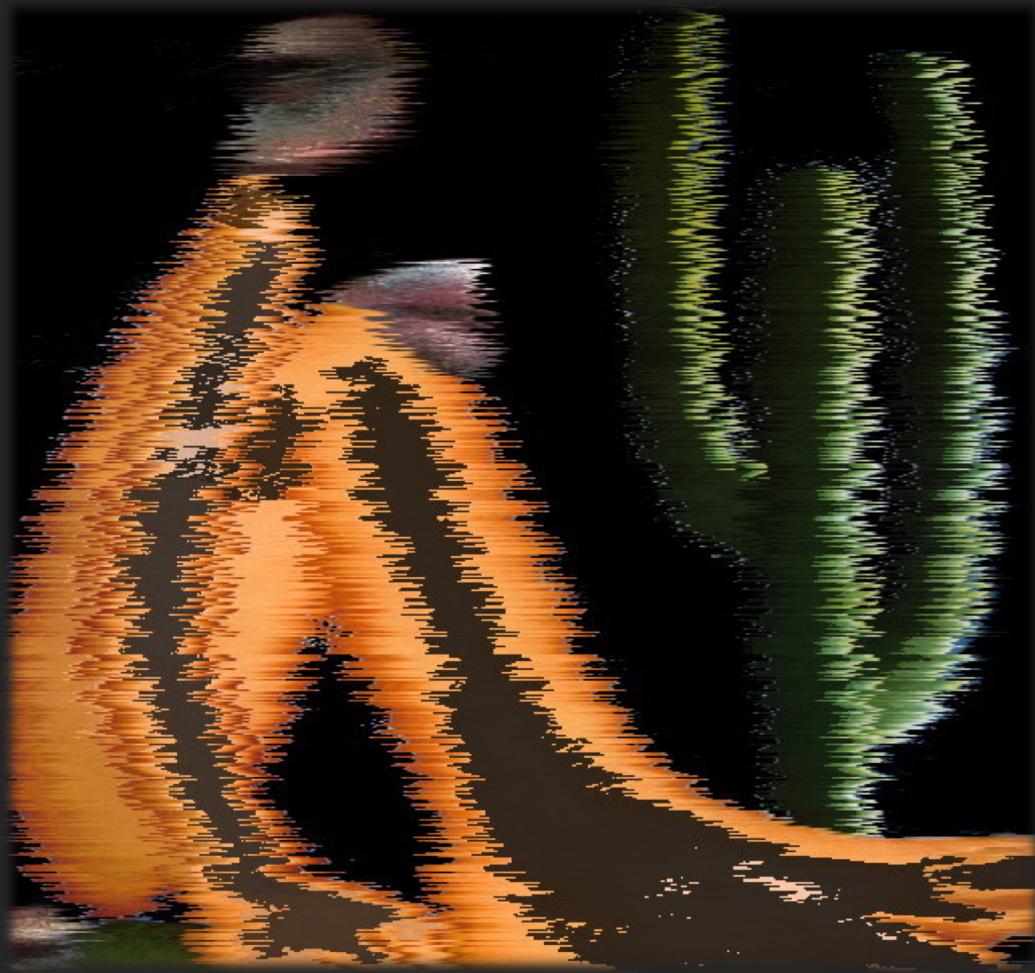


ALIENOCENE – DIS-JUNCTION

THE BODY OF THE POOR



GIUSEPPE COCCO AND BRUNO CAVA

In 1955, after a journey throughout Brazil, Lévi-Strauss published *Tristes Tropiques*, an assortment of philosophical and anthropological reflections written as if a memoir. In his travel log, the author points out the difference between anthropophagy and anthropoemy:

“If we studied societies from the outside, it would be tempting to distinguish two contrasting types: those which practice cannibalism – that is, which regard the absorption of certain individuals possessing dangerous powers as the only means of neutralizing those powers and even of turning them to advantage – and those which, like our own society, adopt what might be called the practice of *anthropoemy* (from the Greek *émein*, to vomit); faced with the same problem, the latter type of society has chosen the opposite solution, which consists in ejecting dangerous individuals from the social body and keeping them temporarily or permanently in isolation, away from all contact with their fellows, in establishments specially intended for this purpose. Most of the societies which we call primitive would regard this custom with profound horror; it would make us, in their eyes, guilty of that same barbarity of which we are inclined to accuse them because of their symmetrically opposite behavior.”

The typology of the Americanist anthropologist distinguishes societies depending on whether they operate according to inclusion or exclusion practices. Exclusion marks the civilized societies, which rely on the everlasting reaffirmation of their own interiority – their values, rationalities, and belief systems –, as opposed to an outside. Anthropoemy then occurs through the multiplication of dialectical pairs regarding the self and the other, so that the self is always construed as a non-other. According to this logic, primitive is defined as non-civilized, animal or vegetal as non-human, backward or underdeveloped as non-modern, and so on. Encountering the other is then occasion for an inquiry into whether this other is similar to the

self and thus endowed with humanity, culture, religion, God. Put simply, if this other has a soul. Inclusion, in turn, relates to the anthropophagic or primitive societies, for whom the vomit logic would seem scandalous, for they do not define themselves by asserting an identity, but through a constant and open relation with all exteriority. Hence otherness is no pretext for probing the nature of the other to determine if it equals the self. It is rather an opportunity to investigate the interference this other may cause in the very self. That is to say, otherness acts as a destabilization and reconfiguration power. Exteriority is thus more important than interiority, in the sense that the society is continuously (de)defined and (un)founded as it devours the relations it establishes with the outside, becoming other in the process. According to Lévi-Strauss, instead of excluding the other from the social body in order to assert their identity and reaffirm a preexistent sameness, anthropophagic societies work by mobilizing the outside in a way that paradoxically constitutes the very social body as a dynamic and driving principle of immanent exteriority.

In August 2012, the graduate program in Arts from the State University of Rio de Janeiro and MAR, the Museum of Art of Rio de Janeiro, organized a seminar called “Vomit and Negation: Anthropoemic Practices in Art and Culture.”ⁱⁱ In retrospect, we could say that the event was embedded in the wave of political and cultural upheaval following the protests against the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). The whole turmoil had just taken place in the city, stirring an effervescent flow that would culminate with the June 2013 uprising of the Brazilian multitude, which was particularly intense throughout the metropolitan area of Rio de Janeiro. Embracing the Lévi-Straussian ideas on anthropoemy and anthropophagy as theme, the organizers’ main concern – as they themselves announced – was whether or not postmodern capitalism has become anthropophagic. The point in question was to know if the anthropophagic strategy had simply turned into a mechanism for strengthening the current regime of flexible accumulation. The initial provocation even speaks of an “anthropophagic capitalism” when raising the following question: “In the context of an economic (and social, cultural, political, etc.) system that devours anything and adapts to everything, we ask if this wouldn’t be the moment to reconsider anthropoemy as a necessary

resistance practice in face of *anthropophagic capitalism*.ⁱⁱⁱ Such formulation of the problem, asking for a sort of “anthropoemy redux”, echoes a particular spirit of the times present in critical theory, shared by a plethora of contemporary thinkers who distrust affirmative theories, filled with flows, becomings, and multiplicities, which would be complicit with the positive and fluid logic of neoliberalism. According to this end-time approach to politics, one would have to recover the power of *no*, negativity, and negative thinking in general. We could mention, for instance, Slavoj Žižek’s criticism of Deleuze and Negri^{iv}, or Benjamin Noys’ accusations against ontological affirmationism^v. Those formulations are subtly tied to a common theme of the post-1990s Left, which diagnosis a ubiquitous neoliberalism and firmly asserts itself as *anti*-globalization, *anti*-flexibilization of labor, and *anti*-cultural postmodernism. Against the excesses, already assimilated by capitalist accumulation in the post-Fordist era, it would be necessary to interrupt the process and dialectically introduce a sound *no*, even if it means resorting to regressive projects and rebuilding national states, hegemonic parties, and regional geopolitical blocs.

The invitation text of the aforementioned seminar also refers to Oswald de Andrade, whose anthropophagic manifesto from 1928^{vi}, the chef d’oeuvre of aberrant Brazilian modernism, called for an ethics of life, meaning an intensive devouring stance in face of existence. In this seminal text of a movement that crossed generations, the aphorism “I am only interested in what is not mine”^{vii} (the “law of the anthropophagus”) make room for a set of practices of relational predations, self-variation, and metamorphosis. The Oswaldian manifesto is not limited to prescribing some plain opening to otherness or an ideal of tolerance with difference in a sort of early multiculturalism of *belles âmes*. Such prescriptions would, indeed, be easily accommodated in a post-colonial conception of culture which reduces it to a social commodity and an elitist status marker, an exchange commodity for the political, cultural, and economic upper classes within the universities, art circuits or the creative jet set. As Lévi-Strauss pointed out in *Tristes Tropiques*, Brazilian elites wear culture as if they wore a new dress.^{viii} Other than that, the Oswaldian program pierces the curtain over the shallow cultural cordiality and touches the primitive unconscious – a “pre-logical mentality”, the “palpable existence of life” –, which will work as an

“anthropophagic vaccine”^{ix} in face of the disease of modern Western civilization and the inferiority complexes in the South. The manifesto does not operate by schematics or categories, but by a flood of evocations. The chain of images connects Oswald’s poetic intuition to a philosophy of the savage body, in a production – to speak in Deleuzian terms – of a powerful image of thought. The desire that flows through the primitive unconscious is historically repressed by the successive orthopedic operations performed through the colonization of Brazil and the formation of the Brazilian People. From Jesuitical catechesis to Black slavery to the successive waves of industrial proletarianization and urbanization, there were numerous biopolitical technologies to undermine the potencies of the savage body and to mobilize it for work and compliance.

Oswald is clearly breaking with romantic writers such as José de Alencar as well as with the Indianist nationalists, who, in the 1920s, mystified the image of the Indians for their Wagnerian patriotic cosmogonies, which was as a prelude to the formulations of the 1930s’ fascist Right that led straight to the Vargas’ dictatorship from 1937 to 1945. The Oswaldian Amerindian is neither the Rousseau’s good savage nor the “Indian dressed up as senator of the Empire (...) featuring in Alencar’s operas full of good Portuguese feelings.”^x The nakedness of the naked anthropophagic man is fully clothed in the sense that the body, unlike the Aristotelian tradition in which it is a mere instrument of the soul, is a complex assortment of transitions, a patchwork of affects, relations, and energy. Hence, the myth of the anthropophagic utopia cannot be explained as a revival of a supposed “pre-modern” instinctive reserve, as if the Indians were archetypes of the revolution. Instead, it is a *fully material* actualization of anthropophagic practices, such as horizontal miscegenation and lines of deterritorialization or exodus. The anthropophagic madness has its own right, the cannibal right to oppose the civilizing sickness and rebel against its institutions: the missionary and the church, the master and his land, the merchant of culture and widespread prostitution (capitalism).

We cannot reduce Oswald’s experimentation with the savage thinking to a mere tradition of cultural critique – which would be aimed against the importers of European canned culture and the reactionary nativists, champions of the Brazilian identity –, as if he was just a landmark within

the Brazilian cultural history. As Oswald himself had already written in a previous manifesto^{xii}: “Poetry exists in the facts. The shacks of saffron and ochre in the green of the Favela, under cabralin blue, are aesthetic facts.” The primitive unconscious “without complexes”^{xiii} is totally inhabited by rebellious practices and peoples, by the insurgencies from the colonial period, from quilombos and villages. In this sense, it is crossed by thresholds of subversion and powerful psychosocial energies. When Oswald mobilizes the myth against the repression of the unconscious, he does not simply return to the savage, who would lead, in Freudian style, to the de-sublimation of great passions. More than a return, this is about an active oblivion, a pragmatics of de-Oedipalization, a sustained liberation of productive desire. The Dionysian theme present in the anthropophagic manifesto, in its delirious style as well as within the images of idleness, feasting, and free love, does not refer to Freud and the return of the repressed, but to Nietzsche and the transubstantiation of values. We can thus relate the anthropophagic program to the one unfolded by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*. That is to say, it comprises the *production of the corps sauvage* as the limit of neocolonial society, the absolute limit in which becomings and intensities that constitute the Southern unconscious begin to flow freely. It is nothing less than a schizophrenic-anthropophagic revolution which does not go back the beginning, to a mystified origin, but lies in the future, on the extreme edge of biopower workings. The anthropophagic practices manifest, above all, in neo-primitivism, techno-shamanism, hyper-consumerism, alter-anthropology, as well as in the becoming-Brazil, the Technicized Barbarian^{xiv}, and in all those images pertaining to a theory of subjectivity within underdevelopment, which are pre-logical and post-logical at the same time. That is if we think like Oswald and go against the eloquent rhetoric of Father Vieira, who believed that “we have never admitted the birth of logic among us.”^{xv} As Oswald himself used to say, instead of an ontology, an odontology. In this sense, his torrential modernist manifesto outlines something like Spinoza’s *Ethics* for the tropics. A kind of “Joyeux Tropiques” in which anthropophagy, as Amerindian perspectivism, acts directly on the desiring body and its affections. Transubstantiated into body, the anthropophagic action cannot be framed as a mere culture war, as if it were just a confrontation between belief systems; it can only be approached as a

genuine revolutionary force acting through and within bodies. It is not so much a struggle among cultures, but a “culture” of metamorphosis where the body is the protagonist. The “Carahiba revolution” thus implies the mad, nonconformist, *minor* effort against the racist biopower built in the South – and from which Brazil and its national projects arose. We are far from the litanies on acculturation, “ideas out of place,” or hegemonic ideology, since anthropophagy implies molecular rebellion, an affective and molecular productive turn, recovering the underdeveloped body in other terms. That is to say, a theory of subjectivity within underdevelopment, an exit from biopower by the means of biopolitics. The anthropophagic delirium, in this sense, is totally historical-political; furthermore, it traces a strategy of institutional creativity beyond any culturalist reduction.

* * *

But how to deal with postmodern capitalism when its missionaries – such as George Gilder (mentioned by J. J. Goux) – seem to transpose this torrential and baroque plethora into the very language of capital? What about *KorpoBraz*, the savage and desiring body, which is already invested with the process of capital through money, as Klossowski demonstrates in this theory of the *Living Currency*? Would we be experiencing an anthropophagic capitalism, as the 2012 seminar held in Rio de Janeiro implies?

Suely Rolnik converges with Klossowski’s reflections when describing the turn to the post-Fordist flexible regime of accumulation as the era of “globalized pimping”^{xv} According to the Brazilian schizoanalyst, adherent to Felix Guattari’s analysis of integrated world capitalism (IWC)^{xvi}, the emergence of neoliberalism corresponds to the moment capitalism ceases to operate conforming to clear limits between form and matter to fully assume moving and blurred contours of subjectivity. In other words, when the production of subjectivity proper to capitalism no longer works by imposing a mold, but through successive modulations, resonances, and energetic variations. Rolnik describes the epochal transition of capitalism as follows: the “rise of the imagination to power is a micropolitical operation that consists in making its potential into the major fuel of an insatiable

hypermachine for the production and accumulation of capital – to the point where one can speak of a new working class, which some authors call the ‘cognitariat’.” As in Veronica Gago’s most recent research^{xvii}, Rolnik analyses the formation of neoliberalism in terms of a mutation in the regime of sensible textures, which constitutes the very subjects and their affective-relational power – wherein both researches connect to *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault’s seminal course from 1978–79. According to Rolnik^{xviii}, the introduction of the flexible regime of postmodern capitalism was especially fulminating and uncomplicated in Brazil, since the “anthropophagical savoir-faire of the Brazilians gives them a special facility for adapting to the new times.”^{xix}

In fact, Rolnik’s reference to the Southern plasticity of subjectivity – or, we could just say, the body – echoes the insights of Jesuit priests, especially Father Vieira, as they notice that the Indians behave like myrtles when facing the colonial invasion. It is as if the whole discussion about the biopolitical, post-Fordist, or postmodern turn was overdue regarding the colonization logic, which had to engender a biopower in order to control the flexible production of subjectivity. What is most important pointing out is that the biopolitical resistances, its deterritorialization lines and subjective exodus, are first in relation to a power that had to infiltrate and parasitize those resistances in order to control from inside. It had to do so because ideological indoctrination, spiritual conversion, or the logic of applying more evolved forms to a supposedly inert and shapeless matter never really worked with the savage body. The fact is that the matter is alive and its lack of shape, monstrously productive, is *living currency*. Rolnik then considers a “Tupinambá capitalism”^{xx}, in the sense that the “arrival” – the arrival of those who never went – of neoliberalism in the South activated “the worst of this tradition, the basest [low] anthropophagy.”^{xxi} The expression low anthropophagy appears in the anthropophagic manifesto of 1928 when Oswald refers to catechism, complexes and the “plague of the so-called cultured and Christianized peoples.”^{xxii}

However, as we understand it, the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism in the North, as well as the “arrival” of neoliberalism, cannot be explained by a transition from an anthropoemic and hilemorphic logic (form/content, molds, rigid conception) to an anthropophagic and cannibal

one (plasticity, modulations, energetic conception). Anthropophagy cannot be limited to the logic of acculturation, assimilation, class consciousness, belief context, or any culturalist reduction – in short, to a problem of the soul –, so one may then assign an anthropophagic quality to the cultural turns and “new spirits of capitalism.”^{xxiii}). The very Jesuit catechists, in a second moment, realized that they could not prioritize the soul, as they did in the Old World. Unlike Rolnik, we understand that anthropophagy is both in the beginning and in the end, as inferior and superior limit of the workings of capital, *since its constitution*. It thus does not imply a “Tupinambá capitalism,” but the fact that capitalism has always had to constantly internalize the power of the poor, the *body of the poor*, KorpoBraz. This is also its greatest weakness. In fact, postmodern capitalism is not culturalist, since the exploited bodies are still the body of the poor – and there is nothing more material, productive, and affective than that. *What changed was the body of the poor*. When the becoming-Brazil interferes with the theoretical formulations stemming from Brazil and, more generally, the South, it fosters a displacement from the logic of cultural imperialisms and nationalisms to the logic of biopower and miscegenation. If the pinnacle of anthropophagy construed as a schizoanalysis of Brazil is the savage body – the desert of underdevelopment –, then its occupation involves the population by means of miscegenation, flows of migration, and exodus, as well as the refusal of labor, inseparable from biopolitical resistances (the double yes). Hence the relevance, for a biopolitical factory of strategies, of shifting all developmentalist, national formation or proletarianization/awareness topics. This is the only way of rising to the anthropophagic utopia and, at the same time, allowing for a strategical (squizo)analysis of neoliberalism – which is biopower plus sign-money.

Despite the disagreement above, there is another passage regarding Rolnik’s convergence between neoliberalism and anthropophagy which we believe is very prolific. When describing the logic of postmodern capitalism, she outlines the simultaneous functioning of two regimes: “This kind of pimping of the creative force is what has been transforming the planet into a gigantic marketplace, expanding at an exponential rate, either by including its inhabitants as hyperactive zombies or by excluding them as human trash.”^{xxiv} This does not entail a typology, but a topology, that is, two poles

of different natures that are constantly interacting within the overall workings of the system. That is to say, inclusion and exclusion are two operations that, combined, stratify capitalism of post-Fordist regulation all the way. There is nothing more distant from a *flat horizon* than the multiple modulations and gradients of force that neoliberalism governs in the continuum – which, as we have seen, Foucault called governmentality. As the author herself explains, “[i]n fact, those two opposing poles are interdependent fruits of the same logic; all our destinies unfold between them” through “the opposite and complementary figures of luxury and trash subjectivity.”

In order to reclaim the anthropoemy – anthropophagy pair, we could reframe the issue in terms of low and high anthropoemy as well as low and high anthropophagy, considering that capitalism must remain working within the range between the upper and lower limit in each case. When analyzing the production of subjectivity or bodies in neoliberalism, we thus have two ever-present machinic processes (exclusion and inclusion) in a field of constant interaction. The original typology of Lévi-Strauss then evolves into a topology. This is no longer a matter of anthropoemy *versus* anthropophagy, but each one as two sides of the same coin, the double regime whereby biopower plus money, hence postmodern capitalism, works. As the anthropophagic thought, postmodern capitalism is both at the beginning and at the end. In this sense, the capitalist crisis is also a crisis capitalism, that is, the ability to maintain the interval, to extend the limits of accumulation and, at the same time, prevent anthropophagy from completely imploding the building of exploitation and domination. Thinking in terms of Klossowski’s concepts, resistance arises from two perversions, one for each regime: anthropoemy as creative refusal – an escape that looks for a weapon as well, an exodus which also populates the desert where the people is absent – and anthropophagy as it crosses the biopower modulations – intensification beyond the limit of crisis, its qualitative variation. We could still add that, under those terms, anthropoemy and anthropophagy do not represent a dialectics but from the point of view of capital, for the double perversion/affirmation has the ability to put an end to the dialectics by eliminating the relationship. Immanent exteriority – the savage body of the South, i.e., the Body of the Poor – is the absolute limit

of such topology, the living source which can neither be suppressed nor fully controlled at the risk of devitalizing the parasitic process. The Left is constantly defeated by neoliberal forces because it still has not abandoned the aspirations of the first generation of Jesuits, that is, imposing a form (state-form, development, redeeming industry) to the living matter of underdevelopment. Those forces, in turn, caught up with the second wave of less optimistic priests like Vieira and recognized its inner power. So instead of trying to mold the living matter, they let the flows run and then govern within the very flexibility. This is what neoliberalism does better, it is its expertise and *raison d'être*. Defusing the collective consciousness from the oedipal-narcissistic fixations of a form-lover Left is undoubtedly part of the schizo-Amerindian effort of the Oswaldian program. However, overcoming neoliberalism implies a second movement, a second affirmation, namely, accelerating the process, devising a theory of subjectivity within underdevelopment, connecting to the biopolitical factory of strategies, following the lines of what we call the becoming-Brazil.

After we have traced a genealogy of the biopower mechanisms in Latin America and outlined a positive program of minor politics, we engaged then in the task of writing an Ethics of the anthropophagic unconscious amidst the swirling flow of the 2013 uprising throughout Brazilian metropolises. Deleuze and Guattari claimed that the whole theoretical endeavor of *Anti-Oedipus* was an attempt to adapt the Ethics of Immanence to the new flexible coordinates of capitalism, to the point of saying that the Spinozian substance reappeared in the fluid and mad concept of Body without Organs (BwO). And each of us have our own BwO, we all make our own BwO. In this sense, we could say that the present book operates an interaction between the displacement towards biopower with the political and ethical formulations of the figure of the body of the poor. Always with the struggles and for the struggles, our whole work of dismantling the great theoretical-political buildings of developmentalism, of positivist rationalism, of progressivism, of the promises of national formation, of the redemptive proletarianization, and of the popular culture project of a statist and statolatrous Left suffering from a guilty conscience thus culminates in the (de)definition and (un)foundation of Brazil. Brazilianization is useless from the point of view of transformation, since we, like Oswald, are not interested

in the Indian dressed up as senator of the Empire, the “torch-bearing Indian”, meaning the Brazilianization forged by nationalisms, including the people of national–popular consciousness. We than arrive to *our* BwO, to the desert, but an intensely populated desert, crossed by miscegenation gradients, the mobile thresholds of migrations, by biopolitics. “Against all catechesis,” the assertion of the *Body of the Poor*.

- i. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques* (Penguin UK, 2011). Original emphasis.
- ii. See “Em parceria com Museu de Arte do Rio (MAR), UERJ realiza seminário sobre antropoemia na arte,” Portal Fator Brasil, August 21, 2012, accessed January 31, 2017, http://www.revistafatorbrasil.com.br/ver_noticia.php?not=214068.
- iii. Ibid.
- iv. Slavoj Žižek, *Organs Without Bodies* (New York: Routledge, 2016). From the same author, see also *Living in the End times* (London: Verso, 2011).
- v. Benjamin Noys, *The persistence of the Negative: A Critique of Contemporary Continental Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).
- vi. Oswald de Andrade, “Manifesto Antropófago,” *Revista de Antropofagia* 1, no. 1 (May 1928). For an English version of the text, see “Anthropophagic Manifesto,” trans. Maria do Carmo Zanini, Sibila, March 24, 2009, accessed January 31, 2017, <http://sibila.com.br/english/anthropophagic-manifesto/2686>.
- vii. Ibid.
- viii. Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*.
- ix. Andrade, “Manifesto Antropofágico.”
- x. Ibid.
- xi. Oswald de Andrade, “Manifesto Pau–Brasil,” *Correio da Manhã*, March 1924. For an English version of the text, see “Manifesto of Pau–Brasil Poetry,” trans. Stella M. de Sá Rego, *Latin American Literary Review* 14, no. 27 (Jan.–Jun. 1986): 184–7, accessed January 31, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20119419>.
- xii. Andrade, “Manifesto Antropofágico.”
- xiii. Ibid.
- xiv. Ibid.
- xv. Suely Rolnik, “The Geopolitics of Pimping,” trans. Brian Holmes, European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies, October 2006, accessed January 15, 2017, <http://eipcp.net/transversal/1106/rolnik/en>.
- xvi. Feliz Guattari and Suely Rolnik, *Cartografias do desejo* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1986).
- xvii. Veronica Gago, *La razón neoliberal: Economías barrocas y pragmática popular* (Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños, 2015). For a more thorough discussion on neoliberalism, see Chapters 1 and 2. Bil
- xviii. Suely Rolnik, “Anthropophagic Subjectivity,” in 24a Bienal de São Paulo: Arte Contemporânea Brasileira: Um e/entre outro/s, ed. Paulo Herkenhoff and Adriano Pedrosa

(São Paulo: Fundação Bienal, 1998), 128–47. Bilingual Portuguese/English edition. Republished in Portuguese as “Subjetividade Antropofágica,” in Daniel Lins, comp., *Razão Nômade* (Rio de Janeiro, 2005: Forense Universitária).

xix. Rolnik, “The Geopolitics of Pimping.”

xx. Speaking at a lecture. See also “Zombie Anthropophagy,” in Ivet Curlin and Natasa Ilic eds., *Collective Creativity* (Kassel: Kunsthalle Fridericianum, 2005). Bilingual German/English edition. Published in a shorter version in French as “Anthropophagie Zombie,” in *Mouvement: L’indiscipline des Arts Visuels*, no. 36–37, (Paris, Sept.–Dec. 2005): 56–8.

xxi. Rolnik, “The Geopolitics of Pimping.”

xxii. Andrade, “Manifesto Antropofágico.”

xxiii. See Jean-Luc Boltansky and Éve Chiappello, *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme* (Paris: Gallimard 1997). By the way, it would be more appropriate to speak of “animal spirits” of capitalism. See Matteo Pasquinelli, *Animal Spirits: The Bestiary of the Commons* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers/Institute of Network Cultures, 2008).

xxiv. Rolnik, “The Geopolitics of Pimping.”