

Anthropophagic Banquet: Project for a Conference

Anna Maria Maiolino. 24/07/2009

I am the faecal ball resulting from the Brazilian anthropophagic banquet: my work and I are like the Tupi people. 'What collided with the truth was clothing, that impermeable layer between the inner and the outer worlds.'¹ They took them off at the banquet, I was left naked.

'In the country of the great snake'² I finally managed not to use any grammar. Mixed in my digestive system were the cultures of my native land – Calabria, in the south of Italy – and of the Tupi-Guarani land. I became Calabrian-Tupi-Guarani. I got rid of logic, of the obligation to be coherent, of catechism. I gained freedom.

'The spirit refuses to conceive the spirit without the body.'³ In the faecal mortar, all 'my taboos and totems were transformed'.⁴ I came back to life 'from the equation *I* coming from the Cosmos to the axiom Cosmos coming from the *P*'.⁵ And finally I breathe in what is Right as 'a guarantee of the full exercise of possibilities'.⁶ I did not arrive at the 'Country of Carnival'⁷ like the Conquistadors, but in a train full of immigrants. As I disembarked in Rio de Janeiro, I was devoured by the beauty of a blazing landscape: water, blue sky, sun and mountains. I happily gave myself away to the open mouth of the Guanabara Bay. I was eaten 'like a sacred enemy',⁸ digested and expelled by myself, an anthropophagous.

In my new condition as an anthropophagous, I went in search of food. The first person I tasted was Oswald de Andrade and, by identification, his *Anthropophagous Manifesto*. Then it was the turn of the Neo-Concretist artists. I digested very slowly their conceptual ideas, such as: not to conceive '...a work of art like a "machine" or an "object", but rather like a "near body", i.e., a being whose reality transcends the external relations of its elements; a being that, while capable of being deconstructed through analysis, can only be fully realised through direct, phenomenological means...'⁹ The banquet was copious during the sixties. I tasted Lygia Clark's immanence and subjectivity, while Hélio Oiticica was proposing new problems for Brazilian consumption.

While chewing the cud, I signed the *Declaração de Princípios Básicos da Nova Vanguardia* (Declaration of Basic Principles of the New Avant-Garde) in 1967 – me, who could hardly speak Portuguese – and timidly took part in the exhibition *Nova Objetividade Brasileira* (New Brazilian Objectivity) at the Museum of Modern Art, Rio de Janeiro. Those were hard times. The military were in power. And yet our manifesto rejected all that was institutional and imposed: '...the avant-garde assumes a clearly revolutionary position and extends its manifestation to all the fields of man's sensitivity and conscience... its project is based on the freedom of human beings, and its execution seeks to transcend the paralysing conditions of this freedom...'¹⁰

And so I continue to enjoy other people's poetry, always finding new banquets in my pilgrim's life. Voracious, I quickly absorb everything – foreign customs and cultures. During the pauses, I chew and rest. I alternate the good food with the indigestible: TV and newspaper news that, luckily, are easy to digest in the rapid passing of time. The succulent dishes are the lasting ones, the more nutritious, such as the ones by those artists and philosophers who allow the intricacies of human nature to renew themselves and be turned into art.

¹ Oswald de Andrade, *Anthropophagous Manifesto*, 1928.

2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. *Op.cit.*

⁹ Ferreira Gullar, *Neo-Concrete Manifesto*, 1959.

¹⁰ Pedro Geraldo Escosteguy, 1967.

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