

DIGITAL ANTHROPOPHAGY AND THE ANTHROPOPHAGIC RE-MANIFESTO FOR THE DIGITAL AGE

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A theoretical essay proposing a new practice of consumption (ingestion, digestion, excretion) involving a technological mediation, and a manifesto-poem with a new take on the 1928 *Manifesto Antropófago* by Brazilian author Oswald de Andrade. I offer an update for the concept of cultural cannibalism in regard to the digital age, where the virtual world is the new frontier, and everyone a possible colonizer.

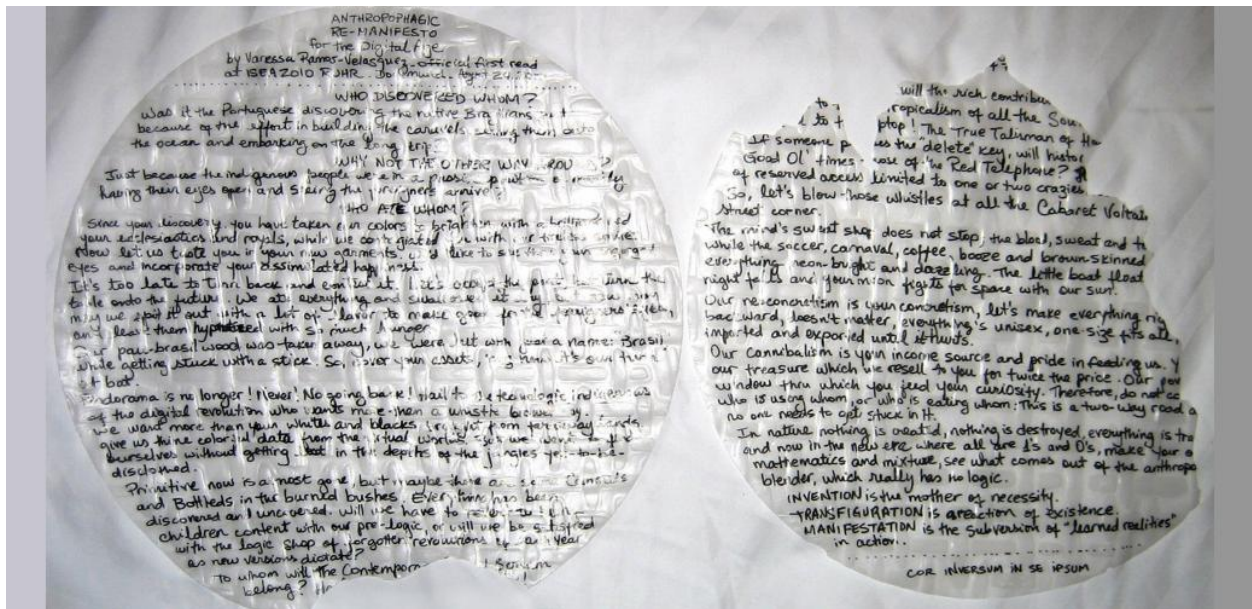


Fig 1. The Anthropophagic Re-Manifesto for the Digital Age

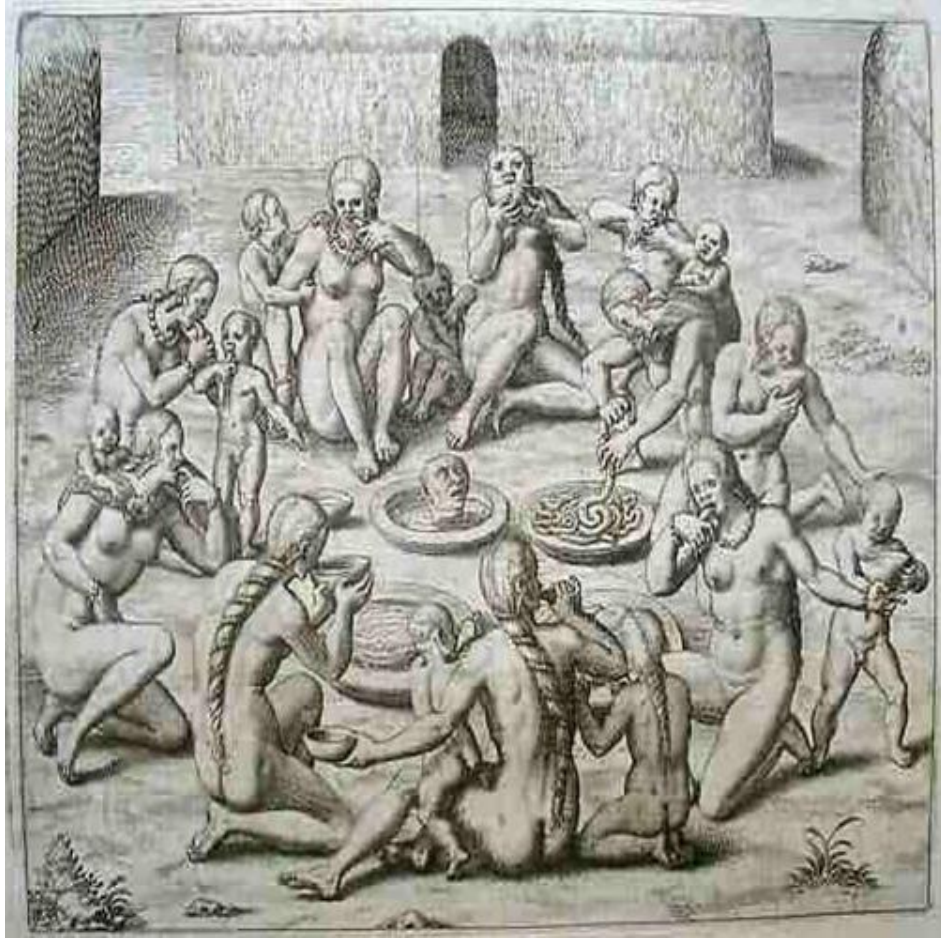


Fig 2. Anthropophagy



Fig 3. Digital Anthropophagy

ANTHROPOPHAGIC RE-MANIFESTO FOR THE DIGITAL AGE

Who discovered whom?

Was it the Portuguese discovering the native Brazilians just because of the effort in building the caravels, setting them onto the ocean and embarking on the long trip?

Why not the other way around?

Just because the indigenous people were in a passive position of merely having their eyes open and seeing the foreigners arrive?

Who ate whom?

Since your discovery, you have taken our colors to brighten with a brilliant red your ecclesiastics and royals, while we contagiated you with our tireless smiles. Now let us taste you in your new garments. We'd like to see thru your engorged eyes and incorporate your assimilated happiness.

It's too late to turn back and contest it. Let's accept the past, but turn the table onto the future.

We ate everything and swallowed it dry, but now may we spit it out with a lot of flavor to make good for the foreigners' eyes and leave them hypnotized with so much hunger.

Our pau-brasil wood was taken away, we were left with just a name: "Brasil", while getting stuck with a stick. So, cover your assets, 'cuz now it's our turn at bat.

Pindorama is no longer! Never! No going back! Hail to the technologic indigenous of the digital revolution who wants more than a whistle blower toy.

We want more than your whites and blacks brought from far away lands, give us thine colorful data from the virtual worlds. But we want to find ourselves without getting lost in the depths of the jungles yet-to-be-dis-clothed.

Primitive now is almost gone, but maybe there are some Canneds and Bottleds in the burned bushes. Everything has been discovered and uncovered. Will we have to revert to being children content with our pre-logic, or will we be satisfied with the logic shop of forgotten revolutions of each year as new versions dictate?

To whom will The Contemporary Primal Scream belong?

Hail to innocence and purity! May they never lose themselves in the post-modern emptiness of the Matrix, the new belly button of the world!

Hail to the ignorance of the infant unknown to pixeland!

This time, what will the rich contribution of all mistakes be?

Hail to the En-Tropicalism of all the Souths.

Hail to the Laptop! The True Talisman of Happiness!

If someone presses the “delete” key, will history be erased? Good Ol’ times those of the Red Telephone? It was just one button of reserved access limited to just one or two crazies. Now every loony has one!

So, let’s blow those whistles at all the Cabaret Voltaires of every street corner.

The mind’s sweatshop does not stop; the blood, sweat and tears run infinitum while the soccer, carnival, coffee, booze, and brown-skinned beauties leave everything neon-bright and dazzling. The little boat floats at sunset as night falls and your moon fights for space with our sun.

Our neoconcretism is your concretism, let’s make everything right, left, forward or backward, doesn’t matter, everything’s unisex, one-size fits all, made in China, imported and exported until it hurts.

Our cannibalism is your income source and pride in feeding us. Your trash is our treasure which we resell to you for twice the price. Our poverty is your window through which you feed your curiosity. Therefore, do not complain who is using whom, or who is eating whom. This is a two-way road and no one needs to get stuck in it.

In nature, nothing is created, nothing is destroyed, everything is transformed; and now in the new era where all are 1’s and 0’s, make your own mathematics and mixture, see what comes out of the anthropologic blender, which really has no logic.

Invention is the mother of necessity.

Transfiguration is a reaction of existence.

Manifestation is the subversion of “learned realities” in action.

FULL ABSTRACT

The background of my *Digital Anthropophagy* theory comes from the *fair use* conundrum of the Information Age. One of my own art practices is to create films from found footage and openly exposed media. I metabolize these materials into new contexts. In the creative process of this practice, in the age of the Interneted Information Society as the producer of culture also engaged in remixing, offering a rich self-serving online buffet, I often thought of the Anthropophagic practices of some Brazilian indigenous tribes when they came into contact with their colonizers. The indigenous cannibal honorably eats the foreigner in order to incorporate his strength, experiences and qualities and to see through the cannibalized foreigner’s eyes. But I find that in today’s digital culture, we unceremoniously consume the world around us in a globalized structure, thus quickly acquiring worldly references and spitting them out in a personal but also somewhat homogenized way. We have thus become both the cannibal and the cannibalized because of the wide and immediate access to information and the incredible reduction

of time it now takes to consume that widely available culture. It no longer takes a passive person watching the ships arriving on the shore in order to consume what they might bring aboard, and conversely, for the colonizer in those ships to take away the riches they “discover” in far-away lands. Over five hundred years later, that exchange has now become cross-pollinated and more equal, and happening in an inhuman speed cycle. And the paradigm of power acquisition has now shifted from land ownership of colonies to ownership of information and creative property, especially engendered by the virtual world. This virtual world has started to disintegrate former imperialism and push toward a “democratization of access” and “freedom of use” of information. And so I offer an analysis of Information Metabolism which drives human experiences. I hope this work furthers the discussion on fair use of media, leading to a simplification of global fair use cultural models and practices in the age of digital culture.

Background history leading to my Anthropophagic Re-Manifesto for the Digital Age:

In 1928, a Brazilian Modernist author, Oswald de Andrade wrote the *Manifesto Antropófago*, (the *Cannibal Manifesto*). It was an assertion of the unique Brazilian voice in the emerging modern time, away from clichés of colonialism, while unapologetically metabolizing outside references from the First World. Over 100 years since Brazil’s independence from Portugal, the moment of transformation had come! To devour outside artistic influences from Europe, and to finally incorporate all their developments useful to Brazilian culture, while seeking the Brazilian modern identity, strength and unique vision. It was as much a dictum against the colonizer’s power, as it was a criticism of the colonized people’s hunger for what is not their own. My manifesto-poem offers a new take on the original Manifesto and I call it a “Re-Manifesto”, alluding not only to today’s remix culture, but also to a re-assertion of previously colonized cultures into the new dynamics and context of cultural influence in the digital era. My *Digital Anthropophagy* position paper likewise, seeks to update that anthropophagic practice of cultural cannibalism to the digital age, proposing that the virtual world is the new frontier and anyone can be a colonizer.

In my Anthropophagic Re-Manifesto, I expose that the allure, the attraction of “the other” is mutual and that it serves to form a symbiotic relationship that feeds both peoples. The concept of “the exotic” is a two-way road, for if one has never seen the other before, their mutual discovery is of equal impact, and a curiosity to consume that newfound exoticism is occurring on both sides. The question thus is not about the symbiosis itself, but about the degree of positive influences and acculturation, especially in the era of an ongoing digital revolution. Of course the great line dividing this equality in colonial times was an economic one: the colonizer upon seeing a newfound land sees money, while the “found people” just sees unknown people. That very innocence of the Golden Age is the exotic raw material that so many in the First World seek, but beware as even in that innocence lies the cannibal spirit. And since there’s no more land to discover, the colonizer has now become the entrepreneur who seeks to conquer the virtual landscape of 1’s and 0’s. But now the “innocent” is born with a much larger capacity to understand and dominate that virtual world. So now the entrepreneur is forced to invite who he or she sees as the cannibals into the game in order to keep the barbarians at the gate. And these little barbarians will grow up to be the entrepreneurs of tomorrow in an endless cycle of digital evolution. Thusly, anyone will be a colonizer, except this time nothing is done by imposition because the networked community functioning as a universal brain decides what gets served up, and consequently what becomes consumable in this natural entropic filtering process.

My Manifesto-Poem is therefore a new take on the original *Manifesto Antropófago*. It is but a glimpse through a prism reflecting how the indigenous Anthropophagic cannibalistic practice resonates to

today's civilized society, materializing as cannibalistic remix culture spanning the entire world in an age where virtually all colonies have proclaimed their independence. It's the new world order: anyone can chose to be either the colonizer or the colonized, and why not both?

DIGITAL ANTHROPOPHAGY

INTRODUCTION

“Anthropophagy”: anthropos = “human being” + phagein = “to eat”. Main definitions:

1. Cannibalism, as the eating of human flesh by a human or humans
2. Self-cannibalism, as the eating of one's own flesh
3. Eucharist, the ceremonial eating of the body of Jesus as wine and bread

In my view, these forms of cannibalism have transmuted into a new form, which I would like to propose as *Digital Anthropophagy*, meaning:

1. All the aforementioned Anthropophagic practices if done virtually, for example, with the aid of computers, social online networking, and other digital devices; or if executed in reality but facilitated digitally
2. A new paradigm of input/output models generated via the internet
3. A new practice of cultural consumption involving a technological mediation for input (both the feeding and the being fed), digestion, and output

OVERVIEW

Cultural Cannibalism from tribal origins to today's cultural practices through a mash-up of Biological, Philosophical, Social, Economic, and Artistic perspectives.

- DIGESTIVE PROCESS OF CANNIBALIZATION: ORIGINAL RECYCLERS and REMIXERS
- DIGESTIVE PROCESS OF CANNIBALIZATION IN HUMAN BEHAVIOR: ACTIVE AND REACTIVE AGENTS
- CULTURAL IMPERIALISM AND TECHNICAL BARBARISM LEAD TO A REACTION TO DEMOCRATIZE
- ACCULTURATION MODELS ACCORDING TO A PROPOSED POLYMORPHOUS CANNIBALIST PRACTICE

CHALLENGES

Human nature reacting to widespread availability of information and culture. Uncontrollable hunger to consume what's available and facility of "public as producer of culture" leading to uncontrollable media usage in the form of appropriation and re-appropriation, memes as an example.

- CYCLES OF CONSUMPTION / MEDIA BOMBARDMENT
- APPROPRIATION
- RE-APPROPRIATION
- THE NEW TECHNOCRACY
- THE NEW CANNIBALISM: TO PROPAGATE OUR HISTORY AND TO SECURE OUR IMMORTALITY

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Considerations for a free and democratic internetworked society.

In practical terms, common sense should guide us in helping to decriminalize the very pillars of freedom of expression and access to information as they are paramount in the new socio-economic development. In his book "Remix", Lawrence Lessig proposes five steps to help us walk the path towards more efficient and sound copyright law.

My own proposed methods involve:

- Credit your sources whenever possible! If you don't know who or where the material came from, use a standard disclaimer that invites the audience to contribute the missing information, much like in the Wikipedia model.
- Use a pre-existing international forum, such as Creative Commons to further internationalize the simplification of copyright regulations into the Copyleft Model, and expand upon it to ensure owners of the creative property are getting paid in a fair method for the use of their work.
- If this model starts to fairly value the exchange of intellectual property, then Mafia-like organizations who collect money on behalf of artists will naturally become obsolete and disappear, just like in a process of natural selection and evolution.
- Treat other people's output as you would like yours to be treated, keeping in mind that imitation is still one of the highest forms of flattery, but that we have moved way past that simplistic form of content integration onto higher forms of remix culture and beyond, where everybody can win. New technologies will always bring with them new possibilities and probabilities that cannot be stopped or reversed. Therefore it is up to each of us to be creative in how not to lose profit but more importantly in how to gain new profit. And by profit I don't mean just money, but all that is made possible by being internet-worked. A new gateway to a new kind of enrichment.

References and Notes:

-Winner of the Flusser Award Distinction (Vilém Flusser Theory Award) at Transmediale.11, the work premiered at ISEA2010/RUHR – International Symposium on Electronic Art: Cyborgs and Transhumans. After ISEA2011/Istanbul, next presentations in 2011 at Moscow Biennale - Pro&Contra Symposium: Media Activism; the International Congress Image, Imagination, Fantasy. Twenty years without Vilém Flusser; virtually from Berlin, Germany at ABCiber Conference in Brazil; and at Festival CulturaDigital.Br at Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

-Initiated in May 2009 and completed in July 2010, in reality the work is morphing according to the interplay with the date and place where it's presented. And thus the work itself becomes Anthropophagic.

-This text is an abridged version fit to ISEA2011/Istanbul print format. For complete paper, video version, or if interested in publishing, or bringing this performative work to your programme please contact author.

-I am unfolding other forms of expression from my Re-Manifesto such as a film done via Facebook. The public is responding to the invitation by choosing phrases of my Re-Manifesto and self-recording reciting their lines and posting the clips on project page: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Re-Manifesto-Antropofagico-para-a-Era-Digital/174803579203744>. The video will also exist as a finalized edited piece and spread virally online for unrestricted reuse by third parties, following the inherent concept in Digital Anthropophagy. Please visit the Facebook link for more details on how to participate.

-More about the work on artist's websites:

- www.quietrevolution.me
- coming soon: www.vanessaramosvelasquez.me

-ISEA2011/Istanbul presentation sponsored in part by Step Beyond Travel Grants Programme / European Cultural Foundation.