomplished by no longer starting from generalized hypotheses (as we shall see below), but giving voice to native explanations for the phenomenon, a task that still remains to be done for the vast majority of these populations. The Karitiana's rationalizations offer perfectly intelligible explanations which are very relevant to the habit of (and the *enjoyment* of) accumulating domesticated animals which live among humans. They apply even to us, modern Westerners, once we understand the idea (a discussion of which concludes this reflection and is intended to open up new fields of research about the relationship between humans and non-humans) that *living together is an art*.

* * *

The Karitiana (*Yjxa*) speak the Tupi language, Arikém branch (the only language in this family), and traditionally inhabit the valleys of the Candeias, Jamari, and Jaci-Parana Rivers, major tributaries of the right bank of the Madeira River in the northern portion of what is currently the state of Rondônia. Today, the group has a registered area of approximately 89,000 hectares, a square of reasonably preserved forest bordered on the south and east by the Bom Futuro National Forest (FLONA), and on the north by several cattle ranches and large rural properties, many of which belong to prominent figures in the state's politics and economy. The demarcation of this indigenous land left out vast portions of traditional Karitiana territory in the Candeias River region, an area the group has been fighting to obtain for nearly twenty years and is awaiting an anthropological study for identification and demarcation, which is currently in progress.

At this time there are around 315 Karitiana (Sesai/2014) living in five villages. One of them, *Kyōwã* (New

Village, or *Central Village*) is located within the Karitiana Indigenous Territory and has been continuously inhabited for almost 50 years. It is where most of the population's institutional structures are located: the school, clinic, FUNAI quarters, housing for non-Indian teachers, and covered meeting space, among others (this was where I conducted most of my field work between 2003 and 2012). Two other villages were established outside the indigenous territory, as part of the Karitiana's efforts to recover old parts of their traditional lands which still lay outside the territory: *Byyjiyty ot'soop aky* ("Byyjiyty's Hair") or the *Candeias River Village*, situated on the banks of this river and built by the traditional healer [pajé] Cizino in 2002 (today, home to approximately 30 residents), and *Mywyno* (the name of the Preto river), a village built by a significant leader at the northern boundary of the demarcated area within a nearby cattle ranch. A fourth small village, *Bom Samaritano*, was erected in 2011 about five kilometers from Aldeia Nova, and is occupied by a few families; more recently, in 2014, part of the group created a village on the banks of the Caracol River, in the far southwest of the indigenous territory. Many Karitiana also live (on a temporary or permanent basis) in cities in the region, particularly Porto Velho and Cacoal.

My work (especially Vander Velden 2012a) has sought to investigate the relationship between the Karitiana and the *animals they raise* (as they call them), which we will call *domesticated animals*, *companion animals*, or *pets*. These are not limited to animals which are traditionally obtained in the forest; generally, juveniles are captured after adult animals are killed in hunts, and then become domesticated (or tamed) in what is almost always forced coexistence with humans, and abound in all indigenous villages in the South American lowlands (coatis, capuchin monkeys, jacamins, macaws, and parrots are the most common among the Karitiana). Animals introduced by whites after contact also feature among these animals, and are fully incorporated into modern Karitiana everyday life (dogs, cats, horses, donkeys, oxen, pigs, chickens, ducks, and even rabbits), and are also extremely numerous in most indigenous villages throughout Brazil.²

I have been attempting to understand how the incorporation of animals taken from the forest may have orchestrated the adoption of new species of beings, and also highlighting the differences between these groups. There are important differences, especially with regards to recognizing the origin of these beings: the Karitiana say that introduced or exotic animals "*have no history*", unlike the native animals who have their origins explained in narratives we can describe as *mythical*, known as *stories* or *stories from the old times*. I do not intend to dwell here on these issues, but instead to focus on one of the aspects of this mechanism of "keeping" (perhaps rather than "capturing", I think) beings and enabling permanent coexistence between humans and non-humans in the everyday life of the Karitiana villages.

* * *

Why raise animals in the village? This issue has been addressed by some Americanist ethnologists who were encouraged by the bountiful and obvious symbolic rendering of *xerimbabos* (a Tupi word designating animals that live together with humans in the indigenous villages; in broad terms, it would roughly correspond to "pet" or "companion") living in the communities in which they worked. Disagreeing with previous authors who maintained that familiarized animals are raised to provide meat in societies which

² I wish to note the Karitiana language, like most Amerindian languages, does not have a term for the (semantic) category *animal*. If a comparison must be provided, speakers offer the term *himo* to refer to animals. This term, however, falls far short in the scope and fixed nature of the concept of animal, since it designates prey animals for hunting, i.e. those that are or may be *food* (*himo* is the same word used for *meat*); consequently, only hunted animals are *himo*, which gives the term a contextual application. For example, if a spider monkey is killed in the forest (which we would call "wild"), it is *himo*, but a spider monkey raised as a pet in the village (and which will never be slaughtered) is not. As can be seen, seeing the category *animal* as a monolithic entity can create more problems than solutions (Derrida 2002). Therefore, in the interest of economy here I will use the suggestion by Tim Ingold (2000) which attempts to avoid dissociating humans and animals by recognizing that this dichotomous opposition does not consider the multiple modes of relationship between various human and non-human collectives.

depend on the uncertainties of hunting, Philippe Erikson (1987; see also 1997) used extensive ethnographic evidence to argue that the indigenous lowland societies in South America adopt young animals as a way of restoring the “natural balance,” using care (the feminine) to cancel out or compensate for the violent and destructive effects of the hunt (the masculine).

In a later text, Erikson (2000) retains a “psychologizing” perspective by suggesting that the adoption of animals is forced by a *conceptual discomfort*; in the author’s words, “pets serve as an intellectual counterweight to prey” provoked by the death of a being. In this way, adoption continues to be a way of counterbalancing the effects of the hunt, understood as aggression against another in the context of the rivalries with the spirit-owners of the hunt (Erikson 2012: 16). This creates a “dishonest alliance” that keeping pets seeks to ameliorate, since this can cause danger for humans. This is criticized by Philippe Descola (1998b, 1999), who maintains that the “discomfort” Erikson alludes to is much more characteristic of Western sensibilities with regard to taking the life of an animal, and does not do justice to the symbolic complexity of the relations between humans and animals in Amazonia. Descola (1994, 1998b), like Patrick Menget (1988), Carlos Fausto (1999), and Fernando Santos-Granero (2009), prefers approaches that seek to position the raising of *wild pets*³ into the broader cosmological contexts, focusing the need for *alterity* and *exteriority* to reproduce the *socius*, reinforcing the homology between the familiarization of animals and the adoption of captured children as opposed to the analogy between hunting and cannibalistic predation (real or metaphorical) of enemies; all of this, finally, is the expression of the global position between *consanguinity* and *affinity*. The structural formula is summarized by Descola (1998b: 37):

“*hunting : pet keeping : : enemies : captive children : : affines : consanguines*”

All these authors assume a complementarity between “keeping pets” and hunting (like the capture of people and wartime aggression), which seems to position the entire process as a “man’s subject.” Taylor (2000; 2001) offers an alternative scenario by definitively incorporating women, suggesting that for the Jivaro, the analogy connects the “taming” of women through marriage and taming of forest animals; this suggestion continues by maintaining that caring for the animals is a female task since, structurally, women and pets are equivalent. In another article, this same author maintains that among the Jivaro, wild pets are “orphans,” whose “protection” must be guaranteed by women in the sequence of violent events entailed in the hunt (Taylor 2000: 324). More recently, Cormier (2003: 112ss), in a specific study on the pets (primarily monkeys) among the Avá-Guajá, referenced these positions, defending “the importance of raising pets in the production of feminine identities” (Cormier 2003: 113). Although she recognizes that several of the explanations posited by previous works can be applied to pets among the Guajá, this author maintains that the relationship between pets and women should be emphasized: “(...) I believe that the maternal relationship is the key to understanding pet keeping among the Guajá”; and, continuing: “(...) In their beliefs, pet keeping among the Guajá is best described as a reproduction of *maternage* (mothering)” (Cormier 2003: 114; *maternage*, *sensu* Haudricourt 1986).

I do not intend to resolve this question here. However, the material from the Karitiana seems to indicate that the keeping of animals should be seen as a practice pertinent to the set of family relations, which involves the actions and intentions of women, men, and children: after all, speaking of children (considering the Karitiana insist that “a dog is like a child”) implies talking about maternity and paternity. More than this, the incorporation of pets seems to be a subject that concerns the entire village as a whole, as

3 I use “wild pets” to refer to animals brought from the forest and familiarized in the villages; these differ from animals that are normally called “pets”, a term corresponding to species or varieties of domesticated animals that have been undergoing a process of co-evolution alongside humans for millennia. These “wild pets” approach those animals Christian Talin (2000) calls “new companion animals” (*nouvelles animaux de compagnie*) in the Western world which are not domesticated, strictly speaking, and mostly remain wild (iguanas, spiders, ferrets, martens, snakes, etc.).

a type of community policy project which may on the one hand be powered by the families that individually care for their pets, and on the other hand seems to be part of a symbolic economy that reflects the desire and an image of an entire collective.

* * *

The practice of taking in the young of various species from the forest reflects the ever-present desire also to continue incorporating introduced animals into daily life: the Karitiana always express their intention to “*get another dog*”, “*have more chickens*”, “*raise pigs*” or “*raise cattle*”. The kept animals, therefore, always come from *outside*, from the *exterior* of the villages, whether they come from the forest or the city. Additionally, the historical narratives of contact with whites, which were mainly collected by Liliam Moser (1993 and 1997), in many cases highlight the fact that the Karitiana immediately began to *ask for* and to *steal* animals, particularly dogs and chickens, from the rubber tappers and other agents of colonization who sporadically reached the region starting in the middle of the nineteenth century and arrived on a larger scale starting in the 1940s and 1950s. There was and still is an active search for different recently-arrived animals.⁴

When asked why they adopt animals, the Karitiana provide several explanations. Valter, for example, told me once that “*people kill the mother of the animals in the forest, then you have to get the young to bring up, they can’t be left alone. They have to be brought up like a child,*” reasoning that evokes the suggestion by Erikson (1987, 2000) that the adoption of pets serves as *compensation* for the assault inflicted upon animals through hunting. Nevertheless, most of the other statements I collected point in another direction, one summarized by the conclusion of a conversation with Antônio Paulo, Elivar, Meireles, and Arnaldo, in the Casa do Índio:

*Women like to raise animals, it makes them happy to raise them, it is good for women. Children also like [to do it]. Men don’t like it, it’s difficult. That’s why men get the animal from the forest to raise. People like to catch animals in the forest just to see them, to raise them.*⁵

There are two important things here. First, the desire to collect animals in the forest is driven by the women, with the men only doing it to serve them; this is consistent with countless reports from hunters who claim to raise animals only because “*the woman [wife] wants them*” or “*child [children] asks [for them]*.” Second, the reason for raising animals is pleasure, “*it makes them happy,*” “*it is good for women*” – which is indeed *aesthetic* – “*just to see,*” which also appears in the phrase by the same Antônio Paulo, a great storyteller: “*the Karitiana like to raise animals.*” And this pleasure is not only female, or childish.

It described macaws and parrots, but also chickens, the mare that belonged to the vice-chief John, and the rabbits that Valter had in 2006: they “*adorned the village.*” The mere presence of the mare was said to serve as “*embellishment,*” or to “*decorate the yard*” of the house. Valter, responding to my question, said that his three rabbits, which were kept in a large wood-and-mesh cage in front of the family home and fed with greens from a small vegetable garden (Valter is a small entrepreneur: he plants and sells coffee and oranges,

4 These must have been quite common events in the history of the initial contacts between indigenous populations and the colonizers, but we know little about these events, mostly because of the virtual inexistence of documentation. One of the few documented cases involved the group contacted in the Javari River valley (eastern Amazonas, probable the Matis) who insistently asked FUNAI employees for puppies. The following text is from the *Revista de Atualidade Indígena*: “Stray dogs began to be part of the relationship of the traditional gifts used to attract reluctant and isolated Indians. The sertanistas from FUNAI were surprised with strange requests for dogs when last year they made contact for the first time with an as-yet unidentified tribal group on the banks of the Ituí River in Amazonas. Since first contact the Indians showed a desire to receive more than the axes, machetes, cooking pots, and scissors that the sertanistas offered them. (...) They wanted dogs (...). In the two subsequent encounters, they again asked for more dogs, forcing the attracting team to round up the stray dogs they found in neighboring villages, and buying some (...)” (FUNAI 1978: 18). Alex Golub (2005) has reflected about the tremendous impact that the presence of dogs in the first expeditions throughout the highlands of New Guinea had on the native populations of that region, and on the way in which relations between these people and the foreign explorers were organized.

5 I note that here, as in other citations of statements from my Karitiana interlocutors, I chose to standardize the language.

and is also a pastor at one of the village's evangelical churches), “*just serve as decoration for the house.*” The notion of *decoration* or *adornment* (*pojati*) is used to refer to the body paint and adornments made of feathers used by the Karitiana, but also describes various bird feathers, which are defined as their *decorations*. The myth of *Ombygmo* chronicles how birds came to have differently colored plumage, by painting themselves with different substances from the broken body of this unfortunate man: “*the bird took the colors and became different, he painted himself to decorate himself,*” the story concludes. In this way, painting is embellishment, and marks the origin of *diversity*, which in this situation is chromatic. Therefore, the enjoyment of raising animals, besides pure pleasure, also seems to be a nod to *variety*, which exists in the forest but can and should be reproduced in the village.

Although in some case the Karitiana may place some small collars or adornments on their dogs and cats (some improvised, like one of the cats belonging to Renato, in the city, which wears a Karitiana bracelet around its neck), they do not adorn their animals per se, in the way that the Pirahã (Gonçalves 2001: 368), the Karajá (Ferreira 1983: 226),⁶ and the Matis (Erikson 2012) do, particularly with beads. In our case, the animals themselves are the adornments. We can remember in passing what Loretta Cormier (2003: 115-116) said about the keeping of monkeys among the Guajá people as body art: “monkeys can be considered a type of body art that projects the image of fertility, and therefore of sexual attractiveness....” There, monkeys are women's ornaments, just as for the Karitiana they are ornaments for the village.

Dogs, however, do not adorn the village space—I never heard this statement apply to them. At least not at first glance.⁷ However, the statement remains that it is the women who are principally responsible for adopting these animals into a residence. The men, in turn, provide an additional reason to keep dogs, beyond the simple pleasure of raising them: for hunting. If dogs are like children – for both men and women (and this is always the answer when the Karitiana are asked about the relationship they have with dogs and other animals they keep) – they are also *companions* and *helpers* (cf. Vander Velden 2015). Cizino Karitiana summarizes:

Dogs are just like us, because they help people, they kill animals in the hunt for people, they eat the flesh and bones. They help, and kill pigs, agoutis. That's why dogs are not eaten, they are our friends, friends [with] four feet.

It is said that the dog is a “*companion in the forest,*” and that is why they are raised: “*to scare away angry beasts in the forest; it is dangerous to walk in the forest without a dog.*” Besides the enjoyment of keeping dogs, they are an important *helper*, as Meireles points out: “*dogs help us a lot, as hunters, and at night, when animals come near the house, the dog faces it, it lets us know...*” Highlighting another function of the dog, as a *guardian* and a *protector*, Meireles adds: “*the dog keeps a watch at night, if people come he warns us. He's company, he always accompanies us.*”

Dogs do not adorn the village,⁸ but enter into the social universe of the Karitiana when they are adults

6 And this was also done by the groups living in villages on the Madeira and Tapajós Rivers (the Tupinambarana and Tapajó) in the eighteenth century, according to a report from the Jesuit João Daniel (*apud* Cypriano 2007: 125, free translation): “*they greatly prize the pendants and medallions with images of the saints; but it is for the beauty of them and not for the respect and devotion they hold; and so often they use them to adorn their monkeys and puppies, tying them around their necks (...).*”

7 They are not adornments, but not because they are ugly, dirty or sick. Even if the Karitiana abhor the odor of the dogs, I never heard them say the dogs were ugly. Perhaps their ugliness offends the eyes of non-Indian observers, who are accustomed to the careful and detailed treatment these pets get in the contemporary world. Furthermore, according to Golub (2005: 8), “[E]uropean judgments of indigenous dogs had historically been quite negative.”

8 Among the Pitaguary in Ceará, dogs decorate the village, especially beautiful and healthy ones; like other animals reared in homes, particularly birds in cages and certain lizards (iguanas and tegus), dogs are *animaux decoratifs* that beautify the home environment (Kagan 2015: 138-140). The Kaingang of Toldo Chimbangue (in Santa Catarina) refuse to eat the chickens they keep, since they “*decorate the yard*” (Stefanuto 2015: 41).

under the guise of *companionship*, it can be said, of *work*⁹: as *protectors*, and especially as *hunters*, which are eminently male obligations. This is why many Karitiana men say they only appreciate dogs that know how to hunt, and even when they respond to frequent requests from their wives they often refuse animals that do not demonstrate the ability or propensity to “kill prey,” other men state they do not even enjoy the company of dogs during the hunt. But perhaps the fact that dogs do not decorate the village when they are adults, and quite to the contrary, are filthy, dirty, disorderly, and incestuous (and are associated with the Devil among evangelical believers who frequent the churches that exist in Kyôwã¹⁰) explains why that they are the only animals many Karitiana refuse to keep, or have refused to keep in recent years. Maybe it is better to state that they say they refuse to keep dogs.¹¹

The filth of dogs is a common argument: Valdomiro says he does not have dogs because he has small children at home, who are in close contact with the animals – “they [would] keep touching and biting the dog, I don’t like it. When the children grow I’m going to get a dog. My wife wants to keep a dog, but I don’t.” Meanwhile, while Marcelo wanted to have dogs, his wife Milane did not allow it since she does not like them. Furthermore, dogs are said to be “odorous” (that is to say, smelly), and they transmit *opira*, a pathological condition that can be described as “a strong or bad smell” that also seems to be applied to skin problems: a dog that is *pirento* (a Portuguese-Karitiana pidgin term) is mangy, hairless, and smelly. Gumerindo adds another reason that is increasingly alluded to in refusing to keep dogs at home:

I don’t have a dog, I just like hunting dogs to kill prey, since they help people, but just keeping [dogs] [without any utilitarian purpose?] I don’t like, no, they smell [stink]. I kept hunting dogs in the past, but you feel so bad when they die, [because] dogs kill prey and help people, and dogs don’t live very long either, since dangerous prey kills many dogs.

The emergence of a *new sensibility* (cf. Thomas 2001) can be detected in this statement with regard to the suffering involved in the death of a dog, especially an animal trained for hunting. Here, much more is at stake than the loss of an efficient *companion* in chasing animals in the forest, coupled with a feeling of anger (*pa’ira*) caused by the aggression against the kept animal, which forces the hunter to “pay the dog” (that is, *avenge* it) by slaughtering the offending animal; anger is a disagreeable feeling in the Karitiana worldview, with strong connotations of insanity, emotional disarray, and a very strong potential for violence (see Araújo 2014), and so bringing the dogs to the forest has been avoided. This would explain why the refusal to have dogs seems virtually restricted to adult men; women and children never speak of not keeping dogs, and cases like Milane, who doesn’t want dogs in her home, are rare.

But there is another share of sensitivity found among the men’s explanations, one which women do not mention about not keeping dogs. As Antônio Paulo states:

I don’t want to get another dog, because they suffer so much from hunger, they get beat up. I don’t like to see dogs suffer. I don’t want to, but my wife gets them anyway. It’s women and children who get them, who always want to get [dogs].

9 The equines that lived in the village, a mare and two donkeys (the latter two having died in 2009), also seem (or seemed) to be subsumed in the universe of work: Epitácio told me that the donkeys were used to transport cultivated crops from the clearings and the products extracted from the forests to the village. John, who was the owner of the mare, told me that he hooked up a small wagon (which I saw alongside his house) to the animal to drive the family to more distant clearings, which I never saw; only once I witnessed Junio, the son of Irene (John’s wife) saddle and mount the mare to visit a distant clearing, and the use of the horse for riding seems unusual (most of the Karitiana do not know how to ride). This infrequent “use” seems to suggest to me that equines are not (and were not) in fact considered working animals, and the everyday treatment they receive seem to indicate firstly that they are (or were) *kept at home*, or *closely*, though they were not referred to as *companions* or *helpers*. Furthermore, they “*adorn the village*.”

10 This was in my last year in the field; I know the religious configuration of the village has changed slightly since that time, but I do not have precise data.

11 If there are many dogs, the Karitiana state that today there are few which are effective hunters. This would explain why many houses do not have dogs: several men stated they only liked dogs that know how to hunt, and since these are rare, they do not keep any dogs. I cannot say to what extent this shortage of hunting dogs is real, but it can be suggested that training dogs to stalk and kill prey is a domain which is increasingly restricted to older and more experienced people, and consequently it has become more difficult to obtain these specialized dogs.

Antônio José, his son, agrees:

I don't want any more dogs, I don't have any more, they all died. People have to leave the village, so the dog stays alone, hungry, nobody feeds it, it suffers a lot.

“When they are kept, they suffer a lot from being kept” is a common phrase. Antônio Paulo asserts that he doesn't like to see the animals suffer, and Cizino says that the common habit of leaving dogs alone in the village without food or care whenever families travel to the city is “ugly.” This leads to acts that could read as mercy, such as the care the healer Cizino gave to a kitten that had its leg broken during a beating in the city. Actions such as these, however, are much more common among women and children, who in turn do not refuse the dogs, and seem to want more and more animals. They also suffer when dogs are killed during the hunt (especially from attacks by coatis) and when dogs are abused in the village or in the city, but this does not seem to be a reason to stop women and children from gathering them around. As Cormier (2003) suggests, something in the female identity must be strongly linked to raising animals.

* * *

Therefore, as *the village ornaments* we have kept animals that serve the aesthetics of everyone: this is also noted by Stephen Hugh-Jones (*apud* Serpell 1996: 64) regarding the Barasana, among whom caring for pets is primarily *leisure*:

These people simply take advantage of the day to care for and feed the animals they raise. The animals are a strong source of discussion and entertainment, and are considered an integral part of the community.

Long before the British anthropologist, the French missionary Charles de Rochefort, who lived among the Karib in the Lesser Antilles, described them as:

Great Lovers of divertissements and recreation...[T]o that purpose they take a pleasure in keeping and teaching a great number of Parrots and Paraquitos (cited in Norton 2013: 66, author's translation).

Further reflection on the aesthetic dimension of raising animals is in order, including how to connect the dogs to the other kept animals which are said to decorate the village. The importance among Amazonian lowland peoples of the creation or ownership of *beauty* as one of the fundamental attributes of humanity, to be pursued actively and daily by individuals, is indeed well known: the ability to produce beautiful things is a crystallization of the manifestation of human creativity, knowledge, and productivity, and of the pleasure and joy involved in daily activities. Beauty, care, attention to detail, and perfection in the arts of doing and the *art of the everyday life* (Overing 1999) are always sought, because they are indicators of the agency, and productive capacities of people: in short, they are signs of joy, harmony, and continuous production of social behavior itself (Overing 1991 and 1999; Overing & Passes 2000; van Velthem 1998, 2003; Lagrou 2007, 2009, Santos-Granero & Mentore 2008).

Can the arts of domestication be considered to produce beauty? Aristóteles Barcelos Neto (2002), in his discussion of the relationship between the Wauja people and hyperbolic beings called *apapaatai*, makes some interesting contributions in this regard. According to this author, the images (masks and drawings on paper) of the *apapaatai* awaken “intense emotion” of an aesthetic nature in the Wauja, which is founded on the fact that closeness to these beings is found under the signs of “enmity/friendship, danger, mistrust, and forced reciprocity.” He continues:

Among the Wauja, the scale of the monstrosity of the apapaatai becomes 'domesticated' through art, which provides a less-'dangerous' contact with the 'supernatural' beings. In this case, aesthetic pleasure is associated exactly with the pleasure of a controlled approach (...). This is because the aesthetic pleasure awakened by the representations of the apapaatai could be the pleasure of a virtual 'domestication' of monstrosity (...) (Barcelos Neto 2002: 175-176, my translation).

Domestication, by reducing the harmful powers of the *apapaatai* through iconographic fixation, is a process that provides aesthetic pleasure: joy and beauty contribute to the domestication of monstrosity, and are the main fruits of this activity (Barcelos Neto 2006: 305-306). Is the same not true with the familiarization/domestication of animals, transforming the uncultivated and unsociable young animal taken from the forest, or the unknown animal from the city, into a fully social being that pleases individuals because of its agentive capacities and the colorful, beautiful, and pleasant variety that its presence lends the villages? Els Lagrou (2009: 56, my translation, emphasis added) also considers a similar possibility:

*Obtaining and preparing materials from the outside into materials that constitute the very group identity follows the same logic, whether this is the incorporation of people, of the agentive qualities or abilities of people (soul, singing, name), or of objects [And, I would also add, of non-human beings or persons]. **These elements that are won from -or negotiated from- outside must be pacified, familiarized. This process of transforming what is external into something internal has eminently aesthetic characteristics.***

While the dogs themselves may not exactly adorn the village (because of their characteristics associated with uncleanness and certain antisocial habits), can we not say that they contribute to creating harmony and joy in the community, which in turn does make them lovely, by demonstrating the human creativity and productivity seen in the transformation from puppies to companion dogs? After all, the “wise dogs” (“cachorro sabido”, in Portuguese), a term used to refer to certain animals that are good hunters or show a particular appreciation for human company, and have learned to demonstrate these tendencies especially through observing behavioral ethics (such as not stealing food or entering the homes of others, for example) are very much appreciated by the Karitiana.

The act of domestication,¹² therefore, seems to be beautiful in itself and ends up creating more beauty: a village populated by different species living in harmony, highlighting the humans' ability to produce variety, harmony, peace, and friendliness. In his ethnography of the forms of constituting subjects and subjectivities from subjugation (which is required for full and satisfactory coexistence) among the Urarina people in Peru, Harry Walker (2013: 192-195) shows that the most extreme form of shamanistic control among this people of the Peruvian Amazon is the domestication of small bowl-shaped stones called *egaando*, which are powerful beings because they hold many small darts used in mystical attacks. The *egaando* can be familiarized and thus subjugated by the shamans – placing them “at their service,” so to speak – in a laborious process that the author describes as “where practices of taming and raising reach their highest level as an art form” (Walker 2013: 192, emphasis mine), although the author does not develop this comparison. Familiarization is the art of making companions, human and non-human, artifacts and animals: after all, “pets are nothing if not good company” (Walker 2013: 208).

¹² Here I use the term domestication in the broad sense, borrowing the term from the ethnologists who discuss art as the domestication of potentially dangerous beings and agencies in the villages (their *miniaturization*, one might say, to human scales; with regard to miniaturization or smaller-scale models as a form of ownership, see Levi-Strauss 1997 [1962]: chapter 2). Being faithful to the technical terminology, I obviously am referring to the *familiarization* (*taming*) of kept animals and not their domestication, which is generally held to not be present in the South American lowlands (Descola 1998a); in any case, recent reflections (Cassidy & Mullin 2007) have urged us to rethink the current notions of *domestication* to approach cases of closeness that are not usually considered as such (for example, marine fish farms, “wild domestication,” eating together, mutualism, etc.) in an effort to reconsider human-animal relations as a whole. In a certain sense, even these ethnologists with whom I dispute should employ the idea of *art as familiarization* (or *taming*), since the set of relationships with these beings/agencies is a permanent process and refers to specific individuals, and not the “species” of beings or powers. Still, perhaps the opposition between *domestication* and *familiarization/taming* even may lose its meaning, when domestication is understood not as a finished process, but as an ongoing and continuous effort to create the interspecies bond (Haraway 2008; Fijn 2011). Similarly, captives (as well as the animals taken from the forest) gradually are familiarized by their captors when they are captured (Fausto 1999): there are no “domesticated peoples” (as a state or condition), so to speak, although a recent study by Fernando Santos-Granero (2009) suggests the contrary.

If “*the beauty is the beast*” (cf. Van Velthen 2003), beauty can also be the art of getting ferocious beings used to living together, and considering their diversity, making a certain space decorated and consequently beautiful. Since the notions of beautiful and aesthetically pleasing are a fertile field with an infinite variety of fruit (cf. Descola 1996: 166-167), beauty also resides in a village filled with beings of different natures living in harmony: an additional aspect of what Barcelos Neto (2002: 263, emphasis in the original) called “*animals as art.*”

* * *

Therefore, the dogs also adorn the villages in their own way: as dedicated workers and efficient companions. Throughout Amazonia, their training depends on a set of *technical* operations (cf. Vander Velden 2012a and 2015). But there is another important dimension to the position of these beings. As *companions*, in the sense of *helpers*, dogs are restricted to the male domain, defined by the hunter’s *activity*; but for the women, they continue to be something else, as the Karitiana say, they are “*like children.*” Not only dogs, but kept animals in general are defined by the Karitiana as being “*like children.*” In this sense, the Karitiana resemble the Matis according to Philippe Erikson (2012: 29), for whom “*the purpose of familiarization is precisely to make ‘children.’*” Taking animals from the forest or the city, therefore, obeys other reasons besides just the aesthetic pleasure of taming/domesticating and creating friendship. There are other dimensions at play, such as membership, companionship (in the case of hunting dogs), and even wealth, particularly in the case of livestock, although this can be extended to other species which may eventually serve a consuming market outside the village, whether as pets, crafts that use feathers, teeth, claws, skins, bones, or other fragments of animal bodies which are found in abundance.

However, it seems to me that all these reasons to collect more and more animals are connected to the theme of *decoration* and the *production of beauty*. Indeed, the relationship of companionship and mutual help (if we can use this term, cf. Lestel 2007) between humans and dogs reflects the good relations that fully-fledged humans must maintain between each other for the continuing production of peaceful and productive conviviality, which in itself is also beautiful for this reason (Overing 1991). Similarly, the demand for kept animals as *wealth*, which is evident in the case of the Karitiana’s desire to introduce cattle raising into the villages, as I have written elsewhere (Vander Velden 2011), also operates in the sense of the production of beauty, since in the Karitiana view wealth (as it is seen in the farmers who own herds of cattle within the indigenous territory) is essential for the production of *health*, and in turn is expressed in the beauty of perfectly functioning healthy bodies and high community morale (as I showed in Vander Velden 2004).

With respect to the association between kept animals and children – which is expressed in phrases like “*dogs are like children*” and detected in various daily practices and rituals among the Karitiana (described in Vander Velden 2012a) – the subject of adornment and beauty is revealed with even greater clarity. This is because the children of the Karitiana are considered to adorn the village: a beautiful community is a community full of children. The village of *Kyõwã* is called “*child village*” (one of the possible translations, since *õwã* translates as “child” in Karitiana) not only because it is a new village (or it was, when it was named), but because it is a space with many children: it is even said that the name stems from the fact that the village “*is as beautiful as a child’s smile.*” It is no mistake to say that considering the abundance of young inhabitants as a way to beautify a village arises in good part from a spectacular¹³ demographic recovery, of which the Karitiana boast: consequently, the numerous children show victory in the fight against extinction

¹³ The Karitiana numbered only 45 in the late 1960s; today they are more than 350 in number, having increased almost seven-fold over the course of 40 years.

and the persistence of an entire people and their culture. This topic certainly has not escaped the notice of other indigenous peoples, who mention how beautiful villages full of children are, precisely because along with the children comes population growth (cf. Cohn 2000: 13; Müller 2002). “*Children represent joy [...], a house without children is a sad house,*” claim the Iny-Karajá, according to Sofia Scartezini (2015: 36).

The bond between animals and children becomes even closer when we realize that it is particularly the offspring of animals, whether these are captured in the forest or brought from town, that effectively receive care and affection from people, especially the women and children. Baby birds and dogs are kept in straw baskets and fed by hand, are set on laps, and like human children sleep in the company of their owners; the young mammals collected in the forest tend to be more reluctant and are kept in cages or on chains, but at least in the Karitiana view this is a far cry from abuse or neglect. Just like human children, the young of introduced domestic animals (such as puppies and chicks) – and the *wild pets*, which remain “*eternal children*” (Anderson, 2003) for their entire lives – certainly help to adorn the villages. When they become adults, however, the treatment of these beings changes appreciably. In most cases they are treated indifferently, as in the case of chickens; monkeys and coatis can be beaten for their antics, and macaws and parrots are only sought out when their feathers are needed for crafts, although the Karitiana enjoy playing with parakeets and parrots, which always seem to seek out human companionship. They are never eaten, however, and only rarely are returned to the wild, even if they become troublesome or aggressive.¹⁴

None of these changes, however, is as radical as what occurs with dogs. Although they are loved and pampered when puppies, adult dogs suffer from hunger, abandonment, illness, and unreasonable violence, particularly when they do not demonstrate an aptitude for hunting (anyone who has ever spent time among Indians is familiar with the notorious “village dogs”). In a previous work (Vander Velden 2012a), I suggested that this transformation in treatment is the result not only of associations between dogs and the devil (*Kida hu~j hu~j*), but particularly the perception of their life cycle, which is true to a greater or lesser extent for all animals that coexist with humans. Like children, puppies require permanent care and attention; fully-grown adults need to show the ability to care for themselves, control themselves, be productive, and share responsibility for comprising the community; as the Karitiana say, they have to know how to “*take care of themselves.*”

The dog, which is an uncomfortable hinge between the worlds of nature and culture (as discussed in Lévi-Strauss 1997 [1962]), subverts this need at every turn: with their pernicious habits of stealing food, attacking people, eating feces, and copulate with kin, dogs evoke the fragility of the human condition, trapped in the arduous task of producing beauty in a universe where violence, disorder, disease, and death swirl about, the “everyday tragedies” that nevertheless are a necessary part of life in the forest (Kohn 2013). And let us not forget that *dogs are jaguars*, even if they are domesticated. Their name in the domestic indigenous language, *obaky by’edna*, translates as “*kept jaguars*” or “*house jaguars.*” The danger of the great Amazonian predator is concealed in each and every dog, but keeping them controlled and making them polite and useful are practices that illustrate human mastery in domesticating the wild powers of the non-human universe. Some dose of violence will doubtless be involved, which is why dogs are beaten: to be reminded of their duties as adults, as adult (not human) people who must be productive and controlled. In the polished words of Herbert Baldus, as he observed the way in which the Tapirapé treated their dogs: “*after their childhood full of pampering, life becomes canine for the dog*” (Baldus 1970: 183; my translation, emphasis added).

¹⁴ Returning kept animals to the wild was recorded among other groups such as the Awá-Guajá (Uirá Garcia, personal communication) and the Wayapi (Igor Scaramuzzi, personal communication), but not among the Karitiana.

The domestication and even familiarization of animals has been addressed in most works as a *technique*/ *technology* or a *set of techniques* (cf. Clutton-Brock 1990) rather than an *art*. Some authors have dedicated themselves to defending practices of dealing with domestic species as an *art* – notably those related to controlling animals which are intended to perform more complex tasks like training for shows or competition, such as equines (Patton 2003; Cassidy 2007) and dogs (Haraway 2008). Nevertheless, raising animal species or individuals in the company of human beings and groups – whether they are domesticated or familiarized – is generally understood to be a set of techniques or technologies designed to conquer the “characteristics” of the animal (Pavão 2015), which are epitomized in the animal’s refusal to obey human designs, a refusal of the technique itself, which is understood as a *human/cultural* predicate as opposed to the *nature* of the animal, and the animal’s desire to enjoy its natural freedom far from humans.

Maybe this equation relates to the way that in the modern West we consider the relationship between *art* and *technique*, which are understood to be opposing and contradictory terms (Benjamin 1985): in this sense, domestication, with its usual association with themes of *power*, *control*, and *domination* (cf. Patton 2003; Cassidy & Mullin 2007), cannot be associated with art and its traditional ties with freedom, autonomy, and emancipation. However, the domestication (or familiarization) of animals considered as a form of art is not foreign at certain times in the history of cohabitation between humans and non-humans in the modern West.

In her study of exotic animals in eighteenth-century France, Louise Robbins (2002) looks at *menageries*, the precursors of zoological institutions, a type of “living curio cabinet” designed to accommodate and acclimate foreign species which were brought to Europe in increasing numbers by travelers and colonial merchants starting in the fifteenth century. In fact, Robbins argues that *menageries*, besides being expressions of royal and colonial power – and the animals, besides being appreciated in themselves as *ornaments* for their beauty, exotic nature, or curious habits and morphological characteristics (Robbins 2002: 26; 44) – also expressed the human ability to control and teach animals, since different species were kept in the same environment and cages were only used sporadically (Robbins 2002: 79). In this way, the French kings, as well as the nobility, large-scale animal dealers, naturalists, and even ordinary people could express power and wisdom in managing the variety (going far beyond exotic) that lived at liberty in the spaces which were generally built especially to house this type of fauna.¹⁵ It is no wonder that there were many attempts (theoretical and practical) to domesticate these new species brought to Europe in order to broaden the menu of species which were subjected to peaceful coexistence with human society (Robbins 2002: 29-31; 35-36; 193-198).

In a brilliant but little-known article, Alfred Gell (1988) argues against the separation of *techniques*/ *technologies* and *arts*, treating the latter as modalities of technologies which he calls *technologies of enchantment*. Gell (1988: 7), who in this article is also interested in the relationship between humans and animals, suggests a link between domesticating animals and what he calls *technologies of reproduction*, namely *kinship*: we, humans, domesticate animals because we first domesticated ourselves. The same techniques that we use to make humans (kinship and marriage) were later employed to domesticate animals. Nevertheless, the *technologies of enchantment* as arts can also be considered fundamental in the process of domestication, since they act on the passions and work “to enchant the other person[s] and cause [them] to perceive social reality in a way favorable to the social interests of the enchanter” (Gell 1988: 7); the same workings that apply in the “domestication” (or, in other words, enchantment) of human minds through the

¹⁵ Consequently, the menageries of French kings resembled the collections (which included living exotic animals) assembled by Chinese emperors in palaces which were constructed especially for this use; Marshall Sahlins notes that “[T]he synthesis of diversity and conquest made these imperial retreats [the palaces] perfect microcosms. They represented the whole world as the work of the Emperor and within his power” (Sahlins 1988: 22).

arts can apply to the domestication of non-human minds.¹⁶ Art and technique are not opposites, after all, and if domestication is a technique, the arts also are: the opposition between *technique* and *magic* (which is in all technology as its “ideal” form) would lack basis (Gell 1988: 6) and the author’s intent is to indicate that the technology of enchantment exists and that “[...] it has to be considered, not as a separate province, i.e.. ‘Art’ – opposed to technology – but as a technology in itself” (Gell 1988: 7).¹⁷

More recently, Tim Ingold (2000) has argued that the modern split between *art* and *technique* was unknown in Greek and Roman cultures, where both comprised the same skill craftsmen employed to manufacture durable objects. The separation between art/aesthetic and technique/technology in the contemporary world, according to Ingold, results from the opposition between *mind* and *body* that characterizes Western thinking, and is developed in other complex dichotomies such as work/signification, mechanical/semiotic, sensible/intelligible, and so on. Nevertheless, Feeley-Harnik’s study (2007) of pigeon breeders in eighteenth-century England suggests the mutual implication between art and technique in the relationship between weavers and birds, as if both activities — which were simultaneously artistic and technical – were considered under the same symbolic key:

The weavers’ birds and plants alike were clearly tied to artisanal ideals. They were an aesthetic expression of ideals of craftsmanship associated with silk weaving (...) (Feeley-Harnik 2007: 165).

And the idea of *design* in the sense of *planning* or *redesigning* the living beings, according to Feeley-Harnik (2007: 174), drove the London weavers’ passion for pigeons. Nevertheless, one could argue that the aesthetic pleasure offered by the pigeons was found not only in the development of new varieties, but also in the creation and maintenance of living spaces and domesticity, since the birds not only lived inside but were ideally kept separate from the “wild” varieties of pigeons (*Columba livia*). The intense pleasure in companionship between humans and non-humans is simultaneously associated with both technology/technique and art/aesthetics in nineteenth century Britain: beauty and technique in breeding animals, and Lévi-Strauss (1997 [1962]) seems to have been correct when he considered the permanence of the *savage mind* in certain niches of the modern world, most notably among those who live intimately with animals at work, such as circus performers or zookeepers.

Furthermore, this rapprochement between *animals* and *objects* does not seem foreign in the Amazonian landscape in general, and to the Karitiana in particular. In fact, the mythology of this group is lavish in what I have called *artefactual animals*: creatures that were made by demiurge-creators from objects, or from a combination of inert material things. Jaguars were carved from cedarwood, and agoutis and peccaries were made from the shells of Brazils and termite mounds; *Ora*, the mischievous and evil brother of the creator *Botyji*, made the aquatic creatures from trunks, leaves, and branches that he found floating in a river. He also made woodpeckers by sticking a stone axe in the mouths of a group of men, and the deer by putting a broken bow into the head of another, while the anacondas came from a painted piece of wood. There was, therefore, *an* art in the creation or manufacture of the beings that inhabit the forest today, with many of them made from material objects, some of which were worked, decorated, or combined, while others were simply available to the creators to be converted into living creatures. Therefore, from the beginning animals have been manufactured, made, like the range of artifacts made by humans; what the Karitiana do today is manufacture animals, from the art of adorning their villages and through raising/socializing/domesticating these various animals that they bring to their villages and make efforts to live with.

¹⁶ The Pied Piper of Hamelin from the European folk tale may be an extreme example of this analogy.

¹⁷ For Alfred Gell, all art is a technology for capturing, captivating, and holding the viewer and keeping him or her under control. The classic example of the Zande hunting trap, which is discussed by Gell (1996), points in this direction: the indiscernibility between technical objects and artistic objects in the modes of capturing random agencies. Is it possible that domestication is exactly that: the capture of random agencies?

Reconsidering domestication from the notion of *sharing meals*, *coevolution*, and *companionship* (Haraway 2008; Cassidy & Mullin 2007) – and moving away from ideas that allude to power, domination, and control – can help us understand domestication as an art. Among us today we consider that there is an “art of living” or that “living together is an art,” and a difficult, laborious, and risky art at that. Haraway (2008: 205-246) highlights the authentic and intense *aesthetic pleasure* involved in living with dogs (and other animals), but develops a strong warning in the way in which aesthetic categories (intrinsically linked to categories of originality, prestige, rarity, and purity) shape contemporary practices of breeding to develop or improve domesticated animal breeds, especially canines (Haraway 2008: 95-132).

I should warn here that I am specifically addressing *domestication* as an *art* as well as a *technique*, since I maintain that both are not in opposition: from the process of raising and overseeing coexistence between humans and animals (and among different animals) as an activity directed towards the search for *aesthetic pleasure*.¹⁸ And not so much from the animals as “objects” of art in themselves, whose beauty alone is able to *abduct agencies* (according to Gell 1998) and power networks of actors or to produce aesthetic pleasure by its mere presence. Consequently, I am not especially concerned with certain domestic species valued for their intrinsic beauty, for example, which becomes an important (and sometimes definitive) criterion in the reproductive selection of individuals and ultimately guides the very activity that brings together humans and animals, such as professional breeding of purebred dogs and horses, champion bulls and ornamental birds and fish (cf. Cassidy 2007, on horses; Anderson 2003: 406-408, on birds; Leal 2014, on bulls), beyond of course the *consumption* of these species with the goal of ornamenting homes and collections.¹⁹ I also do not address beauty as a criterion behind the illegal trafficking of wild animals, where the relationships between the search for rare and beautiful species²⁰ and the language of mining or mineral prospecting leads to the capture of birds, snakes, and insects with coloring like jewels or ornaments.²¹ Nor am I interested in the form of contemporary art called *bioart* that uses animals (and plants) to produce aesthetic impact, and in many cases borders on cruelty and the exploitation of sentient and non-sentient beings (Kirksey & Helmreich 2010; Kac 2013).

These cases point to a difference (although certainly not an incompatibility or a mutual exclusivity) between the Karitiana and many but certainly not all non-Indians in the criteria that define beauty and pleasure in the relationship between humans and animals, and a definition of *animals as adornment*. Indeed, we have seen that the Karitiana collect all kinds of animals that can become accustomed to living with

18 Bechelany (2012) argues that Indian hunting practices are simultaneously signified as both technique and aesthetic, art and technology, creativity and repetition, freedom and determination; in this way, efficiency and beauty cannot be separated in the activities of Amazonian hunters, nor the precision of pure enjoyment, the economy of profit and expenditure. Uirá Garcia (2010) suggests a “poetics of predation” by advocating a similar idea among the Awá-Guajá. If hunting can be both technique and art, is there a reason why domestication/familiarization – obviously, for different reasons – cannot also be? It is interesting that Henry Walter Bates asked “what *arts* the old woman used” (quoted in Norton 2013: 68, emphasis mine) when referring to “an old Indian woman’s” success in taming what the naturalist described as an “intractable green parrot.”

19 Not to mention, of course, that many of these animals are further embellished by their owners or keepers with special collars and even clothes that mimic human clothing. The practice of decorating family pets has been discussed above.

20 And here, *exoticism* and *exteriority* play a central role and are, in a sense, near the interest of the Karitiana through the integration of non-human beings into their daily lives, whether these animals are brought from the forest, or incorporated in the world of the whites and brought from the cities. Of course the Karitiana, like other Amazonian indigenous peoples, appreciate various animals for their beauty; this is particularly the case in birds, whose feathers are essential for making the most beautiful indigenous artifacts, featherwork, which are highly valued inside as well as outside the villages (Reina & Kensinger 1991). When dressed in their headdresses and feathered gauntlets the Indians often describe themselves as “beautiful,” and bird feathers are described in literature as being native “jewels,” objects that are actively sought, have great value, and deserve special care such as storage in special containers (cf. Giannini 1991; Vander Velden 2012b). For quite some time, bird feathers were appreciated in Western women’s fashion like jewels or body decorations (Schindler 2001; Kirsch, 2006 on bird-of-paradise feathers). Peter Beysen (2013: 226-227, n. 4) constructs intriguing suggestions around the equivalents (via patterns on the skin) made between snakes and jewels or decorations of the female body in Ashaninka thought and in Western painting.

21 This association between beauty and wealth does not escape the indigenous peoples: Hans Staden (1999 [1557]: 101; 113) stated in the sixteenth century that the brilliant feathers of various birds which were jealously guarded by the Tupi in the coastal Portuguese Americas were their “riches”: “their treasures are feathers. He who has many of them is rich (...).” It is very interesting that André Thevet at a certain point viewed sixteenth-century Tupi society through the eyes of European royalty, which is why Cunhambebe’s feather headdress becomes his crown (Mason 1994: 10).

humans in order to decorate their villages. In other words, beauty also seems to lie in diversity and in the very art of domestication/taming, and in raising and living together with these numerous *non-human children* (as well as the human ones) in the villages, decorating these and making them beautiful. The Karitiana report various attempts to tame different species of animals, from tayras, tapirs, and bush dogs to snakes and electric eels; there seems to be a taste for and a certain enjoyment that is simply derived from the presence of these beings in human spaces from the processes of getting them accustomed to a multi-species coexistence. In any case, I think that the exploration by Joanna Overing (1999) into what is called the art of the everyday maintains that this does not imply opposition of the individual and the collective: thus, the animal is an ornament in itself, in its body (the colorful feathers of birds, for example) and in the aesthetically pleasing effect produced by taming/domestication and harmonious coexistence. In the same way, if caring for children (watching over them, feeding them, pampering them) is among the most important arts of social living, since it produces full-fledged people (cf. McCallum 2001), the same can be said of kept animals, which after all are produced by similar processes or arts.

Among non-Indians, in many contexts there is also a search for *ornaments* (ornamental fish and birds, purebred dogs, cats, and horses, for example) that seems to be at play,²² among other factors. But for us the *ornamental* is closely linked to plastic beauty (and to the other symbolic characteristics associated with the different animals that are investigated: strength, vitality, strangeness, docility, and so forth), as well as *rarity* and *exoticism*. The most valuable and expensive species (or their by-products) are those which are the rarest, most endangered, most difficult to find and capture (cf. RENTAS 2001). Here, beauty does not lie in variety and conviviality, but in exoticism and rarity.²³

In conclusion, it is possible to understand how for the Karitiana, a mistreated, skinny, and dirty dog can be understood to adorn the village. We are not discussing a specific individual animal that is used as an ornament, but all of them together, all the beings that cohabit the villages. I do not wish to say that a miserable, mangy and emaciated dog itself adorns the village, although this is not impossible, since aesthetic appreciation (of what is beautiful) may not be universally or transculturally identical (Overing 2001; also Overing 1991, about the Piaroa, for whom beauty is evaluated morally). However, I maintain that what is beautiful and adorns the village is the diversity of beings, and above all the beauty involved in the familiarization process itself: beauty is producing coexistence, beauty is producing kinship, beauty is producing domesticity from the wild. Beauty and enjoyment. Beauty lies in having a village full of different beings living in peace and harmony. Fellowship can be a source of aesthetic pleasure, as well as power and joy (cf. Walker 2013).²⁴ As Anna Tsing states (2005: 167-169), “the pleasures of biodiversity” are valued by

22 This common search for the ornamental can be further evidence for the thesis that the acclimatization of animals to human company meets a need which is specifically human (Serpell 1996). Note that in the contemporary West the search for diversity appears in what are known as “new pets” (Talinn 2000): iguanas, pythons, amphibians, spiders, rats, pigs, foxes, etc. Perhaps the diffusion of this habit (along with the constant discussions and experiences of domesticating various new animal species and getting others used to captivity) is related to the ideas of bringing increasingly diverse beings into coexistence with humans.

23 According to RENTAS (2001), the feathers of some birds are artificially colored to more closely resemble more expensive and more valuable species in the market for wild animals. This is cruel logic that yet again emulates the indigenous practice of *tapiragem*, in which technical processes that today still remain obscure are applied to the plucked bodies of live birds so their feathers grow back in different colors. This also emulates the sixteenth-century Tupi practice recorded by Jean de Léry of coloring white chicken feathers with turmeric to make them resemble the feathers of the scarlet ibis, which were quite appreciated by these Indians and used to make their main feather adornments (see Vander Velden 2012b). All these procedures change the color of the plumage; in one of them, however, the goal is to produce different feathers, while in the other the goal is to produce a different animal. Many origin myths addressing the variety of birds (including those of the Karitiana) focus on the feathers acquiring their coloration from various substances. So would painting animals be so strange to the Indians after all? Would creating diversity be strange?

24 The notion of “ecological aesthetics” discussed by Nading (2012) from the suggestions of Gregory Bateson can be usefully applied here in exploring the aesthetic pleasure we extract from our daily “entanglement” with the creatures who live with us and share our world, in the continuous “becoming” that is life in flux (Ingold 2011). Ecological aesthetics (different from *environmental aesthetics*, which is more concerned with *ordering and control* of the natural world) “*privileges a relational knowledge of life*” (Nading 2012: 577) and invests in the marvel and the beauty that we derive from our relationship with the world and with others. These ideas can also illuminate a reflection on domestication/familiarization as an art or source of aesthetic fruition. Along these lines, in a future work I hope to test Michel Foucault’s ideas about the “*aesthetics of existence*,” which consist of considering the changes themselves in thought knowledge about experiences. Could this then involve using knowledge to modify other species? Does the consideration (also by Alfred Gell) of domestication as being preceded by *self-domestication* – man taming himself before domesticating animals and plants (Leach 2003) – not address precisely this?

people the world over, and it is not true that “nature appreciation is an idea only in the privileged West.”

Keith Thomas (2001: 133) showed that it was in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a period of great discoveries and European explorations of the Americas, that the presence of pets within European homes became established; among the most significant of these animals were monkeys and parrots from the New World, which were very famous and prized (Françoze 2014). Marcy Norton (2013: 71-77) furthers this suggestion: she believes it is undeniable that the practices and techniques – and, hence, the set of relations (adoption, familiarity, intimacy, and parental care) – related to animal taming in the Americas had a decisive impact on the phenomenon of pet keeping in Europe. In this way, the native peoples of the Americas seem to have stimulated the habit of keeping pets in European homes at the beginning of the modern era, and of treating them dearly with care and affection: as members of the family. Norton also argues that the Europeans did not adopt only American species, but also the mode of relationship between humans and animal pets. Perhaps these same people also taught the Old World the value of the beauty and diversity of the animals not only in themselves, but when harmonic coexistence is maintained among different species including humans; the menageries, as the precursors of contemporary zoos, may speak to this argument, since it was the discovery of the Americas that populated Europe with countless monkeys and parrots. But, after all, are zoos imperial devices (Acampora 2005; Rago 2008)? Perhaps. Yet they may also have been our way of dealing with the concentration of natural diversity around us without focusing on the deeper efforts towards coexistence: we manage the diversity of animals by keeping them in cages outside our homes, while the Indians insist on making them thrive as they roam free and within domestic spaces. But was this and will this always be the way? Does our fascination with the biblical paradise of Genesis (or Noah’s Ark, for that matter) not stem precisely from a fascination with the peaceful coexistence between us and other non-humans? And for this reason, does it not suggest a similar consideration about the aesthetic value of living together with difference? Is this not the sign of the Fall, the loss of the singular beauty of paradise, where men and all types of animals spoke to each other?

Translated by Tracy Miyake

Received: December 11, 2015, Approved: July 15, 2016

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