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A Mayan ontology of poultry: Selfhood, affect, animals, and ethnography

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ABSTRACT

This article has three key themes: ontology (what kinds of beings there are in the world), affect (cognitive and corporeal attunements to such entities), and selfhood (relatively reflexive centers of attunement). To explore these themes, I focus on women's care for chickens among speakers of Q'eqchi' Maya living in the cloud forests of highland Guatemala. Broadly speaking, I argue that these three themes are empirically, methodologically, and theoretically inseparable. In addition, the chicken is a particularly rich site for such ethnographic research because it is simultaneously self, alter, and object for its owners. To undertake this analysis, I adopt a semiotic stance towards such themes, partly grounded in the writings of the American pragmatists Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and George Herbert Mead, and partly grounded in recent and classic scholarship by linguists, psychologists, and anthropologists. (Linguistic anthropology, political economy, ontology, affect, selfhood, animals, chickens, Mesoamerica, Maya, Q'eqchi')*

INTRODUCTION

I was sipping a drink with a woman at a party. My sister-in-law. I knew she was writing a book on horses—indeed, it was rumored that she could not just talk to them, but whisper with them. Figuring she must have some insight into their minds, I asked her to tell me about their taxonomy. That is, what kinds of distinctions does a horse make about other beasts? How does it categorize the world of natural kinds? She paused long enough to make me feel the philosophical naiveté of my question. But then she answered, "hooves and claws." I looked perplexed. And she explained that beasts with hooves approach a horse from the front, seeing while being seen, sniffing while being sniffed. Whereas beasts with claws approach upwind and from behind. They pounce onto the back, claws sinking into ribcage and teeth tearing into neck. "Goddamn," I said, taken with the simplicity of her metaphor. "So where's man fit into all of this?" "Claws," she snorted, rein-worn fingers raising bourbon to lips. "Claws, if you consider horsemanship."

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Like this encounter, this article has three key themes: ONTOLOGY (what kinds of beings there are in the world: say, hooves and claws), AFFECT (cognitive and corporeal attunements to such entities: say, desire and fear), and SELFHOOD (relatively reflexive centers of attunement: say, humans and horses). To explore these themes, I focus on women's care for chickens among speakers of Q'eqchi' Maya living in the cloud forests of highland Guatemala.

The first half of this article is the most stereotypically linguistic and symbolic. It details five broad frames: the etymology of the word *kaxlan*, which denotes chickens and connotes alterity; the complementary relation between four kinds of birds (hens, cocks, quetzals, and chicken hawks), each of which is emblematic of a particular era or identity; lexical taxonomies surrounding domestic animals, with a particular emphasis on birds, and the relatively tacit semantic associations that these index; animals calls, naming practices, and kinship designations, which interpellate chickens as quasi-subjects; and finally, ontological qualities related to NOT being a mammal and NOT having a self that are revealed in the context of discursive disruptions. The second part of this article is the most stereotypically psychological and person-centered. It details six broad frames: illness and the relation between pregnant women and brooding hens; some general features about the material culture and political economy of poultry husbandry; attributions of desire and reason to animals; the relation between children and chickens; signs of fear, cowardice, and anxiety; and the attack of a chicken hawk in relation to the collapse of selfhood. As will be seen, the chicken is a particularly rich site for such research because it is simultaneously self, alter, and object for its owners.

These frames were chosen because they constitute empirically rich and analytically replete semiological structures and semiotic processes, themselves mediating a range of social relations. The nature and culture of our object (the chicken) requires us to take into account (and often leap across) various temporal and spatial scales—from the Maya to Mesoamerica, from narratives of conquest to modern ethnographies, and from grammatical categories to breeding strategies. The overarching presentational metaphor, then, is somewhere between the proverbial blind man palpitating the parts of an elephant and trying to imagine the whole, and the pragmatist interpreting a range of indices and trying to abduct to an object.

Each of the three overarching themes is taken up as the narrative progresses, providing a more extended literature review and theoretical synthesis—ontology at the beginning, selfhood in the middle, and affect at the end. This essay adopts a semiotic stance towards such themes, partly grounded in the writings of the American pragmatists Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and George Herbert Mead, and partly grounded in recent and classic scholarship by linguists, psychologists, and anthropologists. And this thematic articulation is itself part of a larger project on the nature of biosemiosis, technocognition, and sociogenesis, which is more elaborately theorized in Kockelman (2011). From such a stance, I argue that these themes are empirically, methodologically, and theoretically inseparable. More strongly worded, attempts to take up such topics separately fail to treat them adequately.

The data for this article are drawn from more than two years of ethnographic and linguistic fieldwork among speakers of Q'eqchi' (a Mayan language spoken by around 500,000 people), most of which was spent in a village of some eighty families (around 650 people) in the municipality of San Juan Chamelco, in the department of Alta Verapaz, Guatemala. During my fieldwork (1995–2000, with shorter trips in 2003, 2006, 2010, and 2011) the majority of villagers were monolingual speakers of Q'eqchi'; some men who had served time in the army or worked as itinerant traders spoke some Spanish. And all the villagers were Roman Catholic. The surrounding landscape was cloud forest punctuated by housing sites, agricultural parcels, and pasture. Although all villagers engaged in corn-based agriculture, very few of them had enough land to meet all of their subsistence needs. For this reason, most men in the village engaged in seasonal labor on plantations (up to five months a year in some cases); many families engaged in itinerant trade (women weaving baskets and sewing textiles for the men to sell); some families began to take eco-tourists (the men guiding and the women hosting); and most women were dedicated to poultry husbandry.

ONTOLOGY: SOCIAL RELATIONS, SEMIOTIC PROCESSES, AND SEMIOLOGICAL STRUCTURES

Each of the frames of this article is used to disclose and enclose a range of semiotic processes and semiological structures, which themselves figure the social relation between women and chickens, the relation between chickens and other animals, and the relation between Q'eqchi' women and other identities. As used here, then, ontologies turn on the objects (signs and interpretants) projected from (and generating of) such processes and structures. In particular, such objects (signs and interpretants) stand at the intersection of two kinds of relations between relations. First, we have Saussurian semiological structures: sign-object (or signifier-signified) relations analyzed by their relation to virtual assemblages of other sign-object relations. For example, the way a word gets its "conceptual value" (or meaning) in relation to other words that combine with it (in a sentence), or could substitute for it (in a slot). And second, we have Peircean semiotic processes: sign-object relations analyzed by their relation to sequential unfoldings of interpretant-object relations (where an interpretant is whatever effect a sign has insofar as it stands for an object). For example, just as an answer (or second part of an adjacency pair) is an interpretant of a question (or first pair-part), my change in attention (say, turning to look) is an interpretant of your gesture that directs my attention.

From such a semiotic stance (Kockelman 2005, 2011), taxonomies and partonomies project out ontologies, as do lexical fields and grammatical categories, as do pecking orders and seating arrangements, as do interactional sequences and affective processes, as do value regimes and commodity circuits, as do predation

relations and mating practices. Such objects range from the concepts and referents of words to the purchases of affordances, from the statuses of roles to the functions of instruments, from the purposes of actions to the values of commodities, and from modalities of intentionality (e.g. beliefs and desires) to techniques of the body. Anything that signifies and interprets has an ontology in this sense, whatever its degree of semiotic agency. And anything that is signified or interpreted is ontologized in this sense, whatever its degree of complicity. Finally, ontologies are concomitant with ontogenies: the latter describe how the former develop—either in history (as the conditions and consequences of their coming-to-be), or in practice (as the processes, practices, and relations through which their being is constituted). Ontologies, then, mediate assemblages, processes and scales far beyond the human-specific, linguistic, or ideological.

Such an approach allows us to both incorporate and critique other approaches to ontology. For example, perhaps the most widespread approach to ontology, qua "cultural logics," is through the lexicon. Given that we are focused on chickens, perhaps the most important scholarship in this regard turns on taxonomic approaches to natural kinds—as undertaken by anthropologists like Conklin (1954) and Berlin (1992), psychologists like Keil (1989) and Medin & Atran (1999), and philosophers like Quine (1969a,b) and Griffiths (1997). Such a lexical-conceptual approach to ontology is very useful, so long as it isn't privileged; it is one important frame among many possible frames. And, indeed, the section on taxonomies presents the most relevant piece of the local taxonomy. Nonetheless, chickens partially fall out of such taxonomies because they often seem more akin to artifacts than living kinds (in the stereotypic sense of these words). Moreover, the form classes and associative chains (or indexical "connotations") that words enter into, via grammatical and lexical constructions, are often far more interesting than their sense and reference per se. In the terms of George Herbert Mead (1934), the ontologies developed here are gestural as much as symbolic, embedded and embodied as much as enminded.

Complementing such lexical approaches to ontology is another great tradition—the Boasian emphasis on grammatical categories, and the kinds of conceptual structures and cultural commitments these reveal (Boas 1910/1989, 1911; Sapir 1927/1985; Whorf 1956; Silverstein 1976, 2006; Hanks 1991; Hill & Mannheim 1992; Lucy 1992; inter alia). Depending on where one draws the divide between grammar and lexicon, much of what is discussed in this article, and in allied works such as Kockelman (2007a, 2010), undertakes such a Q'eqchi'-specific grammatical ontology. However, while the grammatical categories that interested Boas (evidentials, status, tense, number, etc.) were relatively tacit, habitual, and obligatory, many of the categories discussed below, while tacit and obligatory, are relatively infrequent—evinced in grammatical and lexical constructions that are not present in every utterance, but only in particular moments of particular registers by particular kinds of speakers. Finally, in contrast to both lexical and grammatical approaches to ontology, many of the frames in this article turn on nonlinguistic

semiotic practices and semiological structures, and the objects (signs and interpretants) therein revealed.

A closely related approach to this article may be found in Kockelman (2006), which provides a semiotic ontology of the commodity, and the categories of political economy more generally. While that approach attempted to critique, incorporate, and extend the usual Marxist ontology (Postone 1993, inter alia), its categories were grounded in a general theory of semiosis rather than community-specific categories. In this article the semiotic machinery has been moved to the background, serving mainly as a methodology for analyzing Q'eqchi' categories. Moreover, while Marx focused on the commodity because it was, in some sense, the master object (or, rather, relational nexus) of capitalist societies, the chicken is a relatively marginal object—locally figured as female, nonindigenous, nonexotic, and so forth. Indeed, this marginality (as well as liminality and interstitiality) is part of what makes it so interesting (and challenging) to analyze. In this last regard, classic work on domestic animals by Leach (1964), Bulmer (1967), and Tambiah (1969) is relevant; and, in particular, Evans-Pritchard's (1940) notions of value, structural distance, intimacy, and relations between relations undergird this entire article.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LOAN WORDS AND LOAN BIRDS

In Q'eqchi', the word *kaxlan*, as a noun, refers to 'chickens.' In compound constructions (in which it functions like an adjective), it is used to refer to the newly introduced, nonindigenous analog of the object usually referred to by the noun. Thus, if *winq* refers to 'men,' *kaxlan winq* refers to 'Ladino men' (i.e. nonindigenous, or nonindigenous identifying, Guatemalan men). If *aatin* refers to 'language,' *kaxlan aatin* refers to the 'Spanish language.' If *motzo'* refers to 'worms,' *kaxlan motzo'* refers to 'noodles.' The objects denoted are typically nonmetallic objects: artifacts, species, professions, food, or ideas. Loosely speaking, the word *kaxlan* denotes poultry and connotes alterity.

The word *ch'iich'*, as a count noun, refers to 'machetes' and, as a mass noun, refers to 'metal.' In compound constructions with another noun, it refers to the newly introduced, nonindigenous analog of the object referred to by the other noun. Thus, if *so'sol* refers to 'vultures,' *so'sol ch'iich'* refers to 'airplanes.' If *ulul* refers to 'brains,' *ulul ch'iich'* refers to 'computers.' The objects typically referred to by such constructions are made of metal, or perceived as such.

Note then that *ch'iich'* 'machete' and *kaxlan* 'chicken' are in complementary distribution with respect to the newly introduced and nonindigenous objects denoted in such constructions. In this way, a three-fold ontology is introduced: Q'eqchi' things, and Spanish-introduced metallic and nonmetallic things. Note as well that, among the Q'eqchi', machetes are quintessentially male possessions, whereas chickens are quintessentially female possessions. And finally, note that

while machetes are used to kill chickens, chickens are not used to kill machetes. In this way, gender and hierarchy are metonymically built into the ontology.

Evidence suggests that the Nahuatl-speaking Aztecs, upon hearing that the Spaniard Conquistadors were from *Castilla*, assimilated the word to their language and heard "Castillan" (Lockhart 1992:276–78). Given that the Nahuatl locative suffix is *-(t)lan*, this would have made *Castil(li)* a noun referring to some notable feature about the place of origin of the Spaniards. As the Spaniards brought with them, and were in constant contiguity with, chickens, it is not surprising that early Nahuatl dictionaries have an entry *Caxtil*, which is said to denote 'chickens.' *Castilla(n)* seems to have meant for the ancient Nahuas, then, 'land of the chickens' (ibid.). To speculate on historical process, when the Spaniards subsequently invaded what is now Guatemala, their Nahuatl-speaking assistants may have brought this word with them and, with some phonological shifts, it became the Q'eqchi' word for 'chicken' and, as seen above, 'foreign.' Nonetheless, it should be emphasized that most villagers do not consider *kaxlan* a loan word. In this way, otherness comes cloaked in darkness.

That said, this construction may still be used to ridicule those foreign others. In particular, there is a nice slippage between *kaxlan aatin* 'the Spanish language' and *r-aatin kaxlan* 'the language of chickens' (lit. 'its-word chicken'). For example, several times during the course of my fieldwork, a young man, watching me watch his wife's chickens—and both of us in the midst of a cacophony of clucks—would say, *ab'i', li kaxlan aatin* 'listen, (they're speaking) Spanish.'

BIRDS AS EMBLEMS OF ERAS AND IDENTITIES

When the chicken (as the female member of the species Gallus Gallus) is contrasted with other birds—such as cocks, quetzals, and chicken hawks—it gets figured as not just female and foreign, but also worthless and weak, prosaic and prey. For example, as mentioned above, the chicken was brought to the New World by the Spanish colonizers 500 years ago, displacing the turkey as the preferred domestic bird in many parts of Mesoamerica. *Gallo*, the Spanish word for rooster, is also the name of the national beer of Guatemala. European immigrants, lured by the coffee-growing potential of the chilly, mountainous homeland of the Q'eqchi' Maya (itself located in the department of Alta Verapaz, Guatemala) began to arrive in the late 1800s, and soon had displaced many of the Q'eqchi' from their land and were using many of the Q'eqchi' for labor. *El Gallo* is the name of the originally German-owned department store (circa 1872) in Alta Verapaz's capital city Coban—the first place in Alta Verapaz where one could buy a wide array of constantly stocked European-made commodities. (Also, *el gallo* functions as a superlative in Guatemalan Spanish: for example, one can say "the cock of soaps," or "the best soap"—making all other brands of soap, as it were, mere hens.) Atop this department store, and higher than everything else but the cross of the local church, still

stands a metallic cock astride a weather vane and compass: not only an index of weather, but an emblem of dawn, a geocentric origo for national territory, a symbol of ladino-masculinity, in contiguity with the commodity, and a sign of history. So signs of time, space, history, identity, economy, gender, nationality—and even beer—all find their expression here.

Speaking of beer, the village of Chicacnab is located within half-a-day's journey from the city of Coban: first, one must ride in a bus for two hours; and then, one must hike up a trail for three hours. Because of its distance from roads, and its altitude (more than 2,000 meters), it is surrounded by one of the largest cloud forests in Guatemala (with an average rainfall between two and three meters per year), and has one of the highest densities of the resplendent quetzal, a rare and beautiful bird. As is well known, the tail features of the male quetzal are an iridescent green, and can be more that three times the length of its body. Such is their beauty, that they have been a sumptuary item, and at times currency, in Mesoamerica for thousands of years. Indeed, Guatemalan national currency is called the "quetzal," and elders in the village, when tipsy, will sometimes trace the dwindling of quetzals in the cloud forest that surrounds their homes to the devaluation of national currency. In this way, while the chicken can be figured as a foreign imposition, the quetzal often functions as a universal equivalent: the one commodity that can be used to measure the value of all other commodities.

As a side note, quetzal (from Nahuatl *quetzalli*) looks like it is a nominalization of the Nahuatl verb *quetza*, which means 'to erect.' And, indeed, the male quetzal tail features are long and stiff-backed. If one remembers that *quetzalcoatl*, the famous 'plumed serpent' of Aztec mythology, is composed of this same root, one is tempted to retranslate the entire construction as 'erect serpent,' or simply *tumescent penis*—a point we will return to.

So if the quetzal is a sign of national currency, and the cock is a sign of national masculinity, the two come together in the money that Q'eqchi' men spend on beer. Indeed, there are two vices in the village that various organizations explicitly thematized: drunkenness (*kalaak*) and excessive child-bearing (*kok'alib'k*). In particular, when speaking about dissolute Q'eqchi' men, those with "bad habits," one makes reference to alcohol—specifically *tzo' kaxlan*, the Q'eqchi' word for rooster, and the local codeword for beer (borrowing from the trademark *Gallo*). Indeed, a favorite way to trip up the anthropologist was to ask him, *ma nakaaket li tzo' kaxlan*, which means both 'Do you eat cocks?' and 'Do you drink beer?' (It might also mean 'Do you give head?', but I was too shy to pursue this.) In this way, the relationship between chickens and Guatemalan national culture permeates the village (and sometimes inebriates the villagers).

Furthermore, it should be noted that an eco-tourism project was sending backpackers into this village, using the existence of cloud forests and quetzal birds as a lure. However, one of the ironies of village life was that while eco-tourists would backpack in to see the quetzal, not only was the quetzal not particularly interesting in itself, but it was also rarely seen. In its stead, the average eco-tourist saw

hundreds of chickens, all of whom bore a particularly textured relation to the Q'eqchi' and, indeed, a particularly textured historical relationship to the eco-tourists themselves. In other words, the villagers would receive quetzals, qua scarce currency, for showing tourists their quetzals, qua rare birds; the trouble was that the Q'eqchi' had very few quetzals (in either sense), and so tourists only ever saw their chickens, which were in abundance. To quote Wallace Stevens: "O thin men of Haddam, why do you imagine golden birds? Do you not see how the blackbird walks around the feet of the women about you?"

In short, as the cock is a sign of 100 years of world-market domination (and God only knows how many years of world-male domination), as the chicken is a sign of 500 years of colonialism, and as the quetzal is a sign of 2,000 years of Mesoamerican elite life (not to mention twenty years of eco-tourism), so the chicken hawk—to get ahead of ourselves—is a sign of timeless nature: a bird of prey or raptor, symbolic not only of predatory precapitalism, but also of instinct laid bare.

TAXONOMIES AS DENOTATIONAL AND CONNOTATIONAL DOMAINS

Kaxlan, functioning as the Q'eqchi' word for chicken, is unmarked with respect to gender. Nonetheless, it primarily refers to female members of the species *Gallus gallus domesticus. Tzo' kaxlan* is used exclusively to refer to (adult) male members of this species. Chickens share such a gendered feature (unmarked female) and such a linguistic form (*tzo'*) with turkeys (*ak'ach*) and ducks (*patux*). For example, if *ak'ach* refers to 'turkeys,' *tzo' ak'ach* refers to 'tom turkeys.' In other words, domestic fowl all have the semantic status of unmarked female; and to mark the male animal, one requires the form *tzo'*. Note, then, this inversion of the typical gender hierarchy (e.g unmarked male, marked female); such an inversion is not just frequently found in particular nominal kinds (e.g. *widow*, *widower*), but also in the restricted domain of domestic animals for relatively obvious reasons.

Indeed, domestic fowl share such a gendered feature with pigs (*aaq*), cows (*wakax*), and dogs (*tz'i'*). However, the linguistic form used to mark male members of these latter species is not *tzo'*, but rather *k'ol*. For example, *k'ol wakax* refers to 'bulls,' *k'ol aaq* refers to 'boars,' and so on. All of these species (fowl and nonfowl) belong to the superordinate category of domestic animals, lexicalized in the folk taxon *ketomj*, which is a marginal member of the class of inalienable possessions (Kockelman 2007a), and which itself is related to the verb *ketom*, mentioned above, which means 'to eat (or drink).'

Xul, as a noun, refers to all animals, and might be best glossed as 'nondomestic animal.' Domestic animals (*ketomj*) are the most marked members of this category. Thus, when *xul* 'animal' is contrasted with *kristyan* 'human,' *ketomj* 'domestic animals' are included within *xul*. However, when *xul* is contrasted with *ketomj*, domestic animals are kept distinct from animals. In

formal genres, animals (*xul*) are linked—through parallelism—to forest and field, while domestic animals (*ketomj*) are linked to the homestead and hearth. Similarly, forest and field are typically associated with men (insofar as they are the locales of daily work); whereas the homestead and hearth are associated with women. In this way, domestic animals such as chickens are associated with women and home; whereas nondomestic animals are associated with men and fields (or forest).

Xul, as an adjective, may mean 'unbaptized,' when occurring with the noun *winq* 'man' (unmarked human male), and contrasting with the word for *kristyan*, meaning 'person' and, here, 'Christian.' *Xul* may also mean 'wild,' when contrasting with the adjective *tuulan* 'tame' (which can also refer to nondangerous but otherwise wild animals, such as deer.) And it may mean 'mischievous' or 'unruly' when occurring with the noun *al* 'child.' Insofar as *xul* contrasts with *ketomj* (as nouns), the members of the category denoted by *ketomj* are associated with the antonyms of the adjectives for which *xul* is used. In other words, in contrast to nondomestic animals, domestic animals such as chickens may be associated with the ideas of baptism, tameness, and obedience.

Besides *xul* there is another construction used to refer to 'wildmen' or the 'unbaptized': *choolwinq*. This construction seems to refer to speakers of the Mayan language Chool, who had some geographic overlap with the Q'eqchi'. When the Franciscan friars, themselves headed by Las Casas, first tried to conquer the area, the Chool were the ones who allegedly could not be enclosed in the "reductions" (a kind of spatial, religious, and linguistic concentration of previously dispersed peoples). And so this linkage of animality, heathenness, and disobedience probably has a long history. In some sense, then, to be wild is to resist enclosure. And chickens with their coops, just like cows with their corrals, are as unwild as can be. In this sense, chickens, in contrast to chicken hawks, and the Q'eqchi', in contrast to the Chool, are "reductions" of their former selves.

As mentioned, *xul*, as a noun, refers to all animals, including birds. To speak about birds directly, there is no simple word, but rather an adjectival modification of *xul*, constructed with the diminutive-plural marker *kok'*. Thus, *kok' xul*, which literally means 'small, numerous animals,' refers to birds (and also to prototypically flying insects). There was a superordinate category of bird, marked by the word *tz'ik*, but it is now almost exclusively used to refer to the penis. It can no longer be said without making children giggle and adults look uncomfortable. Indeed, the derived verb *tz'ikib'k* 'to be birding,' refers to the activity of having sex. (The other key euphemism for having sex is *aatinak* 'to speak to' or 'to have a conversation with.') The nonmetaphorical (and nonvulgar) word for penis, *kun*, is exclusively used to refer to the penis. Birds, then (but probably not chickens, as we see below), are associated with the penis, and sex more generally.

Indeed, while this section has treated the set of taxa surrounding chickens, later sections show that chickens are more like artifacts than living kinds. That is, the chicken's inherent relation to other animals is determined more by the instrumental

functions it serves, the associative semantic chains it is entangled with, and the ritual meanings it expresses, than by any inherent biological qualities it may possess. As such, if one knows some fact about a chicken (for example, that it succumbs to a particular kind of illness, or that it has a certain type of mating procedure), one can generalize this quality more easily to other domestic animals, or even to children and women, than one can to other birds. Thus, the types of inductions chickens allow for are conditioned by their pragmatic function and ritual meaning rather than their taxonomic placement. In some strange way, then, the chicken has been removed from its life-form (qua biological class: *aves*) by its positioning in a particular form-of-life.

CHICKENS AS ADDRESSEES AND AFFINES

Of all animals, only dogs and cats are typically named and given status designators. Dogs, for example, are given the nonelder status designator *aj* or *ix* (regardless of their age), depending on whether they are male or female, respectively. For a name, nonproper nouns from Spanish are typically chosen: *Conejo* 'rabbit,' *Chapín* 'Guatemalan,' *Camarún* 'Camaroon,' and so on. Cats are often given proper nouns from Spanish and, if they are old enough (and surly or aloof enough), an elder status designator *qawa'* 'don' or *qana'* 'doña': *Carlota*, *José*, and the like. In contrast, chickens are usually identified using the direct article *li* and a size-color-pattern predication. (Since there is typically only one rooster, specifying sex is not helpful.) For example, *li ch'ina-q'eq* refers to 'the little black one.' It should be said that such a definite descriptor does not hold in 'any world' (as a proper rigid designator should) but only until growth, death, or sale of a chicken occurs. Thus, unlike proper names, such descriptions uniquely identify their referent for at most a few months. Indeed, small chickens are not often differentiated. Rather, they are referred to using deictics when the speaker and addressee share a common phenomenal field: *li ch'ina kaxlan a'an* 'that little chicken.' (Nonetheless, women are quick to point out that they 'are familiar with'—*na'ok u*, qua German *kennen*, or Spanish *conocer*—or can uniquely identify, each of their chickens.) Wild animals are never named. Rather they are referred to by their folk-taxon and the definite article *li*. Of all animals, only dogs are usually addressed. When asked why chickens are not named, women usually answer that it is because *li kaxlan moko te'xtaw ta li ru* 'they wouldn't understand them.' In this way, understanding—the recognition of oneself as the referent of a word—is a prerequisite for interpellation. Chicken, then, unlike dogs, won't answer if called.

The fact that chickens are not named did not mean that they can not be hailed by other means. In particular, to call chickens to come and eat, one says *a chik chik chik chiiik*. For example, a woman might grind corn for the chickens up to three times a day (in the midst of grinding corn for her family). She may take out a small basket of corn (for the mature chickens) or a handful of ground corn (*b'uch*) for the chicks,

walking around the house, peering into the underbrush and behind stumps, saying this call half-a-dozen times. After the chickens have gathered in front of her house, she may then scatter the feed. To call chickens back to the house for safety and counting after a predatory engagement, or into the chicken coop at dusk, one may say *a wú chu chu chu chuuu*. To get chickens out of the house, one can give the command *ayu* 'to go' in the same syllabic-stress-length pattern as other chicken calls: *a yú yu yu yu yuuu*. Alternatively, one can use the noun for 'fear' (*xiw*) as a command to flee: *a xíw xiw xiw xiw xiiiw*. In short, there is a form class (determined by a syllabic structure and prosodic envelope, as much as deictic centering and directionality) that has four members: come and get it, come home to roost, go, and get out (or 'shoo'). Such animal calls are a subset of interjections (Kockelman 2003, 2010), themselves a kind of sign that is often understood by linguists and lay folk alike to be at the margins of language, a kind of locale where human voice is still mythologically entangled with animal sounds because of its alleged iconic transparency and indexical immediacy.

For example, if the chickens have not yet been fed, then, while a woman cooks, they may slowly encroach into the space of the hearth. An immature one might even singe its feathers on the fire, or burn its feet on the frying pan. A woman can therefore shoo them out herself, or enlist her children to clap their hands, shoo, and chase. Thus, although semiotic beasts in this way, actual fright (the waving of hands and the chasing by children) is often required to induce chickens to leave the house; and, similarly, food, predators, or rain is required to make them return. Deception also works. For example, I saw women stop their *xiw*ing and hand-waving (from behind the chickens), and instead move in front of the chickens giving the command to come to eat, *a chík chik chik chik chiiik*, even though they had nothing edible to offer. In this way, women can lie to their chickens—at least via gestural feigning, if not symbolic deceit.

Although all domestic animals can have their offspring referred to using the kinship term *r-al* 'son-of-mother,' only chickens can be referred to using other kinship terms (themselves also members of the class of inalienable possessions). In particular, a rooster-owning woman can speak of a 'daughter-in-law chicken' (*alib' kaxlan*), in cases where a roosterless neighbor lends the 'mother-in-law' in question a chicken to breed with her 'son' (the studded rooster). In other words, in cases where a woman's rooster is being used to service a roosterless woman's hens, the latter can refer to the to-be-serviced hens she is lent as 'daughters-in-law.' Although breeding is done where the rooster's owner lives, brooding is done in the home of the owner of the hen. And the offspring of such a match can be divided evenly between the women. It should be emphasized that only the term for 'daughter-in-law' was used. I never heard the woman with the rooster refer to it as her 'son,' and the offspring of the mating were never referred to as their 'grandchildren.' Also note that, in contrast to the use of *r-al* to mark kinship relations between animals, *alib' kaxlan* is used to mark kinship relations—although affinal, to be sure—between humans and chickens. In this way, such chickens are

explicitly treated as first-order-descending female affines; and, implicitly, cocks are treated as first-order-descending male consanguines.

ONTOLOGIES DISCLOSED IN THE MIDST OF DISCURSIVE DISRUPTIONS

A young boy once threw a fit. His mother, unexpectedly called to help a friend cook, had just pulled her nipple from his mouth, placed him on the ground, and dashed off. Chagrined, he jumped up and down screaming. All the older children sitting around the hearth imitated him, raising their arms over their heads and pretending to yell. The boy's elder brother, seven years old, said, *ma a'an xtu' tz'i' la?* 'Is that a dog's tit, you?' The other family members laughed. This boy's cousin, just turned five himself, then said, *ma a'an xtu' mis la?* 'Is that a cat's tit, you?' The family members laughed again. And finally, the younger brother of this last boy, himself the most recently weaned, mimicked the words while jumbling the sense, saying: *ma a'an xtu' kaxlan la'?* 'Is that a chicken's tit, you?' He himself then laughed, thereby conflating both the joke and the audience's response, or his own participant role and theirs. And then the real fun began: this last child's own mother repeated not only what her son said but also his misplaced laughter, while the rest of us continued laughing—both for a child having mistaken a chicken for a mammal, and a speaker for an addressee.

Note, then, that the real laughter of the older participants didn't begin until after the boy attempted to laugh for them. And then their laughter was much more vigorous, for it was not just another animal's tit, and it was not just an animal that didn't have a tit (though clearly this was funny in itself), but it was the confusion about how to be funny that was so funny. Here, then, was a beautiful instance of the implicit disclosure of a local ontology (what kinds of things there are in the world) and ontogeny (what kinds of developmental processes do such things go through). Whereas nobody would explicitly thematize this quality of a chicken (nonmammal or "breastless"), or this quality of a child (nonself or "reflectivityless"), both were therein revealed.

SELFHOOD

Not only do ontologies disclose people's commitments regarding what kinds of things are in the world, they also disclose people's commitments regarding what kinds of people there are in the world—as well as what constitutes a person, or "self," in the first place. In this regard, four general claims are at stake in this article. First, selfhood is constituted by a kind of ontological reflexivity: there exists an ensemble of entities (people, things, events, processes, relations, qualities, etc.) that is ontologically recognized in the semiotic practices and semiological structures of some community, however tacitly or elliptically, as reflexively relating to itself. The task, then, is to delimit both the ensemble of entities and the range of

reflexive relations. Second, such reflexive relations are distinct from, and yet a condition for, more stereotypic modes of self-reflectivity (turning on mirrors, symbols, techniques of and narratives about the self, and so forth). The rest of this section will develop these points in detail. Third, the very processes that signify, and thereby disclose, such ontologically reflexive ensembles tend to simultaneously enclose them—framing them as relatively bounded and coherent wholes (Kockelman 2007b). In some sense, this entire article is complicit in such modes of enclosure, not withstanding its own use of disparate and shifting frames as a partial solution. And finally, as we will see in the last part of this essay, just as selfhood cannot be understood without reference to ontology, affect cannot be understood without reference to selfhood.

So what belongs in the self-as-ensemble? For William James, it included one's body and mind, one's clothes and house, one's spouse and children, one's ancestors and friends, one's property and bank account (1892/1985:44). For Thorstein Veblen (1898/1998), it included one's shadow, reflection, name, tattoo, totem, footprint, nail clippings, hair cuttings, exhalations, excretions, clothing, and weapons (or what he called the "quasi-personal fringe"). And for Michel Foucault (1997:225), it included one's body, soul, thoughts, conduct, and ways of being in the world. Crucially, the interesting question is not so much what belongs in the ensemble per se, but rather what criteria or evidence one uses to determine what constitutes a part of such a whole, or a relatum in such a relation, in the first place. Extending James' ideas, there are three key criteria for delimiting the ensemble he described: (i) one's actions are oriented towards the care of such constituents (one acts both for them and with them, such that one's actions are both autotelic and autotechnic); (ii) one's moods are reflective of the status of such constituents (their flourishing or foundering registers on one as positive and negative affective unfoldings); and (iii) one's person is accountable for the effects of such constituents (they belong to one in ways that may be both normatively and causally regimented). In short, the key signs of selfhood are relatively reflexive desire, affect, and accountability.

It should be emphasized that this ensemble is thereby defined in terms of three relatively distinct modes of reflexivity, and that, with certain caveats, such reflexive relations probably hold for nonhuman animals as well. Crucially, the relative coherence, continuity, or boundedness of the self turns simply on the relative coherence, continuity, and boundedness of such an ensemble. While key characters in the history of literature, key identities in the ethnographic record, and key moments in the life course of any individual may diverge from one or more of these dimensions; while the actual contents of the ensemble may be community-specific; and while the individual in question may be a corporate (and, indeed, incorporeal) entity, the dimensions per se seem relatively robust.

Such relatively pan-species and prereflective modes of reflexivity should be compared with what are (allegedly) more human-specific modes of self-reflection: knowing oneself, representing oneself, performing oneself, and acting on oneself (for the sake of oneself). In particular, each of these has a great tradition behind

it in the philosophical, psychological, linguistic, and anthropological literature. Crucially, these more canonical and well-mined modes of self-reflectivity presuppose the first kind: for all of the things a knower could know (a signer could signify, a performer could perform, or an actor could effect), only some belong to the ensemble that constitutes the knower (signer, performer, or actor). And, aside from the various modes of reflectivity per se (and their criterial significance for the constitution of human-specific modes of selfhood), it is really the fact that such things belong to the reflexive ensemble that gives them their importance in the first place (such that reflecting on them, or failing to reflect on them, is so fraught). Nonetheless, most analyses of various forms of reflectivity presume, or elide altogether, modes of reflexivity—and thereby fail to account for the ensemble's local contours, conditions of possibility, or consequences.

To return to speakers of Q'eqchi', the self-qua-ensemble includes at its prototypic core many body parts (including the heart, the center of emotion and motivation), most kinship relations, one's name, home and field, one's clothing and community, and—more peripherally—one's domestic animals (*ketomj*), and one's shadow and breath (Kockelman 2007a, 2010). This ensemble is evinced in a range of grammatical categories, discourse patterns, ritual practices, and quotidian activities. And these categories, patterns, practices, and activities are themselves closely aligned with James's three dimensions of reflexivity (motivation, affect, accountability), as well as at the center of the four kinds of reflectivity (knowledge, power, performance, and signification). In some sense, such entities may be understood as relatively inalienable parts of relatively personal wholes, such that whenever one relates to such things, one relates to oneself at one degree of remove.

As should now be clear, this article is precisely a detailed look at the relatively reflexive relations between certain kinds of "selves" (Q'eqchi'-speaking women in a particular village) and certain kinds of "things" (chickens, and domestic animals more generally). Crucially, chickens do not just constituent part of a women's reflexive and reflective self (even if at the periphery), they are also relatively reflexive selves in their own right (even if only marginally—at least in my own, and the Q'eqchi's, ontology). In the next section, we will ground affective unfoldings—in particular, fear and desire—in terms of both this reflexive ensemble and this ambivalent ontology.

BROODING HENS, TABOOED ACTS, CORPORATE UNITS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Women's actions affect the health of their chickens. In particular, there is a relationship of contiguity and similarity between a woman's just-hatched chicks and her own actions during the three weeks in which it takes her hens to brood. For example, after a woman has placed a basket over her brooding hen (for peace and quiet as much as protection), if she were to go out on a long walk, the chicks, when born, would tend to wander far distances from the house, thereby

making themselves easy prey for predators—in particular, the chicken hawk. If she or, as is more likely, her children go out to play soccer, her chicks will suffer a disease known as *mosq'ok*, in which their skin will swell, becoming bumpy (*sipook lix tz'uumal*), and causing them to die. In this case, the soccer ball, with its inflation and bumps, is similar to what happens to the skin of the chickens. If she is out looking for firewood and collects the *q'otq'ob'il che'*, or any other branches that are twisted (*naq'otoxin*), then the legs of her chicks will be twisted as well. Because of this infirmity, they will be unable to walk or forage for themselves, and thus they will die. If she lets her griddle (*k'il*) heat up on the fire without maize-dough (*q'em*) on it, her chicks will not even hatch. If she goes out to do the wash after she has basketed her brooding chicken, the eggs will have only water, and no little chick (*xul*) will have formed. And if she sleeps in a fetal position, with her arms curled around her head, the wings of her chicks will be twisted. In this way, her chicks will not be able to get themselves out of their eggs, and they will die. In sum, at certain times a woman's personal boundaries, both her actions and experiences, overlap with those of her brooding chickens—and thereby have consequences for the health of her newly hatched chicks.

These kinds of sympathetic, or "iconic-indexical" relations are, to be sure, the low-hanging fruit of anthropology: they are quickly elicited, ubiquitous in their spread, and far too easy to make too much of. With this caveat in mind, it should nonetheless be emphasized that no other animal, domestic or wild, has such relations to women. And the only other humans that are involved in similar relations with women are their own children. Moreover, their real importance lies in the fact that various activities of women can be inferred from the health of their chickens: newborn chicks act as mirrors, reflecting the actions of their owners when their mothers (i.e. the hens) are brooding. Moreover, it lends itself to a form of self-consciousness, qua reflectivity: the constant attention to one's own behavior in order to understand its consequences for another's health. And as for reflexivity, when chickens were brooding (just as when women were pregnant) they and their owners (just as children and their mothers) constitute a single unit of accountability, if not a single corporate body. In short, just as chickens can be representative of women (qua symbols), women can be representatives for their chickens (qua spokesperson).

MATERIAL CULTURE AND POLITICAL ECONOMY OF POULTRY HUSBANDRY

For reasons of space and genre, the material culture and political economy of poultry husbandry is not treated here (see Kockelman 2002 for a detailed analysis). For the sake of subsequent arguments, however, a few key points should be summarized. First, there are issues related to space, time, and social relations: what kinds of animals are allowed where and when in relation to the coop, the house, and the housing site (as a function of sex, age, stage of growth, predation events,

mood of owner, and so forth). Such positioning in time and space also projects and reflects an ontological placement qua structural distance: for example, with respect to women, brooding hens and chicks are treated as relatively similar and intimate.

Second, apropos of the last section, there is the relation between chickens and other kinds of domestic animals (in relation to men and women), and the relation between men and corn in relation to the relation between women and chickens (and children). For example, men's relation to corn (especially during planting) resonates with women's relation to chickens (when brooding or pregnant), when seen through the lens of prohibited activities and possible repercussions (see also M. Wilson 1972; Wilk 1991; R. Wilson 1995).

And finally, there is the range of social relations mediated through the production, exchange, and consumption of chickens. In particular, while often originating in the domain of status (as something inherited through relatively immediate familiars), chickens are often terminated in the domains of contract (as something sold to strangers), commensality (as something eaten with relatively distal familiars), and sacrifice (as something given to the gods). For example, chickens provide a key means for women to turn their labor into cash, or their chickens into quetzals, which can then circulate on far wider circuits.[1]Chicken meat is the culinary emblem that something special is happening, qua ritual meal. And chickens are the only object that can simultaneously play the role of ceremonial means and ends: that which is sacrificed while one prays for precisely the current health or future accrual of that which will be sacrificed while one prays. All of this is not to say that chickens are the universal equivalent (the one commodity that is used to measure the value of all other commodities), but, with corn, they are universal mediators (the one good that can be used to evince or extend any social relation).

Finally, while chickens are the possessions of women, their circulation is directly tied to men. Indeed, more generally, it is probably best to think of them as the possessions of a single social person (the household) in regards to use rights and exchange rights, and as the key possession of the wife in regards to care responsibilities. Women's anxiety regarding chickens is clarified in the light of this double-edged deontic modality: they are solely responsible for the effort, whereas their immediate family has collective rights to their achievement. Relatedly, given the difficulties of raising chickens, any chicken owner watches quite a lot of what is born under her care—and for whose life she is held accountable—die to agencies other than her own. (Indeed, there is a whole genre of narrating the various misfortunes and untimely deaths that befall chickens, and who is at fault.) A central preoccupation of women, then, is indeed care—but not so much as the fostering of life, as the preventing of death.

REASON, DESIRE, AND DOMESTIC ANIMALS

If one examines the types of mental faculties, or semiosocial facilities, attributed to chickens, one finds that they are relatively unique among animals. Let me discuss

'reason' (*na'leb'*) and a form of desire known as *ataw*. *Na'leb'* is the instrumental nominalization of the verb *na'ok*, which means 'knowing that,' 'knowing how,' and 'knowing someone' (depending on the form of its complement). As a noun, it may be given the basic gloss of 'instrument for knowing (how).' In such a capacity, it is a count noun, and may be pluralized, spoken of in the singular, and possessed. Depending on context, it may be translated as 'habit,' 'custom,' 'idea,' 'example,' 'advice,' 'sense,' or 'reason.'

For example, to say that someone has a *na'leb*' (*wan lix na'leb'*), is to say that that person is 'wise' or 'experienced.' To say that someone does not have a *na'leb'* (*maak'a' lix na'leb'*), is to say that they are 'ignorant,' 'naïve,' or 'callow.' To describe someone's *na'leb'* as *tz'i'ej* 'doggish' is to imply that they practice immoral or disgusting acts. This use of dogs as a predicate is meant to be exemplary: dogs are said (and often seen) to mount their own sisters, sniff each others' butts, lick their own genitalia, and gobble wormy feces. At age three, a child can be said to have a *na'leb'* insofar as it can play imitative games with its parents. For example, while digging post holes for his new house, a man noticed that his three-year-old son was patting dirt around the post holes just as he himself had tamped in dirt with a pole. He said to his assistant, *wan xna'leb'* 'he has sense' or perhaps 'he has a trick or habit.' The friend grinned, and they continued working. Besides such metaphorical or humorous extensions of children having a *na'leb'*, they are usually said to have only one up until the age of twelve: they can play.

Nonhuman animals may also possess a *na'leb*', but usually only in the sense of a typical action they engage in, itself caught up in human concerns. For example, a dog is said to have a *na'leb'*, in that it will greet its owners when they return home, and bark when an intruder nears the house. Thus, a dog's *na'leb'* allows it to distinguish between its owners (and their familiars) and strangers, evincing this distinction by the response it gives. The quetzal is said to have a *na'leb'*, in that it will only show itself when the tourists who come to see it have gone home. And chickens have a *na'leb'*, in that when you scare them, they are frightened and will run away, and in that when they get hungry, or are called, they will come to eat—note the relation to animal interjections described in the section on chickens as addressees. (Turkeys are said to have such an insignificant *na'leb'* that they won't even come to the house in the evenings for food or protection—whereas even newborn chicks will do that.) Such domestic animals, then, have *na'leb'*s that depend on the actions of their owners: certain types of stimulus-response pairs (or sign-interpretant relations, and perception-intention chains, depending on how much semiosis and intentionality you want to ascribe them) that owners can expect, and which turn on the timing and location of certain human practices. Note, then, how the authochthonous domestic bird is said to be far more stupid than the nonautochthonous domestic bird. And note how the wild bird has a trick that frustrates, rather than facilitates, human involvement; and that its actions are oriented towards eco-tourists, qua outsiders, rather than Q'eqchi'-speakers themselves—though such a *na'leb*' has repercussions for

villagers, in that tourists who don't see a quetzal go home unhappy (and the tourism economy suffers as a result).

Chickens also have such frustrative *na'leb'*s. For example, a woman spent one morning watching her chicken rooting about in the underbrush, thinking that it had left a number of eggs there. She told me that it had a *na'leb'*, in that it didn't want her to find its eggs. Similarly, when a chicken flew through a window into a home, the owner joked that it had a *na'leb'*. When I asked why, the owner said, *molb'ek traj* 'it wants to lay eggs.' In this way, although slightly humorously, chickens have other *na'leb'*s, which turn on the shenanigans they engage in while trying to lay eggs: protecting them from humans, finding nests, and so forth. In this way, chickens have *na'leb*'s that mediate between, if not help constitute, their own instincts and human institutions.

In this last example, the *na'leb*' of a chicken was described in terms of a desire (to lay eggs). However, if asked directly what the desires (*ajom*) of chickens were, I usually heard that chickens (and other domestic animals, such as turkeys) did not have desires, although wild animals did. Instead, it was emphasized that owners had desires over their chickens—which I understood to mean that owners were in control of the ends to which their chickens were put, because the chickens were their possessions, and thus could be disposed of how they (i.e. the owners) wished. The desire of animals, in this most general way, requires a kind of freedom from possession that only wild animals can be said to have. In other words, domestication, as the enclosure of animal instincts in human institutions, has the effect of killing desire.

However, chickens are said to have one type of desire known as *ataw*, which itself is usually predicated of women. In particular, a person is said to have such a desire if he or she really wants something (such as a house or clothing) but cannot buy it (usually for lack of money). While this is a wide gloss, it conveys the sense of wishfulness: desiring something that cannot be obtained. More frequently, women experience *ataw* when they are pregnant, as evinced in their marked hunger for certain kinds of foods (often meats, like chicken, as well as sweetbreads, and so forth). In particular, if one does not offer such foods to them (say, while they are visiting), their children can be born with certain defects—akin to the ones that chicks were subject to. Thus, one is often under a loose compulsion to give a pregnant woman whatever she asks for. In this way, pregnancy (like brooding, in the case of hens) allows a woman to expand the scope of her desire, and more easily secure the objects it is directed at. In this way, such taboos can expand a woman's agency as much as limit it.

Various kinds of *ataw* are also ascribed to domestic animals. For example, older chickens are said to have *ataw* insofar as they want the cooked corn (*b'uch*) that is scattered out to the young chicks. In this way, they have a kind of desire that is thwarted by humans—who have to tie them up or keep shooing them away. Similarly, dogs are said to experience *ataw* insofar as they want to eat the eggs of chickens, but are prevented from doing so by their owners. (Dogs can often be trained to

not eat eggs, but most will still do it when not watched, and, for this reason, egg-laying chickens are kept inside the house.) And cows are said to have *ataw* insofar as they want to eat corn in the fields, but are prevented from doing so by being tied up or fenced in. In this way, while the frustrated desires of domestic animals are cross-species, that which does the frustrating (money, training, fences, and so forth) is species-distinct, and yet always human-related. In each case, then, the metaphor is one of the corral: a quasi-instinctual desire is thwarted by a human-specific instrument or enclosure—fences, twine, or obedience training. And desire itself is constituted as a back formation: that which is evinced in its frustration or thwarting.

CHICKENS AND CHILDREN

There are many more stories to tell regarding chickens and children. For example, a boy, grabassing with his cousin by the hearth, stepped on a chick. Several hours later, half-dead, it was discovered by the boy's mother when she returned from the market. When asked if they knew what happened to it, the boys said no. Indeed, the one who stepped on it said to her, rhetorically, *k'a tawi' ru ninnaw k'aru xk'ul* 'how would I know what it received!?' His eyes flicked up to mine, knowing I knew. Satisfied with the answer, the woman crushed the remaining life from the chick beneath the naked heel of her foot. (Imagine God doing this to Abel if Cain had only maimed him.) I helped her bury it behind the house, in the marshy soil, near an old stump.

On another occasion, a two-year-old boy, Munter, advanced upon a chicken, saying *kaxlan, kaxlan* 'chicken, chicken,' one hand raised above his head in a fist (as when he would threaten his older brother), and the other gripping a stick. He called out to a big chicken *laa'at* 'you,' took an unsteady step toward it, and sent it running away. (Note, then, that children could address chickens—indicating their relative proximity in terms of structural distance.) He then scooped up one of its chicks, gripping it tightly. It did not peep; it could not breathe. The big chicken—its mother—returned. Munter set down the chick. It was dazed and unsteady, giving him just enough time to whack it on the back with his stick. Ingressively peeping for lack of air, it ran away. The boy's mother, watching me watching him, called his name. Wide-eyed, perhaps ashamed, he looked back to her and said *xiwak* 'it got scared.'

One could now perhaps embark upon a lengthy discussion of the psyche of Q'eqchi' children, insofar as they are so often equated with, and jealous of, their mothers' chickens. One could note that one of the first emotion terms children learn, and perhaps the first emotion they learn to intentionally induce in others (in particular, chickens), is *xiw* 'fear.' One might also recall that this word for fear is also the command given to chickens to shoo—thereby being a sign that simultaneously denotes and induces an emotion, functionally akin to John Austin's description of primary performative utterances. One might even interpret the beating

of chickens by small children as their attempt to recoup the prominence won over by chickens—reestablishing, as it were, the village-wide and inter-species pecking order. And one may recall all the ways in which a woman's chickens are treated in ways that are similar to her children: from the care spent on their upbringing, through the birth-defect pathologies they are caught up in, to the responsibilities they have for them. But let me leave such developmental stories aside and, in their stead, segue to fear.

SIGNS OF FEAR, COWARDICE, AND ANXIETY

As detailed in Kockelman (2010), *xiwak* 'to become scared' belongs to a form class that includes *titz'k* 'to become exasperated, or fed up,' *lub'k/tawaak* 'to tire,' *raho'k* 'to get hurt,' *yib'o'k* 'to get disgusted,' *jiq'e'k* 'to get choked up,' *q'ixno'k/tiqwo'k* 'to get angry/hot,' *josq'o'k* 'to get angry,' and *xutaanak* 'to become ashamed.' In particular, all of these verbs are intransitive state-changes (where the subject undergoing the state-change is accorded relatively little agency); all have nominal counterparts that they are derived from (e.g. fear, anger, pain, disgust, etc.); and all may take nonfinite complements (which indicate the event or experience causing the change in state). Most of these words can be predicated of animals, as well as people. And in many ethnopsychologies, including our own, most of the predicates within this form class would be understood as referring to "feelings" (or even "emotion").

Xiwak may be further derived into the participle *xiwajenaq* 'scared' or 'frightened' (also referred to as *seb'esinb'il*, the participle form of the verb 'to scare (someone)'). In this form, it is often used to refer to the local elaboration of *susto* (or 'magical fright,' as it is often called in the ethnographic literature on Mesoamerica). As detailed in Kockelman (2007a), this illness is usually caused by moral transgressions, and is intimately linked to relatively inalienable possessions (qua reflexive-self) in its origins, symptoms, and cure. Like desire, fear constitutes a highly elaborated lexical domain; and is thus what Levy (1973) would call a "hypercognized" emotion. While all of these connections are relevant, they have been treated elsewhere at length. In what follows, we will move from such relatively lexical signs of feeling, and such relatively medicalized and well-studied forms of emotion, to more elliptical, covert, embodied, and quotidian modes of affect as they mediate the relation between women and chickens.

There were two ways to refer to 'cowardice' among speakers of Q'eqchi'. *Kapun* is an adjective meaning 'cowardly.' It may be thought of as a trait, that is, an adjective predicable of a person as part of their underlying personality, in the sense that it is relatively predictable or stable. In this regard, it was in a class of words with 'sensitive' (*ch'impo'*), 'abusive' (*eet*), 'stubborn' (*jip*), 'angry' (*josq'*), 'dumb' (*mem*), 'smart' (*seeb', q'es ru*), 'humble' (*q'un*), 'tame' (*tuulan*), 'jealous' (*sowen*), 'crazy' (*kaan, look*), 'arrogant' (*b'ach'b'ach'*), 'rude' (*q'etq'et*), and 'nice' (*b'it'b'it'*). It is also one of the great unsung loan words of Q'eqchi', coming from the Spanish word

capón, meaning either 'castrated' (as an adjective), or 'castrated cock' (as a noun). In English, for example, we have *capon*, a rooster castrated to improve the taste of its flesh. Another way to say coward is the compound form *ixqiwinq*, consisting of three morphemes: *ixq*, the noun for 'woman'; *i*, an adjective-deriving infix that is attached to some nouns, giving 'womanish'; and *winq*, the word for 'man.' Thus, a coward is a 'woman-ish-man.' Note that in the case of *kapun*, the underlying trope is diminished masculinity, whereas in the case of *ixqiwinq*, the underlying trope is heightened femininity. In this way, to attribute either of these traits to women is relatively nonsensical. In short, cowardice—a type of personality that all too easily gives in to fear—is lexicalized in Q'eqchi' using words originating in the domains of chickens and women, and yet cannot be predicated of chickens or women.

Many families, especially those living on high and exposed hills, set up long poles with brightly colored plastic bags attached to them. These are said to scare off chicken hawks, who nonetheless make enough visits to make the ethnographer wonder if they are at all worthwhile. Indeed, their main purpose seems to be indexing the owner's fear of chicken hawks. In this way, they are like flags announcing the shared anxieties of an otherwise anonymous community in regard to an event that may best be described as a REPLICATED SINGULARITY.

RIDE OF THE CHICKEN HAWKS; EFFERVESCENCE OF A COMMUNITY

Compulsively looking out windows, sending children outside to scan the sky, growing more restless as the afternoon wears on, staking hens to posts near the house to keep their chicks at bay… Sometimes it seemed that women would not only not count their chickens before they hatched, they would not count them until they had grown too large to be snatched away.

These constant, low-level indices of anxiety aside, no one would see the chicken hawk (*k'uch*) descend when it finally did. A woman would be grinding corn for dinner; her children might be fussing by the fire; the men would still be out clearing their milpa for planting. Perhaps only the chickens suspected, for they were silent. The kind of silence that is retroactively inferred after the chicken hawk's dive punctuates it—inferred by the hens cackling, the dogs barking, and the children screaming. In just this order. And then she would drop her work to come running out, door banging, feet thumping, and newly wielded machete whishing.

On the ground, children from each of the houses circling the valley would be at the edges of their housing sites screaming a high-pitched *iiiiiiiii*. Punctuating this would be the low voices of women urging on their dogs to keep after the hawk, saying *hach' hach' hach' hach' hach'* or 'bite it, bite it, bite it, bite it.' They would try to make sure it could not land lest they lose sight of it and be attacked again.

A young woman, her mother-in-law, her sister-in-laws, her older sister, and most of their daughters would follow the dogs after the chicken hawk. They would race down the individual trails linking their houses, alternately slipping in the mud, or their heelless sandals slapping on dirt and stones. Their paths reliquescing in this way, not only was chaos constituted by the chicken hawk, but community.

Women at no other times, and certainly not on a weekly basis, would move that fast. Indeed, the only other activity undertaken at such a frenetic pace was soccer playing by men on Sundays. And even that was lugubrious by comparison. This was hot sweat and strewn hair.

And one almost never saw a direct hit. It was always too quick. Too quiet. Indeed, I usually only figured out what had happened when I saw the slow, heavy flaps of the hawk, post-kill, as it moved toward the thermal at the edge of the valley, wherein it would slowly circle with its putative load, rising in the heated air out of the valley until it was no longer in sight.

Such an event could happen once a week within the same family compound. And the afternoon would then be spent combing the underbrush for remains—or even the chick, for perhaps the hawk had dropped it; perhaps it had never gotten it, but had only scared it outside of the borders of the housing site and into the underbrush. Chickens, and especially chicks, were difficult to account for—and so just as anxiety would precede an attack (as to whether it would happen), uncertainty would follow an attack (as to what had just happened).

Mare wan sa' pim xb'aan xiw 'Perhaps it is off in the bushes because of its fear,' said a little girl about the chick her mother couldn't find. And several days after the attack, when I asked her mother whether the chicken hawk actually got the chick (whose body was never found), she said, *hehe', xchap li ch'inakaxlan, kikam* 'Yes, it grabbed the little chicken; it MUST have died.' Just as the girl used the modal adverb *mare* 'perhaps' to say that she wasn't sure where the chick was, her mother used the unexperienced evidential verbal inflection *ki-*, indicating that the event of death was not actually experienced, but only inferred. She never knew for sure whether the chicken hawk killed the little chicken.

AFFECT

Scholars trained in a semiotic tradition often speak of the "grounds" of signs, usually understood as the relation between a sign and its object. In particular, relatively iconic signs share qualities with their objects, relatively indexical signs are causally contiguous with their objects, and relatively symbolic signs are related to their objects by convention—itself typically couched in terms of a mediating idea, or concept, that is intersubjectively shared within a community (Peirce 1955a). In this article, we have been focused not so much on "signs of the self" (be they icons, indices, or symbols; be they evinced in performance or described by narrative; etc.), but on SELFHOOD AS THE GROUND OF SEMIOSIS. In particular, one way to understand the reflexive self is as a kind of META-GROUND. Crucially, such

a ground does not mediate the relation between sign and object, but rather the relation between an interpretant and this sign-object relation. In particular, what is at stake in such interpretants is not "what is the object of this sign," but rather what is an appropriate and effective interpretant of this sign-object relation given the selfhood of the interpreter, with its distinctly reflexive modes of desire, affect, and accountability. To conclude this article, we draw out the repercussions of such meta-grounds as they play out in the attack of a chicken hawk.

While the self is at stake in any semiotic process, its fundamental relation to interpretation is perhaps most transparent in the context of emotion (and affect more generally). To make this claim as clear as possible, it is worth discussing such putatively psychological processes at length. Many serious scholars of emotions (cf. Averill 1985; Frank 1988; Ekman & Davidson 1994; Griffiths 1997; Wilce 2009, inter alia) long ago gave up thinking of them in terms of relatively subjective states, or private feelings. Instead, they are usually understood as relatively complicated bundlings of one or more of the following kinds of components: an eliciting event or situation (e.g. a loss or the threat of loss), a physiological change (e.g. autonomic nervous system arousal), a relatively reflexive signal (e.g. a gasp, interjection, or facial expression), some affective experience (i.e. a "feeling"), a relatively controlled action (e.g. fleeing from a threat or fighting to forestall a loss), and a second-order interpretation of this ensemble of components, whether by the experiencer or by an observer, as relatively uncontrollable, subjective, and natural. No single one of these components is an "emotion"; rather, any affective unfolding may involve all of them, with more or less elaboration. Moreover, despite the common assumption that the key component of an emotion is a subjective state or "feeling" (qua putative psychological kind), the ethnographic record shows that local understandings of this bundling are just as often rendered in moral, spiritual, and physical idioms as in psychological ones (cf. Levy 1973; Rosaldo 1980; Shweder 1994).

To be sure, not much else has been resolved in this domain. There are still contentious debates about what components are involved, how fixed or fluid the bundlings are, what the order and intercausality between the components is, how much control one has over any particular component, and whether and to what degree emotion (as a genus phenomenon), or any particular emotion (e.g. anger, surprise, etc.), is a natural kind or social construction in the first place. The point in what follows is not to enter into these debates per se. Rather, I want to reframe such a bundling of components from a semiotic stance, which is itself grounded in reflexive (and reflective) modes of selfhood. In some sense, this involves bringing together aspects of Peirce's theory of interpretants, James's theory of the self, and Mead's theory of generalized others. The point then is not to define "what emotions really are," but rather to map out the relevant semiotic and intersubjective dimensions of an otherwise seemingly psychological and subjective domain.

To appraise a situation is to interpret it (Averill 1985), and the situation so interpreted is thus a sign, however immediate or mediate, of an event (qua object) that

concerns the self as reflexive ensemble, however directly or indirectly. In the attack described above, such an event involved a threat to one's flock (about which, more below). But it may range from finding the door of one's home ajar to receiving news of a death in the family, from one's hen laying an unusually large clutch to the faint memory of a propitious dream, from spilling broth on one's best blouse to learning about one's husband's reputation. The relation, or ground, between this sign and object may thus be iconically transparent or dreamily imagistic, indexically proximal or inferentially distal, lexically explicit or symbolically encrypted. In particular, women could learn of such an attack, and its attendant threat, through any number of signs—from the sight of a hawk's shadow to the scream of a neighbor's child, from the sudden presence of one's hens at the hearth to the excited barking of one's elderly dog.

More specifically, as ontologically established in this article, a woman's reflexive selfhood is at stake in the context of such an attack in a variety of ways. First, as a key possession in her self-qua-ensemble, such an attack represents a threat to her selfhood in the most transparent way: a loss of one or more of her relatively alienable belongings, themselves a rich bundling of potential use-values and exchange-values. Second, insofar as chickens (as well as their parts and products, through processes like barter circles and ritual slaughters) are a key means to mediate her relation to others (children and husband, in-laws and neighbors, god and community), a range of other relatively inalienable entities in her self-qua-ensemble is threatened at one or more degrees of remove. Third, chickens are themselves reflexive selves, sharing a number of properties with women. In this way, one may even invoke empathy: fear for someone with whom one is both similar and intimate (Kockelman 2007a). Finally, related to this, chickens are figured as reflexive selves who are not themselves capable of full reflectivity—and so a woman relates to them as warden, caregiver, or representative. As we saw, a woman's children and chickens are frequently figured in similar terms, all of them, at key times, constituting a single unit of accountability. In other words, she is responsible for recognizing a threat to them because they are less able to recognize it themselves. Given the fact that women are fully responsible for the loss of chickens, but share the rights to the benefits provided by chickens, women could fear being held accountable for the loss, as much as for the loss per se. In short, a woman's self is threatened in a variety of more or less direct ways—and so just as multiple signs are in play (however explicit or implicit), multiple objects are at stake (however immediate or deferred). In this way, part of what is so crucial about such AFFECTIVE UNFOLDINGS is that they figure the boundaries and loci of selves in relation to the values and categories of communities.

As a function of such sign-object relations, a range of interpretants is then available. Such interpretants are themselves effects of such signs that are relevant in relation to such objects, and thereby only "make sense" in relation to the selfhood of the interpreter. Moreover, they are also potential signs (and objects) themselves, with their own potentials to generate interpretive cascades (by the self and others).

And they too may be more or less immediate. Loosely speaking, and building on Peirce's typology (1955b; Kockelman 2005), there are affective interpretants: relatively involuntary transformations in the state of one's body that may be felt by the one embodying them (and even perceived by others, if only indirectly)—from an increase in metabolism (and the racing of one's pulse), to blushing (and the feeling of heat in one's cheeks), from a faint sense of deja vu to the pleasure offered by arousal. There are energetic interpretants, which range from voluntary actions to involuntary behaviors. These include grabbing a machete and sprinting down a path, as well as clenching one's fist and interjecting *ay dios*. There are representational interpretants: signs, be they public or private, which frame such events (and their causes and effects) in terms of relatively propositional contents. These may range from describing to one's daughters what happened to wishing one's flock was closer to home. And there are ultimate interpretants, or dispositional variants of any of these interpretants, qua habits to affectively, energetically, or representationally interpret in particular ways in more distal contexts. Indeed, much local behavior was frameable as retrospective modes of readiness for the next chicken-hawk attack, qua "indices of anxiety" in the face of such replicated singularities: remembering or recounting the last attack, trimming the underbrush, becoming restless as the afternoon wears on.

The fact that certain aspects of such semiotic unfoldings (for example, affective interpretants, in the strict sense, and uncontrolled energetic interpretants) are often framed as relatively unagentive, has some important consequences. From a semiotic stance (Kockelman 2005), the interpretants per se (as incipient semiotic processes in their own right) might be framed as relatively difficult to control (as to when and where they are expressed), relatively difficult to compose (as to what sign is expressed and what it stands for), and relatively difficult to commit to (as to what effect the sign-object relation will have when expressed in such a time and place). They may be understood as more likely to reveal an authentic self (for they are less amenable to censure). One may be accorded less responsibility for their repercussions (as they are less likely to be "intended"). And emotion per se may be read as more natural, pan-cultural, or even cross-species. Such points, and their caveats, are well rehearsed. I stress them here only to make sure the reader does not project them *tout court* onto the foregoing analysis.

Moreover, note that just as a sign may be more or less transparently related to its object, an interpretant may be more or less transparently related to a sign-object relation. And so just as there exists a range of more or less immediate interpretants (affective, energetic, representational, ultimate), there also exists a range of more or less overt interpretants. Such relatively covert interpretants may arise for the simple reason that, as potential signs themselves, they are subject to one's own and others' subsequent interpretations (and the judgments these may entail). Freud, in a psycho-medical paradigm, Goffman, in a socio-interactional paradigm, and Foucault, in an institutional-historical paradigm, handled this in now canonical ways: there exist censoring agencies, whose presence may be internalized, that lead to

the recoding and rechanneling of such potential signs—giving rise to minimizations and maskings, condensations and lies, gestures and displacements, shifts in footing and slips of the tongue (as well as a host of hermeneutic techniques, or interpretive epistemes, for recovering the original sign-object relations—from psychoanalysis, through genealogy, to linguistic anthropology). Such censoring agencies may be real or imagined, internally imposed or externally applied, consciously undertaken or unconsciously executed. And they may be figured as any kind of generalized other—not just fathers, wardens, and dictators; but also unratified bystanders, ego ideals, and evaluative standards. Again, such issues are well-rehearsed. I mention them here to highlight the differences between such analyses and my own, as well as some possibilities for pushing this analysis further.

Indeed, if there was anything in this article that had all the bells and whistles of a Freudian unconscious, a Lacanian imaginary, or a Nietzchean allegory, it was the local ontology of poultry. However, we understood such a rich and ambiguous range of figurings, almost dream-like in their texture and tension, not as the repercussion of deferred affect or sublimated desire, itself grounded in some universal psychodynamic subject. Rather, we understood it as the only empirically tractable entry way into local understandings of self, alters, and objects (ontology); and thus local ways of framing reflexive modes of desire, affect, and accountability (selfhood); and thus local ways of grounding interpretations of sign-object relations (affect). In this way, the analysis necessarily wraps back onto itself: for the ontology with which we began was itself grounded in semiotic processes, semiological structures, and social relations, which were themselves the collective products of signifying and interpreting selves (both human and non). And so as we have ended, so we may begin again.

To return to Wallace Stevens, anthropologists and critical theorists alike have all too often been the "thin men of Haddam," focused as they are on cock fights and commodities, companion species and the agency of ants, cyborgs and *homo sacer*, spirits and shamans, symbols and shifters, self-narratives and spectacle, and panopticons and penises. However, culture (language and mind) need not always be approached through its "golden birds," but sometimes simply through the signs (and squawks) of its nonindigenous domestic fowl.

NOTES

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[1]If one looks at the price of corn that goes into chickens, and the price of meat (and eggs) that comes out, however, this is not a good investment (Kockelman 2002; and see M. Wilson 1972). Such a

seemingly economically losing strategy is usually justified by noting that domestic animals, in this case chickens, act as storage banks: they can be fed corn unfit for human consumption, surplus corn that would otherwise rot, or entropic corn (that has fallen out of baskets, and is otherwise too sparsely scattered to be easily picked up). Moreover, chickens convert carbohydrates into much needed protein. In this way, chickens may be thought of as wrinkles in time and value, allowing a woman to turn the family's corn supply into personal cash, carbohydrates into protein, disordered spoilage into ordered vitality, and current resources into future benefits.

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