

Cannibal feminist ethics: Rethinking Self/Other through act(s) of eating

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgement is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

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ABSTRACT

The Derridean carno-phallogocentric system involves a process of subjectivation built on the act of eating animal meat. The sacrificial structure permits the killing of animals yet obscures the existence of this specific type of violence that objectifies the Other. This functioning of Western societies instigates an ontological division between human/animal and positions the male meat-eater individual as the only full subject possible. I propose an intervention on this system by deconstructing Tupinamba cannibal rituals through a close reading of philosophical and anthropological literature as well as a decolonial and feminist remaking of concepts. By considering and theorizing biological insights, the *cannibal feminist ethics* proposes the reconceptualization of act(s) of eating as productive, collective and relational interactions between Self/Other. The process of subjectivation happens when the Self incorporates the perspective of the Other through the act of eating, according to radical imaginations around Amerindian perspectivism and the cosmologies behind Tupinamba cannibalism. In my thesis, the cannibal acts of eating are deconstructed as human sacrifices and their innovative politics of enmity are highlighted as a means of analyzing the deployment of violence. The kinship which takes place between killer/enemy in Tupinamba cannibalistic rituals and the mourning of the latter can be conceptualized as a recognition of the violence. Therefore, violence becomes a stride toward the final goal of relationality attained through the cannibal act of eating. In this way, the cannibal and their rituals break the colonial imagination around them and appear as innovative sites for rethinking subjectivity, interactions between Self/Other and the hierarchies of human/non-human.

Keywords: cannibal, feminism, ethics, sacrifice, enemy

RESUMO

A ordem carno-falocêntrica ocidental identificada por Jacques Derrida como fundamental nos processos de subjetivação se sustenta em uma estrutura sacrificial que permite o ato de comer animais. Esta estrutura possibilita a matança de animais de forma impune e renega a existência deste tipo de violência. Dessa forma, o funcionamento das sociedades ocidentais incentiva a divisão ontológica entre humano/animal e a instauração do indivíduo masculino comedor de carne animal como o único sujeito possível. Sugiro uma intervenção neste sistema mediante a desconstrução dos rituais canibais Tupinambá através de uma leitura atenta de textos filosóficos e antropológicos e da proposição de conceitos feministas e decoloniais. Após argumentar sobre a importância de saberes biológicos nos processos de teorização, a *ética canibal feminista* que sugiro reconceitualiza o(s) ato(s) de comer como contatos produtivos, coletivos e relacionais nas interações Eu/Outro. Considerando imaginações radicais que partam do perspectivismo Ameríndio e das cosmologias do canibalismo Tupinambá, os processos de subjetivação que defendo acontecem na incorporação da perspectiva do Outro no ato de comer. A consideração dos atos de comer canibais como sacrifícios humanos é desconstruída com base nas políticas de amizade que os regem e que ativam outra lógica da violência. O parentesco criado entre oficiante-executor/inimigo nos rituais canibais Tupinambá e o luto que o primeiro leva a cabo após a execução do inimigo podem ser conceitualizados como uma forma de reconhecimento da violência. Dessa forma, a violência é pensada como um estágio que vai ao encontro de uma relacionalidade, o objetivo final do ato canibal. É assim que o canibal e seus rituais rompem com a imaginação colonial que os construiu e se colocam como lugares radicais de pensamento da subjetividade, das relações entre Eu/Outro e das hierarquias entre

Humano/No-humano.

Palavras-chave: canibal, feminismo, ética, sacrifício, inimigo

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*esta caníbal sintió hambre, y le negaron la comida
estuvo llena, y le obligaron a comer
la empacharon de las más diversas formas
y, aún así, ella vomita y caga,
compulsivamente
y cuidadosamente.
yo soy la hija de la caníbal
otra caníbal.
socorro, eres un grito.*

**Para Juliana,
que me disse que tudo bem eu ser canibal**

What different modalities of the human come to light if we do not take the liberal humanist figure of Man as the master-subject but focus on how humanity has been imagined and lived by those subjects excluded from this domain?
– Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*

Chapter 1. A cannibalistic overview

The act of eating in the relation Self/Other has a genealogy which remarkable point, at least for the current thesis, takes place in the 15th and 16th centuries during colonization processes. The search for the spices that would be the metonymy of the refinement of European subjects' taste (Roy 2010, 6) already established a continental and overseas relationship between Self/Other constructed upon the act of eating and tasting. The act of eating and their consequential physiological procedures such as digesting, vomiting, and excreting have been one of my central interests over the last two years. Not only because this is something that I do every day, but because of all the synergies between different kinds of beings that it implicates and that appear worthy of study. These interactions destabilize hierarchies between humans/non-humans – when a bacterium is eating a human from the inside, for example – and disturb limits – like in the vomiting, when the food does not full its “natural” course toward the anus.

The act of eating is impossible to be conceptualized as an autonomous movement. For analyzing it, it is imperative to consider any kind of interaction, either with a consumption system, natural resources or any other humans or non-humans. Furthermore, the act of eating is very material and biological, but at the same time, it is full of symbolism. The symbolisms and discourses around eating differ culturally but are also suffering a process of homogenization due to global exchanges. All these discussions around eating, make of this act a place for several radical deconstructions and conceptualizations.

The Brazilian artistic and intellectual movement of Antropofagia, emerging in the 1920s and relying on the metaphors around the cannibal act of eating (human flesh), digesting, and vomiting, was one of the most radical theorizations in this field. Collaborations with my colleague Cristina Morales Ramos around Antropofagia through the development of “cannibal feminism”¹ (Morales Saro and Abril 2018) as an operative concept to examine Brazilian feminist artistic practices encouraged me to pursue the conceptual research around the connections of feminism and cannibalism². However, it was my encounter with the work of Eduardo Viveiros de Castro that pushed me into revising Tupinamba cannibalism as a place for radically conceptualizing the ethical relations between Self/Other. The ethnographic work around the Tupinamba relates with a very specific feminist ethics that started being developed from the 2000s in a scholarship called new materialism or material feminisms. The ethics proposed by new materialists, in a general way, intends to escape cultural relativism and call upon the very material consequences of ethical decisions (Alaimo and Hekman 2008, 7). This is one of the goals of my thesis when I decide to theoretically work around the real cannibalism that took place in Tupinamba societies. Indeed, the real cannibal – and not just their symbolisms –, constructed as the absolute Other of the European Subject, is the flawless example of process of Otherness centered in what is eaten, who eats it and the circumstance of this action.

¹ Cristina Morales Saro and Ana Abril, “Cannibal feminism as dissident practice against the spectacularization of censorship” (presentation, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, March 24, 2018). Cristina and I worked together on the concept of cannibal feminism, which has been a starting point for both of our theses. However, after the presentation at Harvard, we took different conceptualizations around what is cannibal feminism. While I went into the development of the *cannibal feminist ethics*, Cristina developed a critical feminist tool to contest the neoliberal geopolitics of the contemporary world and its metaphysics of knowledge. See more in Morales Saro 2018.

² When talking about the cannibal and cannibalism, the majority of the times I refer to the material and real act of humans eating human flesh. For more information about the etymology of the cannibal and their practices go to Chapter 2.

This thesis is a small part of the wider research that includes some artistic works around the act of eating, digesting, vomiting and excreting and questions of subjectivity, relations between Self/Other, humans/non-humans, hierarchies and categorizations. My engagement with this thematic includes not just metaphoric, metonymic, symbolic and philosophical conceptualizations, but also biomedical data and onto-epistemological discussions taking place in the realms of science, biology, anthropology and gender studies.

The aim of this MA-thesis is to propose a “cannibal feminist ethics”: a decolonial and non-anthropocentric set of ethics in the relationship between Self/Other through the reconceptualization of the act(s) of eating and starting from Viveiros de Castro’s ethnographical accounts of Tupinamba cannibalism. Before starting, I want to make it very clear that I did not do any ethnographic research, nor did I take as fact all the information around Tupinamba rituals given by Viveiros de Castro. Following the author, I prefer to think about the radical imaginations emerging from “treating indigenous ideas as concepts and then following the consequences of this decision” (Viveiros de Castro 2014, 187).

Through the act of eating human flesh, the cannibal Tupinamba rituals problematize established Western conceptualizations around the notions of Self/Other, subject/object, culture/nature, and propose different logics of violence, sacrifice and enmity. This avows a critique of the coloniality³ (Maldonado-Torres 2016, 10) and anthropocentrism of Western relations and epistemologies. To refer to the Western notions of subjectivity and relationships with the Other(s), I build upon Jacques Derrida’s conceptualization of *carno-phallogocentrism* (1991, 113), a structure characterizing the full subject as a man, meat-eater and authoritative

³ Throughout this thesis I use the concept of coloniality in opposition to that of colonization. For this distinction I follow Maldonado-Torres. Therefore, colonialism would refer to the historical process of the European expansion and the conquering of territories and bodies that took place in the late 15th century, while coloniality points to the on-going effects of colonization.

speaking Self (Adams 2015, xix). The conversations between Tupinamba cannibalism and carno-phallogocentrism are fruitful for disclosing power relations among human beings (the Indigenous and the European Subject) and between human beings and animals through the symbolic and material act of eating. In short, Viveiros de Castro's and Derrida's insights bring to the fore Indigenous and Western accounts, respectively, of subjectivation processes and the relationship between Self/Other through the act of eating. The analysis of both the eating of the cannibal and the eating of the Western subject enables different conceptualizations of the act of eating and its internal mechanisms of power, which in turn provides the tools for discussing radical subjectivation processes and reconceptualizations of the notion of enmity and violence; allowing new possibilities for the relationships between Self and Other, humans and non-humans.

According to the author of the "Anthropophagous Manifesto" (1928), Oswald de Andrade, the urgency for more radical ways of knowledge production calls for a conscious, critical, and non-hierarchical digestion of foundational literature as well as of those texts occupying the margins. For this reason, the methodology of my project is mainly based on the close readings of Viveiros de Castro and Derrida's texts as well as reviews of their works by other scholars, such as Nicola Perullo or Anahí González. The conversation between Derrida and Indigenous cosmologies is fundamental for the development of a decolonial thinking capable of deconstructing the Western propositions that predominate in academia. I complete my work with different theorists' approximations on the question of ethical relationships in cannibalism and Antropofagia – namely, Catalin Avramescu, Suely Rolnik, and Mario Cámara – and processes of subjectivation and the relationship Self/Other in the act of eating – Elspeth Probyn, bell hooks, and Parama Roy. Besides Derrida, the majority of scholars

who have informed my theoretical framework work with postcolonial and decolonial propositions and they do not occupy the traditional centers of knowledge production.

In this first chapter, I start by providing an overview on the literature already written on cannibalism and processes of subjectivation happening in the act of eating and I refer to the confluences and departures between my work and these texts. Afterwards, I refer to the main theoretical tools and interlocutors informing this thesis.

What has been said about the cannibal? What has the cannibal said?

Torture a person to death by force-feeding them with the pages of their own favorite book, covering the naked body of your enemy with dog shit, raping your wife in front of a child. Even worse than all these atrocities, the biggest calamity that a human could commit is that of eating another human being: the act of cannibalism. This is one of the main conclusions that can be reached from the film *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover* (Greenaway 1989). This is only one example of a Western cultural representation of cannibalism. However, this idea is prevalent in several portrayals of the act of eating human flesh. Therefore, the cannibal has never had much to tell, or better said, has never had the opportunity to say anything.

In her book *Carnal Appetites* (2005), Elspeth Probyn locates the figure of the cannibal within contemporary discussions of consumerism and modern capitalism. She refers to how cannibalism is still brought up in existing debates to legitimize violent processes of otherization (Probyn 2005, 90), as it was established during colonization. Moreover, she states how this term is used in the macroeconomic sphere to point out the fear of being *cannibalized* by big markets or companies (Probyn 2005, 85). According to the author, the cannibal replicates the *homo sacer* doubledness: “as a term of abuse it serves to designate

the other as beyond the pale, as not human, and, at the same time, it evokes fears of being absolutely engulfed in the other” (2005, 96). The process of being changed by a consumerist or cannibalistic encounter with the Other (bell hooks 1992, 368) has also been criticized by bell hooks’ account of power and commodification in inter-racial sexual desire. The author claims that the willingness to eat the Other’s difference is in line with overcoming the sameness that terrorizes and bores the white subject (bell hooks 1992, 367). I agree with Probyn and hooks that “eating the Other” can be a means of appropriating them and maintaining power and privilege (hooks 1992, 378). Nevertheless, I also think that “eating the Other” can be conceptualized as a movement which considers the perspective of the Other for the subjectivation process of the Self. Indeed, elsewhere in her book, Probyn notices the potential connection between cannibalism, ethics and subjectivity: “[...] in our moral exhaustion, the cannibal recalls in an elemental way that we desperately need alternative modes of organizing ourselves and our relations to others” (2005, 83). A positive cannibalistic conception of the relationships with the Others has been one of the main goals of the intellectual and artistic movement of Antropofagia, emerging in the 1920s in Brazil. For reconceptualizing the negative meanings of the cannibal and their rituals, Antropofagia is a radical site of theorization that serves me as a starting point.

The real cannibalism taking place in the 16th century on the Brazilian coast became a metaphor for the development of Antropofagia. This cannibalism consisted in the eating of the enemy warriors with the goal of incorporating their point of view. By the inevitable incorporation of the Other into the own body, Antropofagia exposes the impossibility of a pure and universal Self, thought, and culture (Secretaria de Extension Facultad Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educacion - UNLP n.d.). This movement – led by the young artists and thinkers Oswald de Andrade, Tarsila do Amaral and Mario de Andrade – claimed the rethinking of art

and theory upon the Brazilian experience of miscegenation (Indigenous and European), which should be approached from a critical and conscious perspective. The “Anthropophagous Manifesto” (1928) (Andrade 1976) was inspired by the Abaporu, Tarsila do Amaral’s painting that represents a bizarre human, the Sun and a cactus. The representation of this individual as having a human body with big feet and a small head depicts the main claim of this movement: the singularity of the embodied experience of the mixed Brazilian (the big feet) against the universal “pure” and homogenizing European culture and theory (the small head). For its critique of colonial modernity and Occidentalism (Jáuregui 2015), some scholars have referred to Antropofagia as the precursor of decolonial thinking (Ferreira Vargas Netto 2014, 284).

For escaping the negative modern imagination around the cannibal, I acknowledge the decolonial potential of Antropofagia and I perceive it as a dissident voice coming from an old tradition that took place in Brazil (Rolnik 1998, 3). This voice has reverberated through several perspectives within and outside the national frontiers⁴. One that served me as a genesis for the rethinking of subjectivation processes in a cannibal context is that of the Brazilian psychoanalyst and scholar Suely Rolnik. Opposing the “identity-figurative principle” (Rolnik 1998, 13) which has defined subjectivities over the last 40 years, Rolnik proposes the Anthropophagic Subjectivity (1998). In her text, Rolnik posits a global crisis that the whole of humanity is living: the lack of a consistent and palpable subjectivity (1998, 2) that is substituted by a flexible and globalized identity, which can be easily capitalized (1998, 18). Contrary to this, Rolnik recalls a heterogenic and dynamic subjectivity, the anthropophagic one, that is consistent with the history of continuous miscegenation of every Brazilian (1998,

⁴ It is, probably, the most famous “theory” coming from this country. However, still is not known in several academic discussions outside the bubble of Latin American Studies.

4). The characteristics of the anthropophagic subjectivity reclaim the prominence of the body as a sensitive and vibratil operator that provokes change, knows and grasps knowledge and guides the subject (Rolnik 1998). Despite the innovative and stimulating propositions of Rolnik around a subjectivity guided by an ethical desire (Rolnik 1998, 13-14), this specific work with Deleuzian influences leaves unsettled how this ethicality would be achieve if one of the main points is that one cannot be subscribed to any system of references (Rolnik 1998, 3-4). This claim could be seen as problematic because it does not touch upon the idea that the subjectivity and the body has been ontologized within a system of references linked to historical experiences of subjugation, discrimination and exploitation together with the influences of the historical and contemporary biopolitical and disciplinary techniques. For that reason, I take the radical imagination from Rolnik, but I rather focus in the historicity and specificity of cannibalism through its Derridean deconstruction.

In contrast to its apparently decolonial project, Antropofagia has also been criticized for its elitism and whiteness. In a Facebook publication, Tiago Sant’Ana claims that “antropofágico” is the worst description that his work as a black artist from the northeastern region of Brazil can receive. Sant’Ana argues that the devouring of the European culture claimed by the Anthropophagic Movement is impossible because this culture is based on the destruction and silencing of the subaltern aesthetics and projects (Facebook post, May 22, 2018). In a presentation at the University of Warwick, following Sérgio Bellei’s claim, Nelson Schuchmacher Endebo⁵ points out the necessity of decolonizing Antropofagia and refers to this movement’s relation to an intellectual classism, a similar critique to Sant’Ana’s one. I consider this criticism highly pertinent and accurate. However, what I am claiming with the

⁵ Nelson Schuchmacher Endebo, “The Ethnographic Effect; or, Some Thoughts on Antropofagia, its Past and Future” (presentation, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK, November 17, 2018).

methodology and theoretical framework of my thesis is an emancipatory and decolonial way of intervening in Antropofagia by drawing on the anthropological accounts of Tupinamba cosmologies, instead of coming back to the Manifesto by Oswald de Andrade as the main reference. This being said, how do I comply and separate from Brazilian Antropofagia?

I am influenced by and willing to perpetuate one of the maxims of Oswald de Andrade when he published his “Anthropophagous Manifesto”: the creation of a radical social imagination (with utopian tendencies) and its approach through a subversive epistemology aiming to reintegrate marginalized communities (Vargas Netto 2014, 283). By following a movement of Derridean deconstruction, that I also conceive as feminist, I place the marginalized figure of the cannibal as a potential site for rethinking questions of subjectivity and relations with the Other through the process of eating.

Predominantly, the concept of Antropofagia and cannibalization is used in the examination of cultural artifacts, especially literature (Arruda Leite 2016, more examples), and in the approximation between international theories and specific Brazilian contexts. Nemi Neto, for example, uses the concept of Antropofagia to analyze Brazilian literature and film in order to discuss the resonance between queer theory and national gay context (Nemi Neto 2015, iv). The translation of gender studies and queer theory from the North-American tradition into the Brazilian university has also been tackled under the umbrella of Antropofagia by César Lugarinho (2010, 106). However, I am more interested in the potential of philosophical conceptualization (Vargas Netto 2014, 283-284) based on the act of eating the Other. Again, this claim is less related to Antropofagia and more to the work of Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. For this reason, I started my research by investigating anthropological accounts of Tupinamba cosmologies and rituals by Viveiros de Castro. Relating to this, bell hooks has criticized the notion that “the primitive is sent up into the service of the Western

tradition (which is then seen to have partly produced it)” (1992, 368). This claim could be addressed toward my thesis – based on my use of indigenous rituals and ideas for the conceptualization of Western concerns and problematics. However, my use of anthropological accounts of native rituals for rethinking Western concepts is based on a “reciprocal assumption that the procedures that characterize the investigation are conceptually of the same order as the procedures investigated” (Pereira da Silva 2016, 580; my translation). Moreover, I believe that “treating indigenous ideas as concepts entails regarding them as carrying a philosophical meaning or a potential philosophical use” (Viveiros de Castro 2014, 189) instead of leaving them in the realm of the exoticized mythologies and non-academic considerations.

The animal in the eating relation of Self/Other

The rethinking of the relationship between Self/Other on the basis of an ontological prioritization of the Other is not exclusive to the connection between the cannibal and the enemy in the Tupinamba rituals. Emmanuel Levinas also decentralized the transcendental Self and proposed the Other by virtue of a subjectivity capable of embracing an infinite alterity (cited in Colling and Tedeschi 2019, 39). However, Levinas negates any possibility of subjectivity being given to the animal. Indeed, the most original ways of discussing Western metaphysics have left the animal outside of the equation. Due to not having an unconscious (Freud), *Dasein* (Heidegger) or face (Levinas), the animal has been disregarded in the discussion of subjectivity (Derrida 1991, 105).

When included in ethics and politics, animals enter into these realms through an extension of the idea of equality and rights in which they are also included as beneficiaries (González 2016, 136). Here, the colonial man is still the Subject determining which rights there

are and who receives these rights. The animal Other-as-an-equal still arises from a metaphysical conception of the Subject that needs sacrificial Others to emerge (González 2016, 126). In other words, the different beings continue to be thought of as substantial identities with specific attributes. Considering that, it is thought that animals can be protected within the same system and through the same colonial institutions that violate them (González 2016, 130). This is the main critique I make of Carol J. Adams's postulation of the objectification that women and animals suffer under the carnivorous male subject. The author recalls the absent referent and the metaphor as fundamental tools allowing violence in the West (2015, 22). According to Adams, both women and animals are the absent referents allowing rape with impunity and eating meat, two means of physical oppression hidden through the use of metaphors like "meat", which obscure the references to dead animals, for example (2015, 21). I comply with Adams in her claim that language, or some conceptualizations, obfuscates the material reality behind the metaphor. For this reason, I claim a metonymical way of thinking that values biology and materiality in the creation of concepts. However, I diverge from deconstructing the symbolism behind the act of eating meat and, instead, I propose to conflate the symbolism and the materiality of eating. Adams claims a feminist-vegan critical theory (2015, 63) allowing more ethical and less violent relationships between humans and non/humans. However, I argue for a different approach to the question of the animal, which aligns more closely with new materialist insights and Derrida. In *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2002), Derrida proposes a deconstruction of the hierarchical opposition between human/animal by destabilizing this ontological duality that gives more (or any) political rights to the former over the latter. According to Derrida, to undermine the violence of humanism and its conceptualization of the animal is necessary to

reconsider the metaphysical anthropocentric axioma dominating Western thought around fair and unfair (Derrida 1997 cited in González 131; my translation).

Following Derrida (1998) and Viveiros de Castro (1992, 286), I believe that eating is always a symbolic assimilation of the Other. Independent of the practice of real or symbolic cannibalism, the consumption of flesh or meat (either human or animal) is inevitable. The question will then be, as Derrida says, how this act of eating and incorporating provides a means of addressing oneself to the other (1998, 115). One way, as I propose later in this thesis, is to conflate the symbolism and the materialism of eating. Moreover, instead of criticizing the violence of eating animals (as well as humans), I propose a de-centering of the human subject and the revealing of another logic of the violence. Therefore, the ethics I claim in the relationship Self/Other is neither vegan nor animal eater, but cannibalistic.

In other words, I am not trying to delimit who is the subject and the Other in the act of eating, but rather to uncover the mechanisms that conceptualized certain subjects as such and which assert certain power relations. In doing this, I propose new concepts allowing for less violent relations between human and non-humans. For me, contrary to Adams, the movement is not an elimination of the violence that the animal suffers when it is erased as a referent in the eating of meat, but a disclosure of the Western notion of violence and the proposition of another logic of violence – the one taking place in the Tupinamba cannibalism – that does not distinguish ontologically between animals and humans.

To sum up, the reasons I decided to work on the relationship between Self/Other through the act of eating are based, first, on an agreement with Derrida around the impossibility of not assimilating the Other, sometimes materially and always symbolically. Second, on the feminist claim of re-centering the body and its viscosity as a site of knowledge. What is more embodied than the fundamental and material act of eating? And

third, the belief that it is necessary to offer a decolonial and non-anthropocentric intervention by putting together the ethics of a human eating human meat (the cannibal) and of a human eating animal meat (the Western Subject) as a way to reveal different politics of enmity and logics of violence.

Theoretical interlocutors

The main arguments of my thesis start from or enter into conversation, mainly, with the work of Jacques Derrida and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. René Girard's book around the notion of sacrifice and Achille Mbembe's location of the colonial and contemporary enemies in the Western context also occupy a big part of my theoretical framework, primarily in Chapter 3.

One of the main concepts that is reiterated along this thesis is that of "deconstruction" by Derrida (in Sallis 1989). This notion is fundamental in my work, as I locate this thesis as an exercise of deconstructing the figure of the cannibal, the act of eating, the relation between Self/Other, processes of subjectivation, and politics of enmity. The Derridean deconstruction, born from the *Destruktion* by Heidegger (cited in Sallis 1989), aims to problematize the historical layers assumed to be sedimented in the concepts, which allow a consistent and uniform (Western and anthropocentric) way of thinking (Colling and Tedeschi 2019, 157; my translation). For example, when deconstructing the figure of the cannibal, I return to the origins of the word, its uses, and its different conceptualizations with the intention of situating it in a "network of meaning and constructions" (González 2016, 136). Locating the term as the product of a historical, discursive and political trajectory (González 2016, 136) allows new radical propositions around the idea of the cannibal and cannibalism. Indeed, deconstruction encompasses a "detour – at once difference and deferral" (Naas 2015, 103) looking for

different starting points which allow alternative histories that are not within History (Naas 2015, 103). The work of deconstruction, according to Carla Rodrigues (in Colling and Tedeschi 2019, 158; my translation), functions through the identification of a hierarchical binarism in the metaphysical tradition; then, a focus on the subordinated opposition; and finally, “a displacement of the concepts that were founded on this oppositional difference” (Derrida cited in Colling and Tedeschi 2019, 157; my translation). The task of deconstruction is always infinite and unfinished as it proposes searching for a singular answer in each context and it contradicts any universal formula (González 2016, 133). Finally, Derrida’s deconstruction is concomitant with Viveiros de Castro’s narrative of “shuffling the hierarchies embedded in concepts such as center and periphery, metropolis and colony, civilization and savagery” (Ferreira Vargas Netto 2014, 285; my translation), which in turn, is aligned with decolonial propositions.

Keeping this in mind, this thesis works to deconstruct the concept of the cannibal, taking the cannibal rituals by Tupinamba people as reference. Therefore, I would like to clarify where the theory about Tupinamba rituals comes from and what my political and conceptual relationship is to these practices. Because of the metaphysical conceptualizations and political implications this entails, I have chosen to focus on the work of the Brazilian Americanist ethnologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, which looks at the cosmologies of the Tupinamba people, an extinct society that belongs to the Tupi-Guarani language family. The main focus of the fieldwork carried out by Viveiros de Castro was on conceptualizing the Araweté metaphysics considering their unique ontology (Viveiros de Castro 1992, xv). This fieldwork was conducted over twelve months, divided among different time periods between 1981 and 1988. Mystico-funerary cannibalism, which does not include the material act of eating human flesh, was fundamental for the Araweté’s cosmopolitical institutions. This kind

of cannibalism is a structural transformation of the real Tupinamba bellico-sociological cannibalism – a system of capture, execution, and ceremonial consumption of their enemies (Viveiros de Castro 1992, 2014). For understanding Araweté metaphysics, Viveiros de Castro had to delve into Tupinamba cosmologies; and these accounts about the Tupinamba, together with Viveiros de Castro's own conceptualizations, are the raw material for my discussion in this thesis. In *From the enemy's point of view* (1992), Viveiros de Castro explains that his work on the Araweté is a traditional ethnography guided by his own concerns (1992, xvi) while the data about the Tupinamba comes from 16th and 17th century texts (1992, translator's note). This book is an important reference for investigating the rituals of Tupinamba people and because of the author's formulation of their actantial schema. However, it is in *Cannibal Metaphysics* (2014) that Viveiros de Castro offers innovative reflections and conceptualizations that inspire my own thought. The choice in my thesis to conceptualize the real cannibalism of the Tupinamba instead of the mystic-funerary cannibalism of the Araweté⁶ is very telling. The political and epistemological implications of this decision are intertwined. Firstly, I am problematizing the colonality that would disregard the real cannibalism as an impossible way of rethinking ethics. Secondly, I am opposing the ontological anthropocentrism which supports the killing of the animals for eating, but not the killing of humans. Indeed, the analysis of the real cannibalism and its comparison with the eating of animals presupposes the inexistence of an ontological separation between humans and animals, but an epistemological one (I will deep on this when referring to the Amerindian cosmologies in Chapter 2). And thirdly, the analysis of the real cannibalism allows a

⁶ The Araweté's cannibalistic acts belonged merely to the realm of the symbolic because what was eaten were the souls of the dead by the celestial divinities (the Maï), there was not a real cannibalism (Viveiros de Castro 2014, 140).

problematization of the separation between symbolic/material act of eating that is fundamental for the argument of this thesis.

My engagement with Jacques Derrida aims to bring to the discussion the question of the animal, that, conceptually and politically can be connected with that of the cannibal, both considered as less-than-human. Furthermore, it is relevant that this relation of human/animal in Derrida is also approached through the act of eating. In the course of his trajectory, Jacques Derrida has been one of the main critics of the anthropocentrism in the rethinking of the subject and the relationship between Self/Other that characterizes the Western philosophical tradition. *The Animal that Therefore I Am* (2002) and “‘Eating Well’ or the calculation of the subject” (1991) are the main works which address the question of the division between human/animal. In the latter, Derrida touches upon what he calls the *carno-phallogocentric subject* (Naas 2015, 103) as the full subject in Western societies. One of the ways in which this individual achieves full subjectivity is by eating animal meat. The animal and the cannibal are used as less-Other(s) for the construction of the Western subject: remarkably, the animal is bestialized, and the cannibal is animalized. However, Tupinamba cosmologies bring another notion of soul/body that do not presume an ontological division between human/animal. The Amerindian way of thinking about different beings as having different perspectives instead of qualities (Viveiros de Castro 2014, 12) deconstruct the division between human/animal based in the idea of tasting/eating, for example. Moreover, the reason behind Tupinamba cannibalism, that is the incorporation of the perspective of the Other, allows a metaphysical understanding of eating a human while problematizes the eating of the animal for being a way of marking a categorical distinction of the human over the animal. Therefore, Derrida’s discussion around the fundamentality of eating animal meat for the subject formation is ideal for entering into conversation with the eating process of the cannibals, and subsequently for

analyzing and deconstructing the process of subject formation and the relationship between Self/Other in the cannibal rituals. For this reason, Derrida's insights about the question of the animal and the importance of eating as a metonymy for the relation of Self/Other and for incorporation (Derrida 1991, 115) will be present throughout the thesis. Finally, to reinforce how I tackle the relationship between human/animal through the Tupinamba cannibalism, I claim that by radically questioning the notion of Western subject and subjectivation processes as well as the different logics of violence, another way of thinking about relationships between human/animal is enabled.

Furthermore, Derrida, in his seminar "The Best and the Sovereign" (2009b), locates the connections between subject and violence by using the concept of sacrifice to denote a naturalized murder of animals with the alimentary vindication – that is not conceptualized as killing but as sacrifice – fundamental for the establishment of a male meat-eater subject (González 2016, 131). To deepen in the notion of what Derrida calls the sacrificial structure, I analyze the characteristics of sacrifice according to one of the main scholars that worked this theme: René Girard. In his book *Violence and the Sacred* (2005), Girard conceptualizes Tupinamba cannibalism as human sacrifice. Therefore, I bring together his notions with Viveiros de Castro's study around the Tupinamba. This conversation shows several contradictions between Tupinamba cosmology and Girard's concept of sacrifice. For being a notion that obscure or allows certain types of violence, I intend to complicate the Tupinamba cannibalism as sacrifice. For doing that, it is also necessary to discuss the location of this ritual by Viveiros de Castro in the paradigm of sacrifice.

One way in which the sacrificial structure can be destabilized is by the relationship between sacrificer/victim, i.e. Self/Other when the Other is embraced as a friend, a figure of a radical Other that comes first and is interpellated into the Self (Derrida cited in González

1016, 135). When there is not a possibility of sacrificial victim, the sacrifice begins to lose one of its main conceptual ground. While the animals in the West do not occupy this position of prioritization, the enemy in Tupinamba cosmologies is considered as the Other fundamental to the formation of the Self. For this reason, the conceptualization of the Tupinamba's cannibalistic ritual as sacrifice falls into a distorted Western vision that obfuscates the potentialities of the different structures of violence which are proposed. By questioning the location of Tupinamba cannibalism as a human sacrifice, I allow another way of thinking violence that does not rest on the sacrificial structure (Derrida 1991), which avows the dominance of humans over non-humans.

In traditional Greek philosophy, the conceptualization of alterity occurs through the exclusion of the Other who was not integrated into the polis, the Other as a non-friend (Colling and Tedeschi 2019, 39; my translation). Through a radical politics of enmity, the Tupinamba cannibalism proposes a relation between Self/Other in which the Other-as-enemy is killed as a way to incorporate their alterity. While Schmitt's traditional distinction between friend and enemy refers either to an intensive association or disassociation (cited in Zarria and Maschke 2019), the roles of enemy and ally in the cannibalism are in a constant state of relational movement and reciprocity. Moreover, the enemy, at some point of the ritual, becomes kin with their own killer, which complicates the opposite poles of associating and dissociating, friend and enemy. Referring to Schmitt, Mbembe describes the enemy as the "individual whose physical death is warranted by their existential denial of our own being" (Mbembe 2016, 26). In an oppositional movement, the physical death of the Tupinamba's enemy is not necessary for neutralizing the threat to the physical integrity of the community, but rather for allowing the individual and communal establishment of ethical relationships.

In this final part of the section, I would like to touch upon my interaction with new materialist and psychoanalytic insights. While I focus on the inescapable symbolism of the act of eating (Derrida 1991) for my conceptualizations in this thesis, I promptly consider new materialist insights of the body. For example, my conceptualization of the act of eating as an inevitable act of tasting comes from the biological consideration that eating immediately puts the taste buds into operation. It can be said that, similarly to Derrida – who uses the mouth as a place of ideality and sensibility (Perullo n.d., 5) – I move toward “understanding the material [and the biological] in discursive terms” (Alaimo and Hekman 2008, 88), but also toward the use of the material for theoretical conceptualizations. For example, the article “Derrida on Eating and Taste: Toward a gastronomy to-come” by Nicola Perullo is a relevant source in my thesis for claiming the importance of the body and its material functions for philosophical knowledge creation (n.d., 1). Perullo analyzes how Derrida develops a “philosophy of the gastronomical” investigating the implications of eating, metabolism, assimilation, and repulsion (n.d., 2) and making theoretical concepts with them. Although I have related my research to some of the main new materialist’s claim – especially that of creating new understandings in the binarism of discourse/matter in which neither of the oppositions imposes over the other – I mostly argue for the introduction of the question of matter into the theorization rather than actually making this movement (Alaimo and Hekman 2008, 6). However, this is one of the main ways in which I would like to continue this research, by deepening into ontological questions of the human and non-human matter by considering Indigenous metaphysics, biological data and information around the act of eating.

Finally, symbolism and the act of eating inevitably recall psychoanalytic accounts of ambivalence, incorporation, identification, introjection, and especially, the cannibalistic or oral-sadistic stage (Laplanche, Pontalis, and Lagache 1996, 153). How do I incorporate

psychoanalysis in my project? Although I make use of the psychoanalytic terminology, I do not directly engage with this field of study. The only place I refer to psychoanalysis is at the end of Chapter 3, when I criticize the conflation of identification and ambivalence that guides Viveiros de Castro into locating Tupinamba cannibalism as an example of human sacrifice. My recalling of psychoanalysis can be seen as out-of-blue and, indeed, lacks more in-depth engagement – which I plan to incorporate in my further research. Nevertheless, it seemed impossible to escape referring to Freud’s connection of ambivalence and identification.

I think cannibalism is challenging not just on an epistemological level. The cannibal provokes us at a deeper, ontological, level. How can cannibalism's existence be justified? This question is particularly difficult, since the coming into being of the cannibal implies the disappearance of other beings. If this is true, then an examination of cannibalism is bound to induce a species of metaphysical unease.
(Avramescu 2010, 2)

Chapter 2. Human meat is tasteful: deconstructing cannibalistic eating as an alternative to Western conceptualizations of the act of eating

The ethics surrounding the act of eating are generally established depending on those who eat, on those who are being eaten, and the politics of violence and consumption between them. The reason is that eating is conceptualized as a fundamental act for surviving but also, in the West, as a pleasurable pastime. Supposedly, to eat animal meat is justified by the necessity of incorporating nutritional proteins, but also because of their valuable taste. While humans, apparently, have this ability to appreciate the taste of food, animals just eat for survival reasons and they do not have the qualification to taste. The apparently discernment in the qualification for tasting and in the eating for surviving also implicates different categories of subjects and its ethical abilities. How are these premises sustained? While these assumptions are taken for granted, I argue for the deconstruction of these Western, colonial and anthropocentric notions with the aim of unveiling the kind of ethics underlying the relationship of Self/Other through the act of eating. To do this, I use the exoticized figure of the cannibal as the representation of the Other eater without taste (savage, irrational, devourer) of the European subject (with pure and ideal taste). This notion of ideal and material taste is centered when questioning the differentiation between human/cannibal-animal. For this reason, I argue that it is worth deconstructing the idea of tasting and eating before trying to discuss the ethics in different conceptualizations of the act of eating.

Therefore, the question guiding this chapter is: how do the cannibal and the cannibal rituals of Tupinamba people problematize the normalized ethics of eating in the West?

Avramescu's example of the cannibal, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, raises the question of the ethics of eating humans and urges for a deeper analysis into issues of ontological and metaphysical relationships. The Amerindian cosmologies which legitimize cannibalism are radical interventions into the Western categorical division based on attributes, that qualify those who can eat and those who can be eaten. In conversation with the Western conceptualization of the act of eating animals, cannibalism brings another materialist and symbolic logic of putting the Other through the mouth.

In(corpora)ting tasting in the concept of eating

The cannibal with their less-than-human, animalized and monstrous status appears not to have any kind of taste. They are perceived as savages, who can eat everything, even the inedible human flesh. They represent the opposition to the Western *carno-phallogocentric subject* (Derrida 1991, 113) with his pure and ideal taste. However, the cannibal is an omnivorous subject who is defined by their very specific taste: for putting human flesh into their mouth. Here, I want to propose the cannibal as an eater who has a specific taste for, afterwards, equating the concept of eating and tasting. For the deconstruction of the cannibal as a devourer without taste, I want to recall Elspeth Probyn's chapter about cannibalism. After analyzing the book *Heart of Darkness* (1899) by Joseph Conrad, Probyn refers to the cannibal as that who "represents restraint, that most impossible of modern attributes" (2005, 101). This conclusion came after considering a reflection by the main character, Charlie Marlow, about how the natives on board, despite their hunger, did not commit cannibalism. On the other hand, the European Kurtz represented greed and pretence through his actual and

metaphorical consumption of people. Probyn concludes by saying that “the white capitalist becomes a cannibal” (2005, 101). While I differ from Probyn in this statement because it reinforces the negativity of the term cannibal, I claim that the cannibal, in fact, is not a greedy devourer, meaning that they hungrily eat great quantities of food. On the contrary, in the Tupinamba cannibal ritual I will refer to in the next pages, the amount of human flesh eaten by each cannibal is very small, merely symbolic. The act of eating human flesh does not equate with gluttony or savagery, but it can involve a very specific taste. For this reason, I want to disentangle the idea of the cannibal as a devourer and, instead, propose the cannibal as just an eater with a taste: a human eater. The origin and development of the word cannibal, in fact, shows how the term has suffered the negative impressions of colonization processes, withdrawing from it the quality of tasting and imprinting the idea of savagery.

The term *anthropophagi*, referring to a human eating their own kind, originated from the Roman writer Pliny the Elder, and was used by Columbus to refer to the Indians who were called “Caribs”. The mispronunciation of the word “Carib” by the Spaniards (Adams 2015, 9) resulted in the term *cannibal* which still had the connotation of *anthropophagi* (Loomba 2005, 54). Furthermore, and what is more interesting, the term *cannibal* started being used to refer to natives within the Caribbean and Mexico who did not practice cannibalism, but who were resistant to the colonizers⁷. Considering this, the word *cannibal* began to refer to those savages who could turn against Europeans and devour them, while the word *anthropophagi* referred to savages eating their own kind⁸ (Loomba 2005, 66). Here, we can see the double

⁷ Peter Hulme and Robert Miles refer to how notions about the non-Europeans were reshaped due to specific colonial practices. Therefore, “the idea of cannibalism was directly applied to justify brutal colonialist practices” (quoted in Loomba 2005, 54).

⁸ At this point, it seems important to signal the contemporary etymological difference between *cannibalism* and *anthropophagy*. While the former refers to a being “eating the flesh of one's own species” (Oxford Dictionary), the latter indicates “the eating of human flesh by human beings” (Oxford Dictionary). To recapitulate, a human eating human flesh would be both a cannibal and an *anthropophagi*; while a tiger eating tiger flesh would be a cannibal. In Spanish and especially

standard in the ethics of eating human flesh. When those who are being eaten are indigenous people, the subject of eating is conceptualized in its more literal form: eaters of human beings. On the other hand, when those who are being eaten are the Europeans, the eaters are qualified as savages and they are animalized. Indeed, the word *cannibal* is etymologically connected to the Latin *canis*, meaning dog (Loomba 2005, 66). Therefore, the violence against the Europeans is exposed by naming the Other perpetrator as an animal, which in turn gives this idea of bestiality and savagery. However, the same violence against the Indigenous people is conceptualized as a mere cultural tradition⁹. In the conference “Bites Here and There: Literal and Metaphorical Cannibalism across disciplines” at University of Warwick, the professor Manuel Barcia referred to several historical narratives around the different use of the term cannibal. In historical accounts of cannibalism committed by European, the eaters were refer as “humans eating human flesh” while the term “cannibal” was, and still is, linked with the eating act committed by people of color or Other-than-Europeans (Adams 2015, 9; Barcia 2018¹⁰). In this short chronicle of the term, cannibalism appears as a slippery concept whose use does not only depend on who is the eater and who is being eaten, but on a racial Otherization and animalization of the cannibal against the white European subject. As a matter of fact, the symbolical act of eating the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, for example, has never been conceptualized as cannibalism (Avramescu 2010, 3)

in Portuguese because of the Anthropophagic Movement both terms *cannibalism* and *anthropophagy* are used distinctively. However, in English, the word *anthropophagy* was cannibalized, symbolically speaking, by the term *cannibalism*. It is striking how the word cannibal is used in everyday English only to refer to “humans eating human flesh”, but not to other species eating their own kind (it is very rare to hear that a tiger is a cannibal). The origin of the term makes clear all the constructions and the power relations hidden in the words *cannibalism* and *anthropophagy*.

⁹ In Chapter 3, I point out to how the working of sacrifice in the West is veiled while there is an energetic academic interest of conceptualizing cannibalism as human sacrifice. I believe that the equation of cannibalism and human sacrifice aims to call upon a cultural relativism to avoid cross-cultural judgements within intellectual domains.

¹⁰ Manuel Barcia, “White Cannibals, Enslaved Africans, and the pitfalls of the British Colonial System in Jamaica at the time of Abolition” (lecture, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK, November 17, 2018).

I mention all this in order to argue that taste, as the figure of the cannibal, has been conceptualized as a colonial and anthropocentric quality used to distinguish the European subject from the cannibal savage and the animal. After Pierre Bourdieu's survey on class and consumption of food and alcohol in the early 1960s, the author's argument locates taste as a question of culture that is embodied and becomes a matter of nature. In Bourdieu's own words: taste "is an incorporated principle of classification which governs all forms of incorporation, choosing and modifying everything that the body ingests and digests and assimilates, physiologically and psychologically" (quoted in Probyn 2005, 27). Following this, there is an implied differentiation between ideal taste (culture) and physical taste (nature), the former governing the latter. While the European subject belong to the realm of culture, the cannibal and the animal are associated with nature. In a similar manner, Friedrich Hegel considers the opposition *taste/simple nutrition* as two different forms of eating that ontologically separates *human/animal*. While the latter has a negative relation with the objects, by just swallowing them, the human does not devour, but incorporates them (Derrida 2009a, 2). From this distinction emerges the idea of subjectivity as such, a realm only belonging to the human (Perullo n.d., 3; first version). According to Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, there is another difference between humans and animals based on their taste. While animals have a very specific taste, men are omnivorous. These "tasting powers" of men would exempt them from ethical responsibility because as they can biologically eat everything, they should be able to, ethically, eat everything (Brillat-Savarin 1949, 44). However, this logic does not apply to the possibility of eating human flesh, which is a biological option but not an ethical one. In fact, the eating of human flesh would decrease the tasting power of the human subject and locate them in the realm of monstrosity, animality or less-than-humanity to which the cannibal belongs.

I want to deconstruct the distinction between tasting and eating that separates human/cannibal-animal by leaning on Derrida's *exemplorality* (Derrida and Klein 1981, 16), his deconstruction of Kant's notion of pure taste. To do this, Derrida touches upon the hierarchization of senses (Perullo n.d., 5): those employed for the appreciation of Fine-Arts (cognitive and high senses) and those whose purpose is pleasure (non-cognitive and low senses). The physical taste, together with the smell, belongs to the lower senses. In opposition to this, Derrida proposes the mouth "as a place of ideality and sensibility" (logos and taste) (quoted in Perullo n.d., 5), deconstructing the pure ideality of taste and calling upon gastronomical taste (Perullo n.d., 5). Ultimately, the very real notions of disgust and vomit are considered by Derrida as the origin of pure taste for turning back against actual tasting (Derrida and Klein 1981, 16). As the place of vital breath, logos, chewing, introjecting and expulsing, the mouth is the center of the analogy governing the hierarchical relationships between humanity and animality (Perullo n.d., 5). By adhering to Derrida and Perullo calling upon the *exemplorality* (Derrida and Klein 1981, 16) and the *gastronomical taste* (Perullo n.d., 5), respectively, I want to prevent the conceptual division between eating and taste.

In my proposed conceptualization of the act of eating, taste is intrinsic to eating, both in a material and in a symbolic way. For this conceptualization, I rely on the biological description which maintains that the act of eating (putting food into the mouth and swallow it), inevitably, activates the taste buds. This biological functioning of the body supports my argument that taste is present before, during, and after the act of eating, and that it is impossible to eat and not to taste. By conflating eating and tasting, I oppose Bourdieu and Hegel's use of the concept of taste as a classificatory and hierarchical division between the European subject and their Others (the cannibal and the animal). In fact, the Hegelian distinction between taste/simple nutrition based on an incorporation of the Other does not

sustain because the incorporation takes places in the act of eating, not in the act of tasting. Reinforcing Perullo's answer to his own question, that he also poses as a response to Derrida's implicit question "do animals have taste?", the answer would be "yes", as taste is not an ideal pure principle, but an embodied one (n.d., 3; first version). I am not claiming, like Bourdieu, that ideal taste predetermines physical taste, but I am, like Derrida, locating both tastes in the site of the mouth. Bourdieu claims that taste "classifies, and it classifies the classifier" (quoted in Probyn 2005, 27). Probyn contradicts Bourdieu by saying that "eating demonstrates our taste for change" (2005, 10). Following Bourdieu's statement, I claim that eating always implies tasting and, like tasting, eating per se, is widely conceptualized in the West as an act of classification and hierarchization. But, recalling Probyn, I intend to deconstruct the Western conceptualization of the act of eating (and tasting) as classificatory and oppressive and to instead claim it as a way of relationality by using the cannibal rituals of Tupinamba people.

The cannibal and the animal share the categorical Otherization based upon the incapacity of tasting, in contrast to the Western carno-phallogocentric subject. In this deconstruction of the conceptual separation between tasting and eating, I also assert an ontological approximation between the cannibal, the animal and the human subject. This approximation does not intend to suggest the notion of sameness among the three or to politically claim the extension of human rights to the animals and the cannibals. Instead, it serves as a claim against a hierarchical categorization based on the anthropological and colonial notion of taste. Therefore, I declare the cannibal as a human eater with a very specific taste that has been marginalized due to the simplistic and ideal distinction between taster/devourer, among others. Against the prevalence of discourse over matter in the theorization of gender studies, new materialist claims argue for new understandings of the

relationship between discourse/matter (Alaimo and Hekman 2008, 6). My argument of equating tasting and eating complies with these new materialist claims in favor of considering scientific and biological behavior of matter for theoretical and discursive conceptualizations (Alaimo and Hekman 2008, 86). Anyway, the ultimate goal is locating the cannibal as a radical figure of subversion – honoring those insurgents that rebelled against the colonizers – allowing the possibility of rethinking ethical relations between Self/Other and new logics of violence in the act of eating.

Viveiros de Castro declares that “consumption, cannibal or otherwise, is just as much an encompassing of the devoured by the devourer [...] as it is a determination of the devourer by the devoured” (1992, 285). In a similar manner, in its deconstruction of the carno-phallogocentric subject, Derrida claims that “eating is nothing other than assimilation” (2009a, 1). In the next section, I analyze how the cannibal’s act of eating complies with both Viveiros de Castro’s and Derrida’s statements. Meanwhile, the functioning of the Western subject in the act of symbolic and material consumption is a way of hierarchization and classification that locates the superiority of the human subject over the animal. The Western act of eating, definitively, does not configure an “encompassing of the devoured by the devourer” (Viveiros de Castro 1992, 285). In the same way that I unveil the mechanism that divides tasting and eating by using the figure of the cannibal, I intend to disclose the ethics behind the eating of the cannibal and the eating of the carno-phallogocentric subject while showing the potentialities of the former. Following the traditional Western ontology, to taste the enemy, i.e. to eat them, is conceptualized as an unethical action of violence, a product of a war characterized by its savagery. On the contrary, to taste the animal appears as the normal way of Western alimentary consumption intended for nutrition and pleasure. However, in the next two sections I demonstrate how different conceptualizations of the act

of eating are possible: a taste for the enemy appears as an ethical end of relation, while a taste for the animal is an oppressive mean of hierarchizing and categorizing.

A taste for the enemy

The taste of the Tupinamba has been widely and differently discussed. What status and properties did the Tupinamba intend to incorporate when eating human flesh? What kind of ethics guide cannibalism? What were the reasons behind the cannibal rituals? First, I will briefly refer to the last question. According to *From the Enemy's Point of View* (1992) and "Vingança and Temporalidade: os Tupinamba" (Revenge and Temporality: the Tupinamba 1985; my translation), the cannibal rituals integrate the logic behind the motif of Tupinamba life: absolute revenge¹¹ (Carneiro da Cunha and Viveiros de Castro 1985, 191). The eating of the enemy and be eaten by the enemy was a way of getting revenge for the ancestors that were killed and a way to keep the cycle of revenge – because your community would have to avenge your death –, respectively (Carneiro da Cunha and Viveiros de Castro 1985). Therefore, the aim of warfare for Tupinamba people was to go after enemies for the cannibal ritual. In summary, the cannibal rituals aimed to keep a network of social relationship within the indigenous community and between different societies.

Coming back to what was intended by the Tupinamba when eating human flesh, I will refer to some discussions around this question. Within the Brazilian Antropofagia, there exists a general agreement about the kind of enemies the Tupinamba ate in their rituals: only the bravest warriors (Rolnik 1998, 3). This formula for the relation of Self/Other is guided by a

¹¹ Both the social life and the posthumous fate of the Tupinamba revolve around revenge (1985, 329). Therefore, the functioning of the Tupinamba took place under the condition of heteronomy as autonomy: "what is vengeance, if not a mode of recognizing that the "truth of society" lies in the hands of others?" (Viveiros de Castro 1992, 287).

search for refinement of the Self which is acquired by eating the Other (Rolnik 1998, 3). This argument is supported in the book *O Povo Brasileiro (The Brazilian People: The Formation and Meaning of Brazil)*, by Darcy Ribeiro (1995), who in turn refers to Florestan Fernandes. Known for conducting one of the most in-depth studies around the Tupinamba, Fernandes also refers to the eagerness of this community for captivating just the haughty warriors – due to their unique ability of dialoguing with the killer and the eaters (Ribeiro 1995, 34)¹². In Ribeiro's own words: "a coward should not be eaten" (Ribeiro 1995, 34). Therefore, the brave enemies were chosen with the goal of consuming their best qualities, the substance, of the Other into the Self. This statement confirms a hierarchical categorization of the different kind of enemies and a set of ethics guiding the desire of consumption of the Other into the Self. I read this kind of interpretation of the cannibal ritual as a form of egocentric consumption with the goal of enhancing the Self. Recalling the "Anthropophagus Manifesto" (1928), this can be called "low anthropophagy". This form of low cannibalism is, basically, what Probyn refers to as the white capitalist cannibal (2005, 101) and what bell hooks criticizes as the consumption and consequent forgetfulness of racial difference (1992, 380).

This information of eating just the bravest enemies contradicts Viveiros de Castro's claims that the "the status of the victim was irrelevant" (1992, 279), and that the Tupinamba could also eat women or children¹³. Embracing the impossibility of knowing the facts, there is an

¹² Before the real cannibalism of the Tupinamba took place, a dialogical anthropophagy was performed between the victim and the killer as the culminating moment of the ritual. According to Viveiros de Castro, "the captive and his killer undertook a verbal duel that crowned the numerous discourses exchanged between the enemy and his captors ever since his arrival in the village" (1992, 291). The main issue of this dialogue, according to the author, was the question of temporality. To know more about this, see Carneiro da Cunha and Viveiros de Castro 1985.

¹³ According to Viveiros de Castro's research, if there were a lack of enemies, the Tupinamba would exhume their bones and crack their skulls (1992, 279). The reason is that the breaking of the skulls seems to have had a big relevance in the ritual, the same or even more than the anthropophagy itself. It was through the breaking of the skulls of the enemies that the Tupinamba could get a new name (political status), a fundamental act allowing the individual development of the Tupinamba as a Subject within their community. See more in Carneiro da Cunha and Viveiros de Castro 1985. The reasons I do not further explore the breaking of the skull and the gaining of new names is that it is not relevant to the argument of eating. As I said in Chapter 1 of this thesis, I am using ethnographical work for the creation of concepts, but I am not worried about the

agreement that the only binding condition for the ritual was the figure of the enemy¹⁴ (Viveiros de Castro 1992, 286). Viveiros de Castro claims that the goal of the act of eating the Other in the Tupinamba cannibalism was to incorporate the positional value of the enemy, his alterity as a point of view of the Self (1992, 142). Opposing to the low anthropophagy, the incorporation of – not the best qualities of the Other – but of alterity itself can be called of high anthropophagy, according to Idelber Avelar's¹⁵ differentiation. In this process of eating the Other, what is desired is not a quality, but an “intellectual relation” or “abstraction” (Viveiros de Castro 1992, 286). In these two different approaches to cannibalism, the act of eating implies an act of relation. However, the ethics behind these are different: when the goal is to *consume* the good qualities of the Other, it can be said that an act of instrumentalization of the Other is taking place. The relation with the Other has a utilitarian aim of getting benefits for the personal enhancement of the Self. When cannibalism is thought of as a way of *incorporating* alterity, the desire is not to improve the Self by having the qualities of the Other, but to qualify alterity as an important aspect for the development of the subject. In the first case, the relationality is the means to achieve an end – a desired attribute. In the second case, the relationality, the desire for alterity, is the end itself, the destiny (Viveiros de Castro 1992, 287). Here, the differentiation between *consumption* and *incorporation* is relevant, as well as the conceptual choice for the use of the idea of *incorporation* instead of *introjection*. The reason is that the term *incorporation*, with its

veracity of the ritual and the exactness of the process. I am relying on a radical imagination motivated by Indigenous cosmologies instead of accounts of authenticity when thinking about new possibilities for ethical relationships.

¹⁴ I guess that the reason the Tupinamba did not practice endo-cannibalism, one of the main question that the first readers of this chapter asked me, was because, in the act of eating, they were looking for the alterity of their enemies, a positional value that could not be gained within their own community.

¹⁵ Idelber Avelar, “Perspectivismo amerindio y derechos no humanos” (Amerindian Perspectivism and Non-human rights) (course, IIFL Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), May 23, 2016). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j1F0Lh9q3gw>

possession of the word *corpo* – meaning body in Portuguese and coming from the Latin *corpus* – allows the potential conceptualization of an eating that is not symbolically consumerist, but nutritionally embodied. Tupinamba’s cannibalism, contrary to the Araweté one, holds its potentiality in the materiality and reality of the act, which enables the deconstruction of the ethics of eating animals by putting into discussion the differentiation between human/animal and the implications of symbolical eating and actual eating.

As I said in the literature review, I depart from some of the Brazilian antropophagic conceptualizations of the cannibal rituals and I prefer to conceptualize the cannibal act of eating by considering the ethnographic work around Tupinamba cannibalism by Viveiros de Castro. One of the reasons for this choice is the actual cannibalism taking place in this society, but also the cosmologies behind this act. Despite them being demeaned in the West, Amerindian metaphysics allow a cannibalistic act with ethics promoting relationality instead of egocentric consumption and avow a different ontological thought that is not subjected to the figure of the human.

The reasons I am inclined to the idea that the Tupinamba did not desire a quality of the Other, but alterity itself, has to do with Viveiros de Castro’s conceptualization of the Amerindian metaphysics¹⁶. The author uses the concept “Amerindian perspectivism” (Lima 1999; Viveiros de Castro 2014, 49) to refer to his interpretations of how the indigenous cosmologies envisioned the relationships between soul/body and what constitutes humanity. Starting from the cosmological analysis of “the metaphysics of predation” (2014, 49), Viveiros de Castro develops the concepts of *perspectivism* (epistemological) and *multinaturalism*

¹⁶ As I already stated several times in this thesis, I do not think “the exact truth” about what and why the Tupinamba practiced cannibalism as well as how their “real” cosmologies functioned is important for this thesis (also to presuppose that we understand or know their cosmologies is very presumptuous). The reason I use the concept of American Perspectivism is due to its power of disturbance (Castro 2014, 49) and for allowing radical ways of thinking that oppose Western thought.

(ontological) (2014, 70). Both allow the organization of a complex set of indigenous knowledges and practices which bring an understanding of their ways to think about categories, identity, temporality, relations, and the dichotomies of modernity – such as subject/object, body/soul, and nature/culture. Based on his study, together with Tânia Stolze Lima, around Amazonian cosmopolitics and a famous parable recounted by Lévi-Strauss¹⁷, Viveiros de Castro arrives to the conclusion that the ontological regime of Amerindian cosmologies reverses the semiotic functions body and soul hold in the West: the body is the constructed dimension in the indigenous cosmology as the soul is in the Western tradition, while the soul (culture) is the innate in the former and the body is the innate in the latter. In Viveiros de Castro's words

[...] the possession of similar souls implies the possession of analogous concepts on the part of all existents. What changes from one species of existent to another is therefore body and soul as well as the referents of these concepts: the body is the site and instrument of the referential disjunction between the "discourses" (the semiograms) of each species. [...] In other words, perspectivism presumes an epistemology that remains constant, and variable ontologies (2014, 73).

These ideas around body and soul take us to the way the Tupinamba see the non-humans, animals and plants concretely, as having the same soul and, therefore, as humans instead of as members of other species. They distinguish themselves from other non-humans based on their different bodies, not because of the inexistence of logos or consciousness, as it is conceptualized in the West. In other words, while in the West there is a qualification of the things in relation to human attributes (anthropocentrism), in the indigenous cosmologies there are not attributes differentiating beings, but there are different points of view based on

¹⁷ The parable of Lévi-Strauss told by the author in his book *Race and History* is as follows: "In the Greater Antilles, some years after the discovery of America, while the Spaniards sent out investigating commissions to ascertain whether or not the natives had a soul, the latter were engaged in the drowning of white prisoners in order to verify, through prolonged watching, whether or not their corpses were subject to putrifaction" (1952, 329).

the bodies (Viveiros de Castro 2014, 55). In Indigenous thought, a different body allows a specific different *cultural* perspective. Moreover, still according to Viveiros de Castro, non-humans see themselves as humans (anthropomorphically) and they see the rest of beings as animals, either predator or prey (as predation is the fundamental mode of relation) (Viveiros de Castro 2014, 12).

All this explained, it would be contradictory to say that the Tupinamba ate their enemies to consume their qualities if their cosmology did not conceive the idea of quality or attributes, but of perspectives. Moreover, the explanation of their indigenous cosmology will justify the reality and materiality of Tupinamba cannibalism. Despite the Tupinamba eating the symbolic position of their enemies – their perspective from the position of alterity, as they believed that the different perspectives were contained in the bodies – they would have to eat the material bodies, even if it was a small symbolic piece, to incorporate the position of alterity. Therefore, the symbolism of the act of eating and the real act of eating are conflated in Tupinamba cannibalism. This fusion manifests another relation between discourse/matter that differs from the prevalence of the former over the latter, one of the main claims of new materialism. Second, the Tupinamba cannibalism allows a conceptualization of the act of eating that does not distinguished between symbolic and material eating, which allows a theorization of the act of eating as a relational encountering of bodies in which the incorporation of the position of alterity and perspective of the Other is fundamental for the definition of the Self. This theoretical claim would have the political and material implication of the destabilization of the category human and animal.

In opposition to this conceptualization of the act of eating, the relation of human/animal and Self/Other, eating in the West represents a way of achieving subjectivity through the oppression of and hierarchization over the Other that can be eaten: the animal.

The section “A taste for the animal”, as the name ironically refers to, deconstructs the idea of the desire and necessity of eating (tasting) animal meat – under the pretext of having to ingest animal proteins for the health of the human subject and the pleasure of eating animal meat – and reveals a taste for power and superiority that characterizes the virile Western subject.

A taste for the animal

In his gastronomical analysis of Derrida, Nicola Perullo claims that the deconstruction of the subject has to do with a matter of taste (n.d., 7). Despite Derrida not explicitly using the expression “matter of taste”, Perullo infers this idea from Derrida’s questioning of the existence of “full (or almost full) citizens who are also women and/or vegetarians” (Derrida 1991, 113). On this, Derrida wonders whether the head of State could publicly declare himself vegetarian and still keep the highest hierarchy (1991, 114). The answer would be no, as the achievement of full subjectivity relies upon eating animal meat. Derrida’s reflections on the Western act of eating also refer to a Self/Other relation that can take place in two orders: the symbolic, when the one eaten is another human, and the real and symbolic, when the corpse is “animal” (Derrida 1991, 112). However, the actual eating of animal flesh has a lot to say about how subjectivity, the ethics of the relationship Self/Other, and the logic of violence are conceptualized in the West.

In the same manner that the Other is ontologically prior to the Self in the Tupinamba’s ritual, Derrida refers to the responsibility that the Self has to the Other before being responsible for themselves (Derrida 1991, 112). However, this responsibility for the Other expressed by the commandment “Thou shalt not kill” historically referred to the neighbor or to the friend – Nietzsche makes this distinction (cited in Derrida 1991, 112) – not to the enemy. And, ultimately, it refers to the Other as man (Derrida 1991, 113). While the animal

is still an Other, it is an Other from a different kind, who is not established as one who receives the ethical benefits. At first, I wondered if the animal can be eaten because it belongs to a categorically inferior kind, or if it is the act of eating that confirms the categorical difference of the animal. In *Animal Lessons* (2009), Kelly Oliver describes the Western cultural imagination around the relations between humans and animals in the act of eating in the following manner:

If we eat animals, they are not our kin; animals are not our kin, so we eat them. Because we literally consume their flesh and blood, they are not our metaphorical flesh and blood and vice versa. Because they are not our metaphorical flesh and blood, they can be our literal flesh and blood in terms of what we eat (2009, 292).

This statement makes a conceptual separation between the actual and the metaphorical act of eating. As we humans do not intend to symbolically incorporate any perspective from the animal, we eat them. Because we are constantly symbolically consuming/incorporating¹⁸ the Other human, we do not eat their meat. Following the logic of the binarism taste (ideal)/eat (material), the corporeal act of eating carries a symbolism that moves away from its biological function. While the alimentary function has the goal of incorporating nutrients into the subjects, the symbolism of the material act of eating escapes this idea and becomes a way of oppressing and categorizing. The real act of eating animals, therefore, allows another kind of symbolism: it appears as a symbolic demonstration of the power of the human subject over the animal. In the same way as cannibalism, the act of eating allows a process of subjectification that, however, takes place through the hierarchical categorization of human/animal. The full subjectivity is reinforced after a process of self-differentiation from

¹⁸ Coming back to the discussion that took place in the previous section, the symbolical act of eating can take place in a consumerist or in a relational way.

the animal that takes place in the act of eating. In his conceptualization of what a Western carno-phallogocentric subject is, Derrida recognizes three main characteristics: the full subject is a “meat-eater, a man, and an authoritative, speaking self” (Calarco cited in Adams 2015, xix). Again, it is very relevant how, not only the ability of logos and the gendered position of the individual are fundamental, but also the real act of eating animal meat and its symbolism, which determines subjectivity and the relationships of Self/Other and human/animal.

Some carnivores would defend the essentiality of the proteins of animal meat for human bodies as the material consumption desired by the eater over the eaten. However, as Derrida claims, scientific research around veganism and the necessity of proteins have demonstrated that these precious proteins can be obtained from other vegetal resources instead of from the animal meat (Derrida 1991, 112). Therefore, the act of eating the carno-phallogocentric subject does not intend to incorporate anything for the Other as a way to achieve their subjectivity. The subjectivity is achieved, precisely, in the symbolical conceptualization of the act of eating as an act of demonstrating the force and oppression that can be exercised over the Other. Hence, it can be said that, in the West, the act of eating is conceptualized as a negative and oppressive action sustained by the violence that the subject (the eater) can/wants to/has to do with the aim of categorically and hierarchically differentiating themselves from the animal as the Other without ethical rights. The massive killing of animals without any kind of reprisals is a way, similarly to colonization and slavery, of demonstrating the inferiority and objectification of the Other. These Other(s) in the act of eating, contrary to the Other of the “Thou shalt not kill” commandment – the Other friend or the Other enemy, who receives fraternity or violence, respectively – are not conceptualized as Subjects.

The objectification of the relationship between consumers (men) and consumed (women/animals) is what Carol J. Adams criticizes in her feminist-vegetarian critical theory (2015). However, as the cannibal act demonstrates, it is not the act of eating itself that creates this relation of objectification and capitalist consumption. The Tupinamba's cannibalism shows how the act of eating can be conceptualized productively and positively through incorporation. Indeed, it is the division of symbolic/material eating in the conceptualization of the act of eating that allows an oppressive and categorizing symbolism of this material action. My argument is that a conceptualization of the act of eating as contemplating biological reasons of the alimentary nutrition permits a positive and productive symbolic understanding of the act of eating. The cannibal, who intrinsically connects materialism and symbolism when they *have to eat* their enemies to *incorporate* them is a proof of that. Therefore, a vegetarian or vegan politics would not be the solution for the oppression that takes place in the relationship of eater/eaten. The violence that occurs in the act of eating and in the relationship between eater/eaten is not problematic. Neither the changing of the carnivorous diet for a vegan one would solve the ethicality and the violence of the mechanism of eating. The problem is the oppressive kind of symbolism – the sacrificial structure – behind the material act of eating animals and the lack of a similar material eating of humans along with the ethical symbolism of incorporation (not consumption) that allows the objectification. The incorporation of the Other, the Other-as-human-deserving-ethics, is not corporeal, but it is symbolic and, in the neoliberal capitalist world, generally consumerist (hooks 1992; Rolnik 1998). As this incorporation does not take place materially, through the corporeal act of eating, it creates a separation between actual eating/oppressive symbolism and symbolic eating/symbolism of consumerism or incorporation. These two conceptual pairs of binarism are problematized by the cannibal rituals and the Amerindian perspectivism. For them, the

symbolical eating of the Other with the goal of incorporating alterity necessarily requires an actual eating of the Other, due to their understanding that the different points of view are in the body¹⁹. As the difference takes place in the specificity of the body (Viveiros de Castro 2014, 72), the body must be eaten. To sum up, the conceptualization of the act of eating for the Tupinamba is related to the real biological function that the act of eating has – the incorporation of nutrients – instead of gluttonous consumption or the oppression of Other(s). In actuality, the Tupinamba were conflating the symbolism of eating the positional value of the Other with the biological materiality of eating the Other as a nutritional action. As I said before, the material turn in feminist theory – also called as new materialist, material feminisms or Third Wave Materialism (Alaimo and Hekman 2008, 18) – argues for new relationships of discourse/matter, as can be this one displayed in Tupinamba cannibalism.

In his reflections in *Glas* (1974) on the theme of “eating the other”, Derrida claims that “to understand means to incorporate—that is to eat, to absorb and to digest. This is the metaphorical notion of eating, the sensible origin of abstract concepts; in this case the concept of ‘understanding’” (quoted in Perullo n.d., 3). Derrida is an example of a philosopher who takes discursive theorization from the functioning of the body. This does not mean that the body is an immovable machine whose functioning should be revealed and can help in making conceptualizations, but rather that biological functioning can allow radical symbolic theorizations. Therefore, I argue that new materialist approaches to concepts allow radical and productive ways of rethinking violence and oppressions. Certainly, I am not claiming for a politics or ethics of eating human flesh, but I am pointing out how oppression functions in relation to the act of eating in the West as well as the anthropocentrism and coloniality

¹⁹ I think is important to clarify that “a perspective is not a representation because representations are properties of mind, whereas a point of view is in the body” (Viveiros de Castro 2014, 72).

(Maldonado-Torres 2016) of the Western conceptualization of cannibalism due to a symbolic, simplistic, and binarist separation of taste/eat and biological insights/conceptualization of the act of eating.

Conclusions

The deconstruction of the cannibal and their acts as mere devouring of human flesh reveals the Western conceptual binarisms based on and supported by the ontological divisions between human/cannibal-animal. A repositioning of the cannibal as a figure of radical and suggestive conceptualizations unveil cannibalism as an example of the conjunction between a symbolic and material act of eating, resting on the inclusion of the body's biological functions as a way of theorization. Indeed, Amerindian cosmologies bring an ethics based on embodied perspectives instead of attributes, the latter being the main Western tool for categorization, which is built on colonial and anthropocentric standards.

Gazi Islam, when referring to anthropophagy, first points out a desire for appropriation and, second, to an “aggressive process of deconstruction” (2012, 5). This *violent* action of deconstruction of an autonomous and narcissistic Self through the act of incorporating the point of view of the Other is the kind of idea which leads the conceptualization of the act of eating I am claiming. Tupinamba cannibalism urges an act of eating as a way of relation in which incorporating alterity becomes an infinite (and aggregated) circle of relation between Self/Other. Moreover, the individual experience of eating allows a collective enhancement (1998, 15) through the different encounters of bodies. With this equation in mind, the cannibalism of the Tupinamba brings another way of thinking about Western ethics and the functioning of oppression which contravenes the egocentric,

colonial and anthropocentric consumption dominating the functioning of the contemporary neoliberal capitalist world.

It is relevant to highlight that the alternative perspectives that the Tupinamba want to incorporate when eating alterity are not the ones from the animals due to a higher valuation of the human over the animal. Rather, the Tupinamba are interested in the condition of enmity that, in this case, is held by humans from other communities, not by the animals.

Coming back to the quotes by Avramescu opening this chapter, I tried to deconstruct the “metaphysical unease” of cannibalism. The material Western act of eating is a way of symbolic oppression due to the separation between symbolic/material against the conflation of symbolic and material eating of Tupinamba cannibalism, which does not allow a categorical separation of beings based on attributes, but on perspectives, shows that the cannibal conceptualization of the act of eating urge to eat the perspective that want to be incorporated. When the act of eating ceases to be a form of subjectivation based on the oppression of the Other and becomes a way of incorporating alterity or the perspective of the Other, the ontological division between human/non-human is problematized. However, the question of violence still persists as a point necessary of discussion. The next chapter is dedicated to the different logics of violence behind act(s) of eating, its problematizations, and its implications in the relationship between Self/Other. Through the unveiling of the sacrificial structure ruling the subjectivation processes in the West and the deconstruction of cannibalism as a human sacrifice, I allow the entrance of another kind of politics of enmity and logic of violence (different from the West), avowing new ethical relationships between the Self and the Other, humans and non-humans.

Chapter 3. The structure of violence in the act(s) of eating

Even when the act of eating is conceptualized as a productive and positive act moved by an ethical encountering between Self/Other²⁰, the fact that a death and that a violent act takes place cannot be ignored. How ethical is to kill to eat? How the violence of the act of eating can be thought? Does the violence of the Tupinamba cannibalism and of the eating of the animal by the Western subject share the same structure? Indeed, the killing of the Other, even when it is for eating, raises several questions about the kind of politics of enmity that are put into play. Are we killing because the Other(s) are in the realm of enmity?

In the case of the animal, it materializes a process of objectification that does not allow them to be seen as subjects and, therefore, as political enemies. Then, what kind of politics are activated when allowing the killing of the animal? Both in the Old testament and in Greek mythology, there is a frequent leitmotif in the representation of violence that, generally, happens between enemies, who are two brothers in dispute by jealousy, and it is resolved through the intervention “of a third party, the sacrificial victim or victims” (Girard 2005, 4), who is, customarily, an animal. Following this pattern, and according to Derrida, sacrifice appears as the concept working behind the killing-for-eating of the animal. The animal would be the victim which sacrifice is allowed and fundamental for the establishment of the Western human subject.

On the other hand, in the case of Tupinamba cannibalism, the figure of the enemy is fundamental for the warfare, for the cannibal fest, and for the whole functioning of the societies of both the perpetrators and the victims of cannibalism. Do Tupinamba societies

²⁰ By ethical encountering I refer to a relationality between Self/Other moved by hospitality and responsibility for and to the Other(s) (Derrida 1991, 112).

conceptualize the enemy in the same manner that Western tradition does? The answers to these questions contribute to new possibilities of rethinking violence and relationships between humans/non-humans that unveil and problematize the Western structure relying on the political and ontological prominence of the meat-eater subject over all other beings. The rethinking of new logics of violence and of a new kind of enemy holds potential for the deconstruction of a model of life in which violence is always directed toward the same beings.

Eating upon the sacrificial structure: the violence toward what you eat in the carno-phallogocentric system and in Tupinamba cannibalism

Derrida points to the concept of sacrifice as the logic of the violence behind the consumption of the animals by the carno-phallogocentric subject (1991,112). The author criticizes how Heidegger and Levinas, when referring to the responsibility toward the Other, are always excluding the responsibility concerning the animal. This responsibility is masked by the pervasive logic of sacrifice in Western societies. Sacrifice, here, is referred to by Derrida as the “justification of putting to death, putting to death [of the animal] as denegation of murder” (Derrida 1991, 115). The author does not deepen or does not provide clarity around the question of what he calls a “sacrificial structure” (Derrida 1991, 113), which is connected with the institution of the carno-phallogocentric subject as the only possible full subject. However, he still refers to this logic as fundamental for organizing the order of things and the dominant schema of subjectivity in the West. This intertwined structure would explain the question of “who” can be “sacrificed” (Derrida 1991, 113) or, in this case, who can be eaten. To sum up, under the sacrificial structure, the animal escapes the “right” to receive the hospitality and the ethics as an Other. In the same manner, the possibility of sacrificing animals is fundamental for establishing the carno-phallogocentric subject as the full subject.

Relating to this idea of the institution of the subject, Parama Roy argues that sacrifice is “an entitlement and an assertion of one’s rights over one’s body and one’s actions and those of others” (2010, 109). Considering this, it can be said that the masculine man-eater Subject relishes the privileges and the capacities of being a sacrificer.

The functioning of the concept of sacrifice and its implications can help to clarify this connection between violence, eating, the relationship between Self/Other, and processes of subjectivation. According to René Girard, the founding myth of the sacrificial structure is that of Jacob and his father Isaac²¹. This story shows how, first, the function of sacrifice is “to quell violence within the community and to prevent conflicts from erupting” (Girard 2005, 14) by leading the violence to an indifferent victim (Girard 2005, 4) that can be killed, i.e. sacrificed, without provoking revenge. Second, the myth of Jacob and Isaac shows the importance of the animal as the sacrificial victim acting as a substitute for the real victim with the aim of “preventing the direct contact that could lead only to violence” (Girard 2005, 5).

Some authors, like Hubert and Mauss²² (cited in Viveiros de Castro 2014, 141), link sacrifice with an act of reconciliation or negotiation that takes place between the sacrificer and a deity (Girard 2005, 6). For involving a deity, modern theorists have relegated the concept of sacrifice to the realm of the imagination (Girard 2005, 6). However, by doing this,

²¹ The myth, according to René Girard’s account, is as follows: “Isaac is an old man. He senses the approach of death and summons his eldest son, Esau, on whom he intends to bestow his final blessing. First, however, he instructs Esau to bring back some venison from the hunt, so as to make a ‘savory meat’. This request is overheard by the younger brother, Jacob, who hastens to report it to his mother, Rebekah. Rebekah takes two kids from the family flock, slaughters them, and prepares the savory meat dish, which Jacob, in the guise of his elder brother, then presents to his father. Isaac is blind. Nevertheless Jacob fears he will be recognized, for he is a ‘smooth man’, while his brother Esau is a ‘hairy man’. ‘My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, not a blessing’. Rebekah has the idea of covering Jacob’s hands and the back of his neck with the skins of the slaughtered goats, and when the old man runs his hands over his younger son, he is completely taken in by the imposture. Jacob receives the blessing that Isaac had intended for Esau” (2005, 5).

²² Hubert and Mauss, according to Viveiros de Castro, established the sociological definition of sacrifice that was the main reference in the discipline but, however, failed to explain South American shamanic practices (2014, 140). They argue the fundamentality of the consecration of the victim to a sacrificer, who receives the benefits of sacrifice, through the sacrificer, the person who perform the physical killing (Hubert and Mauss 1964, 10–13).

these theorists negate the importance that sacrifice has for the functioning of several societies (Girard 2005, 6), including the contemporary liberal democracies. Girard states that one of the reasons that sacrifice is related to the domain of imagination is that contemporary societies do not “strictly speaking, practice sacrificial rites” and still get along (2005, 14). However, by recalling Derrida, I argue that Western societies are, in fact, heavily based on the sacrifice of animals for their foundations. This is especially significant for the establishment of what is considered a full subject, who must eat animal meat as a fundamental characteristic of their subjecthood (Derrida 1991, 113).

Therefore, the acceptance of animal meat consumption in the West can be perceived as a mechanism which conceals the workings of the structures of violence toward that which is eaten. The violence in Western societies does not just take place in human murder – that are condemned by law– but in the daily murder of animals with the alimentary vindication. This violence, that has started to be condemned by animal rights activists, is never thought of as a sacrificial violence, despite following its logic. Hence, in Western societies, intra-human violence would be displaced toward the animals in a mechanism that enables the non-condemnation of the killers and their subjectivation: the mechanism of sacrifice. In that way, the violence existing within a society is released through animals, indifferent victims. Noticeably, this way of thinking presupposes that violence is *inevitable* and *intrinsic* to society. Also, it presumes that animals are *inconsequential* victims belonging to an inferior category. The other way around, the eating of animals reinforces the delimitation of *categorical differentiation between human/animal*.

On the contrary, the general understanding of cannibalism in the West as a savagery or barbarism is based on the belief that an existing visceral violence against the human, for being uncivilized, cannot be contested in any way. For this reason, the annihilation of the cannibals

is seen as justifiable. Within academia, especially in anthropology, besides seeing cannibalism as an uncivilized monstrosity, there have been attempts to explain its social function. Thus, how has the violence within cannibalism been conceptualized? Florestan Fernandes²³, René Girard²⁴ and Viveiros de Castro²⁵, among others, frame Tupinamba cannibalism within the realm of human sacrifice. To start, let's analyze how Girard does this. The author takes Tupinamba cannibalism as an example of a sacrificial ritual with a surrogate victim²⁶. According to Girard, the goal of this kind of sacrifice would be to liberate the existent violence, the "community's inner tensions" (2005, 291), in a ritualized way that would not provoke conflicts and by choosing a victim that can be sacrificed without inciting a cycle of revenge (Girard 2005, 6). Moreover, the author adds that, by using this ritual, the "truth about men" (2005, 291), about how violence exists and need to be released, is kept veiled. Girard also adds that the length of time the Tupinamba's enemy expends on their captors, which can even be years, is justified by a desire to, first, make the victim resemble the "natural" target of violence, i.e. the members of their own community (2005, 292). Second, with the goal of making their flesh sacred, the enemy would be put through a process of contradictory roles representing the "community's inner tensions" (Girard 2005, 291). Therefore, the afterwards cannibalism would have the aim of eating – as a consumption of qualities – the sacred flesh. These readings contradict the more in-depth studies around the Tupinamba cannibalism, that

²³ Fernandes uses Hubert and Mauss' schema of sacrifice, which forces him to postulate the existence of supernatural entities in Tupinamba cosmology, who would be the receivers of the sacrifice (Viveiros de Castro 2014, 141).

²⁴ In a part of his book *Violence and the Sacred* (2005), Girard argue for a critique upon the theological bases of sacrifice and for a "break with the formalistic tradition of Hubert and Mauss". Moreover, he highlights "the interpretation of sacrifice as an act of violence inflicted on a surrogate victim", what has been worked by Godfrey Lienhardt and Victor Turner (Girard 2005, 7). For the information around the functioning of Tupinamba rituals, he relies on the work *Religions et magies indiennes d'Amérique du Sud* (1967), by Alfred Métraux (Girard 2005, 323).

²⁵ Viveiros de Castro is very clear when stating that the Maussian definition of sacrifice is problematic for Tupinamba cannibalism. However, he claims that Lévi-Strauss' notion "seemed to cast the Tupi anthropology in a new light" (2014, 144).

²⁶ The ultimate goal of Girard in his book is to present his claim that "the surrogate victim is the basis for all religious systems" (Girard 2005, 295).

are also the ones allowing radical conceptualizations. To start, for encompassing Tupinamba cannibalism in the concept of sacrifice, Girard conflates the figure of the enemy with that of the surrogate victim. The author claims that the victim comes from an external community to avoid a cycle of revenge (Girard 2005, 293). However, this revenge is the motor of Tupinamba life (Carneiro and Castro 1985). According to Carneiro and Castro, “without it [the anthropophagia], there is no production of what we call the atom of revenge, the qualification of “enemy” in a sufficient scale for revenge to continue (1985, 198; my translation). For this reason, the substitution of a victim from one’s own community by an enemy, to avoid internal violence, does not sustain itself if the goal is to eat the alterity of the enemy. The final reason why Girard’s concept of sacrifice does not fit with Tupinamba cannibalism is that the interest of the Tupinamba was not the sacred flesh of the enemy – after living the contradictions of the life in community – but rather the positional value of enmity that was embedded as a sign in the enemy’s body.

To sum up, in a similar manner that the sacrificial structure of Derrida is the one governing the way in which the logic of violence functions in the West, the Tupinamba cannibalism would have, according to Girard, the same operation. However, this conflation of eating human flesh and sacrifice as a way to consume qualities and to liberate violence seems to be a bit forced or, at least, understudied, and contradicts most deep readings of Tupinamba cosmologies.

Girard is not the only one who relates sacrifice and Tupinamba cannibalism. Surprisingly, Viveiros de Castro also locates the Tupinamba ritual in the paradigm of sacrifice (2014, 148). Nonetheless, in his case, Viveiros de Castro relies on the concept from Lévi-Strauss²⁷ (cited in

²⁷ For Lévi-Strauss (1966, 225), “sacrifice postulates the existence of a single, at once continuous and directional series through which a real, irreversible mediation between two opposed, nonhomologous terms (humans and divinities) is carried

Viveiros de Castro 2014, 144), which is very different from the Maussian one. He uses sacrifice to explain the functioning of social groups in comparison to the notion of totemism²⁸ (Viveiros de Castro 2014, 144). However, it is very important to highlight that the author shows reticence²⁹ in defining cannibalism as a form of sacrifice. According to him, the Tupinamba ritual

realizes a transformation that is *potentially reciprocal* – the imperative of vengeance that gives it meaning in Tupinamba society – but really irreversible in relation to the terms it connects through these acts of supreme contiguity and "discontiguity" (the violent physical contact of execution, the decapitation and consumption of the body of the victim) *which involve a movement of indefinition and the creation of a zone of indiscernibility* between killers and victims, eater and eaten. There is no need to postulate the existence of supernatural entities in order to account for the fact that one is in the presence of sacrifice (Viveiros de Castro 2014, 148-149; emphasis added).

Due to it being an operation defined by its metonymic continuity, vectoral quality, and syntagmatic working (2014, 148), Viveiros de Castro describes Tupinamba cannibalism as sacrifice. Viveiros de Castro refers to these mathematical analogies that are, in fact, used by Lévi-Strauss (cited in Viveiros de Castro 2014, 145), highlighting the reciprocity between the community of eaters and the enemies, the irreversibility of the violence and the death of the victim, and, especially, *the indiscernibility between perpetrators and victims* (Viveiros de Castro (2014, 148).

Girard's conceptualization of Tupinamba cannibalism as sacrifice is partially conflated with the conception of animal consumption as a way to liberate violence existing in the

out; the contiguity between the series is established through identification or successive analogical approximations" (quoted in Viveiros de Castro 2014, 145).

²⁸ I do not expand upon the question of totemism because it is not relevant for this thesis.

²⁹ At the end of his chapter, reflecting about sacrifice and totemism, Viveiros de Castro concludes with the following relevant reflection: "But does the concept of "sacrifice," in this new Levi-Straussian sense, truly account for what occurs in ritual cannibalism? There is nothing imaginary or even false in Tupi cannibalism. Not even vengeance, which is rigorously impossible, would be imaginary, as it was above all a schematism of social poiesis or mechanism for the ritual production of collective temporality (the interminable cycle of vengeance) through the installation of a perpetual disequilibrium between enemy groups. And in any case, if it is always necessary to imagine an enemy – to construct the other as such – the objective is to really eat it... in order to construct the Self as other. Something indeed does not pass through the concept of sacrifice, even if more things do than through totemism" (2014, 149).

communities. In both cases, the sacrificial structure bears a relation to Self/Other based on the necessity of releasing violence through the killing of the Other. Moreover, the subjectification of the Self goes through an objectification and instrumentalization of the Other. The difference between both sacrificial structures would be that in the former an intra-human and between-enemies violence takes place and, in the latter, a human-animal violence occurs in which the animal is posed as a categorically inferior object that reinforces the opposition between human/non-human. Moreover, the comparison between eating animals vs. eating humans serves the construction of the civilized European in radical opposition to the savage Indigenous. On the other hand, Viveiros de Castro's location of cannibalism within Lévi-Strauss' notion of sacrifice appears as more congruent with Tupinamba cosmologies, but, as the author himself recognizes, the concept of sacrifice remains negligible to all the nuances and characteristics constituting Tupinamba cannibalism. It seems that the main reason for Viveiros de Castro's inclusion of Tupinamba cannibalism in the concept of sacrifice is that it enables an explanation of the indiscernibility taking place between perpetrators and victims through a process of self-identification (Viveiros de Castro 2014, 148). Strauss' concept of sacrifice considers the existence of different poles (community and enemies, in this case) of the same series and that their proximity occurs due to the identification between them (cited in Viveiros de Castro 2014, 145), which also implies the indiscernibility. This entails a relationship between Self/Other that is not based on the instrumentalization of the Other, but on the process of identification and confusion between Self/Other. The concept of sacrifice pointed out by Viveiros de Castro presupposes that in the process of identification and ambivalence/indiscernibility between Self/Other, a certain irreversible violence is part of the operation. Nevertheless, in a similar manner to Girard's, and in the functioning of the Western sacrificial structure, this violence is pushed into the background and is not openly

discussed. Following Viveiros de Castro's apprehension about the ability of the concept of sacrifice to grasp the complex workings of Tupinamba cannibalism, I propose a different conceptualization of the ritual outside of the realm of sacrifice and in a way that posits violence in a place of recognition instead of assumed as intrinsic and substantial for a society. To do this, I analyze the politics of enmity at work during the ritual: that between eaters/enemy during the incorporation and that of killer/enemy in the identification. The second one, which is cited in the concept of sacrifice and converged with an indiscernibility between eaters and victims, however, can be read as Tupinamba's way of recognizing the violence existing in their ritual. For arriving to that conclusion, is necessary to disentangle the identification and the indiscernibility as two different processes, with the latter being problematized. The enemy as kin, the politics corresponding to the relation killer/victim, therefore, does not drive to an indiscernibility between eater and victims but rather a process of mourning connected with the recognition of violence.

The enemy as kin

The cannibal has never been constructed as the political enemy of the Western colonizer Subject. They have been formulated as the less-than-human, the monster, the savage or the moral enemy whose humanity has to be not just repelled, but annihilated (Zarria and Maschke 2019, 274). The reason that colonization was the occupation and annihilation of people instead of warfare, following Europeans patterns, is that the colonized were never seen as a real, respected enemy or opponent (Mbembe 2003, 24), but as the object of catechization and of the "civilizing mission" (Lugones 2010, 744). As a matter of fact,

they [the colonizers] do not establish a distinction between combatants and noncombatants, or again between an "enemy" and a "criminal". It is thus impossible to conclude peace with them. In sum, colonies are zones in which war and disorder, internal

and external figures of the political, stand side by side or alternate with each other. (Mbembe 2003, 24)

From the moment of colonization to the current times of coloniality (Maldonado-Torres 2016), the construction of the enemy by the Western subject has suffered some changes. In his analysis of the functioning of contemporary liberal democracies, Achille Mbembe points out the desire pushing the Subject(s) of a society toward the capture of the disturbing object (2016, 23). This object is the Other, the enemy of the society: the Muslim, the refugee, the foreigner, etc. According to the author, the object itself does not exist as such and it must be constantly invented to satisfy the desire of the Subject (Mbembe 2016, 23). The necessity of having an enemy is not just social, but it is ontological and required for the constitution of the Subject and their entering into “the symbolic order of our times” (Mbembe 2016, 26). The main difference between the old and the new Western enemy, as seen by following Mbembe, is that, while the first had to be “found and brought out in the open”, the latter needs to be “created in order to stand up to him and confront him” (Mbembe 2016, 34). However, both enemies share common characteristics. The colonial enemy and the contemporary enemy share an Otherization characterized for a process of objectification. Contrary to the political subjectified enemy, who is perceived as a worthy opponent to enter into war against, the colonized enemy and the contemporary enemy, who do not deserve either a site to fight the dispute – as it happens in warfare – or the possibility of defense or truce, but they have to be annihilated for the good of the Western subject. Moreover, the destiny of both enemies is total annihilation and destruction, without any possibility of understanding. Indeed, “these are enemies with whom no communication is either possible or desirable” (Mbembe 2016, 34). Finally, both enemies “lie beyond the confines of humanity” (Mbembe 2016, 34) and are fundamental for the construction of the identity of the Western subject.

As astonishing as it may seem and following the pattern of the Western contemporary enemy, the necessity for an enemy was also fundamental in subject formation of Tupinamba people. However, in both kind of societies there are radical differences in the ethics and the relations between Self/Other which arise after creating the necessary enemy. While making this comparison, I will refer to the characteristics of the Tupinamba's enemy and their relations with the members of the community.

Who was the enemy considered as the Other who must be eaten? According to Viveiros de Castro, despite occupying different territories far away, enemies shared the language and the traditional practices of the captors (Viveiros de Castro 2014, 140). Due to sharing the same beliefs around the cannibal ritual and its functions, there was a complicity between the enemies, the killers and the eaters (Viveiros de Castro 1992, 273). The communication between the enemy and the Tupinamba, contrary to the impossibility of understanding between the subject and the Western enemy, was based on their shared traditions and beliefs leading to a complicity and agreement around everything that took place in the cannibal ritual. The enemy was willing to be eaten, what makes of the cannibal ritual a performance of violence in which violence is a part of an agreement. For the enemies, to be eaten was the best death because it allowed immortality and avoided the putrefaction of the flesh after natural death. For the killers, the act avenged the ancestors and allowed them to gain rights and a higher status within the community (Castro 1992, 274). For the eaters, the incorporation of the enemy's alterity was part of a process of subjectivation and allowed them to become potential enemies in the future. Therefore, subjects and enemies, in this case, share a schema of the ritual's functioning and its violence.

Viveiros de Castro gives the notions of subject/object to different participants of the cannibal fest establishing the following actantial schema of the ritual: the subject was the

group of those ingesting the captive, the object was the dual figure of enemy/executioner, and the “cosubjects” were the enemy group from which the victim were captured (Viveiros de Castro 2014, 141, 142, 149). The placement of the enemy group as “cosubjects” has to do with the intention to keep the motor of revenge alive: after a member is eaten, the “cosubjects” move into warfare and go to capture their enemies to keep the society working. On the same level of importance, the anthropophagic ritual was fundamental to maintain the potentiality of developing into an enemy: women, children, and every relative and ally were invited to eat the flesh of the enemy. The goal was to qualify all the eaters as potential victims in the next warfare (Carneiro e Castro 1985, 196) i.e. as potential enemies for others subjects who were looking to avenge their eaten consanguineous. Viveiros de Castro claims that “the anthropophagic commensality is what delimits the warlike units and, in a certain way, forms or confirms the social units” (Carneiro and Castro 1985, 196; my translation). Indeed, the enemy, for the Tupinamba, is fundamental for granting a continuation of the relationships between groups, and also to maintain a continuity of the group itself, which lacks internal mechanisms of constitution (Carneiro and Castro 1985, 200).

In the cannibal ritual, the enemy was killed by an executioner-officiant, i.e. the killer who had the task of smashing the enemy’s skull and the only member of the society who was not allowed to eat the flesh of the victim. The killing of the enemy was part of a ritual of initiation for young men in which they achieved “the status of slayer (a full person)” (Viveiros de Castro 1992, 274) and they received a set of privileges: they were given a name, the rights to get married and to have children, and access to paradise (Viveiros de Castro 2014, 141). In other words, through being the executioner-officiant of the ritual, the killers achieved political

subjectivity and were allowed to enter the adult life³⁰. Moreover, before the ritual, the enemies became related through affinity with the killers. The executioner-officiant offered a woman close to him, generally his sister, as spouse for the enemy (Viveiros de Castro 2014, 141). In that way, the enemy became the brother-in-law. This information is consistent with the meaning of the term *tojavar* that in ancient Tupi means both “brother-in-law” and “enemy”, and its literal translation is “opponent” (Viveiros de Castro 2014, 141). I understand this process of subjectivation as different from the process of those who ate the flesh of the enemy: while the eaters intended to incorporate alterity by eating the enemy, the killer identified with the victim through a period of mourning taking place after the ritual (Viveiros de Castro 2014, 141).

Therefore, in the Tupinamba’s interactions with the enemy, two kinds of politics of enmity can be identified, one happening between eaters/enemy and the other between killer/enemy. While the former is governed by a relation of eating aimed at incorporation, the latter is a relation of identification. While Viveiros de Castro does not explicitly distinguish between the incorporation and the identification, I argue for a conceptual separation between them as a way to propose another working of structure of violence for the Tupinamba. The difference between incorporation and identification, is that incorporation is “the contrary of an identification – literally, an identification to the contrary” (Viveiros de Castro 1992, 286). In other words, following the patterns of incorporation/consumption of Chapter 2, the incorporation consists of eating the positional value while the identification takes place through the grasping of virtues or qualities (Viveiros de Castro 1992, 286).

³⁰ While Tupinamba women won their political rights with their reproductive function, the killing of the enemy was the way of men entering in the adult life of the community (Viveiros de Castro 1992, 274).

In the first politics – that between eater/enemy through a process of incorporation – the enemy, opposing the Western notion, is not someone who should be killed because they are the disturbing object and we desire their annihilation (citation). On the contrary, despite being an opponent or better said, for their adversarial position, is that whose alterity is desired. Therefore, the process of subjectivation of the Self does not occur while locating their identity against that of the enemy (Schmitt cited in Zarria and Maschke 2019) but by desiring the alterity of the Other to the extent of achieving their point of view. Indeed, the positional value of the enemy is a potential place that every member of the Tupinamba society could (and was willing to) achieve at some point. Considering this, it can be said that the figure of the enemy is fundamental. This is evident in the case of the two types of contemporary Western enemies, where the subjectivation processes, the functioning of the community, and the social relationships between groups are central. However, while an “anxiety for annihilation” (Mbembe 2016, 23) leads to the creation of the enemy in the West, in the Tupinamba society the category of enemy is created as a way to incorporate alterity and continue the cycle of revenge. In relation to this, the cannibal fest inviting the most commensals possible has the goal of, through the act of eating the enemy, qualifying all the eaters as future and possible enemies. Therefore, here exists an oppositional difference to the notions of the enemy to which Mbembe refers. In the case of the colonized enemy, the cannibal is shown as the archetype of the savage serving the construction of the idea of civilized European; in liberal societies, the difference between ally and enemy is clearly defined in terms of culture, religion or race (or all together and inter-related). In the Tupinamba society the distinction between ally and enemy takes places on the basis of keeping revenge as the motor of society. Moreover, both the allies and the enemies hold the potentiality of interchanging roles in the future. Here, as referred to in Chapter 2 with the

approximation to the Amerindian perspectivism, while the concept of the *enemy's structure* in Western society works on the basis of categorical differentiation due to certain attributes, the Tupinamba community worked upon the desire for Other(s) perspectives.

The second kind of politics of enmity appears in the relationship of identification between killer/enemy. In this case, the enemy forms kinship with the eater, first, in the act of marrying a woman close to them, and second, in the subsequent mourning of their death³¹. How can this act of becoming the enemy through kinship be interpreted when the *raison d'être* of the enemy in Tupinamba cannibalism is precisely their alterity and their belonging to another kinship or community? How can the distortion of the enemy as kin, through their relationship with the eater, help to conceptualize a different structure of violence and, therefore, a different relation between Self/Other?

Recognition of violence: a stride toward relationality

As I discussed above, while incorporation is a way of relating to the Other through the act of eating, the identification produced through kinship between killer/enemy and the consequent mourning can be thought of as a way to recognize the inevitable violence existing in the act of eating. Indeed, the mourning can be perceived as the Tupinamba's way of showing respect and recognizing the violence. Therefore, the kinship between the killer and the enemy and its separation from the eaters could be understood as a way to give the killer the social function of mourning their relative as a representative of the whole community. While winning political rights, the killer would also have the duty or task of identifying with and mourning the enemy on behalf of the whole community.

³¹ Without entering in the subject of politics of mourning, especially of those that are more radical, I start from the general understanding that the act of mourning is towards a beloved person or someone from your kinship, not an enemy.

In Chapter 2, I claimed the importance of conceptualizing the act of eating in relation to the biological description that eating means to incorporate nutrients. I argue for the need to avoid separating symbolical and actual eating if the goal is to conceptualize the act of eating as a means of relationality which allows an ethical interaction between Self/Other. Viveiros de Castro, when referring to the fact that the killer was the only one who did not eat the enemy, states that the Tupinamba themselves “separated the mouth that eats from the one that utters”³² (1992, 293). The goal of this discourse was, according to the author, to transform the flesh that would be eaten into a sign that its dialogical chef (the killer) would not eat (1992, 293). This idea opposes the conceptualization that Derrida makes of the mouth as both place of ideality and sensibility (quoted in Perullo n.d., 5) as well as his location of full subjectivity in both the mouth that does not have the authority to speak but also the mouth that eats animal meat. This carno-phallogocentric subject is one who does not kill, supposedly, but performs a sacrifice of the Other. How do I engage with this separation if my claim is to use Tupinamba cannibalism to think about both the symbolism and materialism of the act of eating by considering the biological function of the mouth? I conceptualize the separation of the mouth-speaker/mouth-eater as the Tupinamba’s way of recognizing the violence of the killing that takes place before the act of eating, i.e. the recognition of an actual murder instead of its camouflage under the idea of sacrifice. I argue that, in the Tupinamba’s case, the division between speaker/eater does not take place following a possession of attributes – which is the kind of Western division that entails the ontological separation between human/animal – but upon the recognition of a violent act committed by a killer who cannot eat with the rest of the community because they must mourn. This configuration of

³² This affirmation is related to the anthropophagical symbolical dialogue between killer/victim that took place during the ritual, before the killing of the enemy. See more in the previous section.

the structure of violence as an explicit violence that is recognized contravenes the sacrificial structure as the denegation of murder which permits animals to be killed for the establishment of the full carno-phallogocentric subject. This idea opposes one of the main characteristics of the sacrifice: the killing of an indifferent victim with the aim of cheating violence (Girard 2005, 16; my translation). In the Tupinamba's case, the victim is not indifferent, but valuable for their condition and the violence is publicly recognized and expressed.

For this reason, together with the reasons I gave in the section "Eating on the sacrificial structure", the conceptualization of Tupi cannibalism as human sacrifice arises from speculation. In fact, this recognition of violence through kinship and mourning the eater as well as through the separation between mouth-speaker/mouth-eater demonstrates the workings of the structure of violence that I propose as the alternative to the sacrificial structure of violence in the West. Here, the violence is not substantial to the community and enacted upon an indifferent victim, but violence, as well as the cannibalism itself, is one of the strides to achieve ethical connections between bodies, not just within the community, but also with the enemies. Moreover, there is not a categorical distinction between the animal that can be eaten and the human that cannot. The human must be eaten for their position of enmity as the animals must be eaten for other reasons.

The differentiation between incorporation and identification and their different politics of enmity, therefore, reinforce my argument by contesting Viveiros de Castro's conceptualization of Tupinamba cannibalism as sacrifice. As I said above, Viveiros de Castro's emphasis on the indiscernibility between eaters and enemies, due to the identification which takes place during the cannibal act, is the main argument for embracing Lévi-Strauss' concept of sacrifice. I recognize the existence of reciprocity between eaters and enemies as well as

the potentiality of each member of the community becoming the enemy and, therefore, occupying the role of the eaters or of those who can be eaten in the future. However, I propose to disentangle the idea of *indiscernibility* from the process of *identification*. This conjunction of identification and *indiscernibility* or *ambivalence* is not only conflated by Viveiros de Castro, but also by the Freudian concept of identification. Freud's conceptualization of identification between the child and his father (in relation to the mother as the object of desire) in the Oedipus complex (cited in Girard 2005, 182) brings an ambivalence occurring in the

inability to express correctly the relationship among the three elements of the structure: the model [the father], the disciple [the child], and the object [the mother] that is disputed by both because the model's desire has made the object desirable to the disciple. The object represents a desire shared by both, and such sharing leads not to harmony, as one might suppose, but to bitter conflict (Girard 2005, 192).

Without the intention of going more deeply into psychoanalytic accounts, I maintain that to claim an indiscernibility between perpetrator and victim is mistaken because during the ritual of killing and the act of eating, it is fundamental that every member has their role which is clearly established and performed. The conflict must take place and the violence does not obscure the function of either the members of the community or the enemies. This indiscernibility leads toward a confusion between the killer and the enemy, that would not allow a proper mourning of the victim, which I identify as the main reason for the recognition of violence. The actantial schema of Viveiros de Castro in which the killer/enemy is located as the object demonstrates not an indiscernibility between them but, in my reading, that: first, the enemy is a receiving object of violence and, second, the killer cannot enjoy the eating of the other because he is used by the community as the apparatus of mourning. The roles of the victim and the killer are clearly discernible, and in fact, the enemy displays different

politics of enmity depending on whether the relationship happens with either the eaters or the killer. I argue that it is necessary to undo this idea of indiscernibility, which is in fact what attaches Viveiros de Castro to the notion of the Lévi-Straussian sacrifice, and to think more carefully about a potential reciprocity in the future where the eaters can become eaten and the eaten can become eaters.

Conclusions

In the beginning of his book, *Violence and the Sacred* (2005), René Girard wonders if “not every form of violence can be described as a sacrifice” (Girard 2005, 1). Going against this kind of Western homogenic qualification of violence, I propose a different analysis of the structure of violence which takes place in Tupinamba cannibalism. The reason I consider sacrificial logic problematic is because, as Girard says, it locates violence under a general understanding of something sacred or permissible. I do not intend to problematize violence itself, but rather its location in the background and its lack of discussion or its acknowledgement only when it is upon certain beings and in a certain way. Indeed, the sacrificial logic is one of the mechanisms reinforcing the division between human/non-human. The animal is the sacrificial victim par excellence, i.e. the victim whose murder is allowed or, better said, whose murder is not even conceptualized as such. The concept of sacrifice owns a certain notion of civility because it gives the idea of sacredness to the act of killing. While the act of killing *by* the animal is located in the realm of the instinctive or savage, the act of killing *by* the human is supported by the veiled functioning of violence or a “negation of murder” (1991, 115). According to Girard, “the basic function of foreign wars, and of the more or less spectacular rites that generally accompany them, is to avert the threat of internal dissension by adopting a form of violence that can be openly endorsed and

fervently acted upon by all” (2005, 295). The sacrifice in the West, however, is not even recognized as an openly endorsed violence for its conceptualization as sacrifice obscures this. Even when the sacrifice is sacrificed (Derrida 1991), the subject is still extremely well perceived because, as Roy states, abstinence is another way of entitlement (2010, 26). Therefore, what is the ethicality of committing violence and concealing it? In opposition to this, I propose Tupinamba cannibalism as a recognition of violence and its consequent mourning that, in turn, is the active means to achieve the ultimate goal of relationality between bodies within the community and with the enemies.

The ethical construction of the Tupinamba’s enemy also provides another notion of deconstructing the Western idea of enmity. In opposition to the anesthetizing that the animal suffered in the West, transforming it into an object before being killed (Adams 2015, 36), and the total annihilation of the Western contemporary enemy – with whom understanding is impossible – the Tupinamba’s enemy agrees with the violent process and even achieves the radical position of becoming kin. Contradicting the valuable alterity that belongs to the enemy and that wants to be eaten as a way of achieving subjectivation, the enemy as kin makes the killer enter into a process of mourning, which reveals a way of recognizing that a killing was committed.

I therefore realize that the recognition of violence and violence as a means toward the final goal of relationality can be conceptualized as the sacrifice of one enemy for the sake of an entire community. However, I argue against this because the purpose is not the release of violence itself, as sacrifice is perceived, but the relationality between members of different communities. For this reason, I remain firm in my aspiration to conceptually deconstruct the Tupinamba’s cannibalism as sacrifice. The deconstruction of the sacrificial logic of violence problematizes the assumed superiority of the male meat-eater human over the animals and

enables other ways of thinking about enmity and violence that override Western principles of intelligibility (González 2016, 137; my translation).

*We are all cannibals. After all, the simplest way
to identify oneself with the Other is still to eat him.*
— Claude Lévi-Strauss

From the carno-phallogocentric structure to the cannibal feminist ethics

The desire to taste everything, including the forbidden human flesh, is signaled by Sigmund Freud in naming “cannibalistic” the oral stage in which “the child ‘tastes’ the world by putting it in its mouth” (cited in Zwingenberger 2011, 17). The metaphors of eating, putting into the mouth, and incorporating, among others, in the relations between Self/Other have escorted different genealogies and fields of thought and theorization. The Brazilian artistic and intellectual movement of Antropofagia has probably been one of the biggest representatives of the theorization of the act of eating, while including a decolonial epistemological and political project. The reconfiguration of the cannibal — who was constructed as a representative type-image of the Indigenous Other under colonialism (Mbembe 2006, 25) — as a site for radical propositions has been explored and still leaves room for more thought. The metaphor and metonymy of cannibalization hold infinite potential for bringing new arguments, as the different interpretations of the cannibal rituals — such as those of René Girard, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro or Ramy Aly³³ — show. The analysis of other forms of societal organizations, cosmologies, and exoticized Other(s) is a way of justifying and giving empirical backing to our desire for the most radical theorizations. However, a fine line separates this desire from the instrumentalization of Indigenous or other non-Western cosmologies as a way to fulfil our exotified, egocentric, colonial, and

³³ Ramy Aly, “Epistemological Unruliness and Theoretical Cannibalism: Queer Theory and Racial Performativity”, (lecture, Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands, November 5, 2018). See more in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vsL6Q2MYZMY>

anthropocentric questionings. A feminist and decolonial epistemological and political approach to this thematic might protect academics' work from this danger. Considering this, this thesis constantly kept in mind the goal of thinking about the Indigenous people and their cosmologies – who were victims of brutal material and epistemological violence – in opposition to the capitalist colonial imagination (Lugones 2010, 111). To fulfill this premise, I relied on the theoretical tool of deconstruction as that “respect for the unassimilable, as a practice of precaution towards the indigestible, unmetabolizable alterity. [...] A remainder that escapes taste as assimilation and total digestion” (Perullo n.d., 6).

As I explained in Chapter 1, Antropofagia and its potentialities have been established in a place of comfort that, I think, need to be actualized. By following the Brazilian movement's starting point, but also remaining conscious of its need for revitalization, I propose a reconceptualization of the act of eating by focusing on the analysis of the *indigestible* figure of the cannibal and its main act of eating human flesh. Viveiros de Castro's conceptualizations of Tupi cannibalism, for its innovative propositions, serve the basis of this project. The conflation of the symbolic act of eating with the actual eating as *incorporation* deconstructs the conceptualization of eating as a way to exercise oppression and allows a productive act of eating which is conceived of as a site for encountering other bodies, hence a site of ethics. Considering the intervention of the Derridean carno-phallogocentric subject as the hegemonic and normative way of subject construction that, furthermore, relies on the oppression of animals, Amerindian perspectivism guiding the principles of cannibalism appears as a way of metaphysically rethinking the act of eating. The goal is to problematize the carno-phallogocentric system and to depart from this toward another way of relating that, however, does not fall into the metaphysics of assimilation (Derrida cited in Perullo n.d., 12) as the theoretical (easy) solution for rethinking the oppressive and violent act of eating.

The reexamination of the violence of eating through the politics of veganism, extending rights and equality toward all beings, leaves untouched the main problem: theory, politics and epistemology always start, even when they depart, from anthropocentric and colonial notions (González 2016, 137). For this reason, I propose a *cannibal feminist ethics*, a radical reimagination around the act of eating that guides ethical interactions between Self/Other escaping the Western notions of intelligibility, such an enmity and violence. First of all, this ethics relies upon rethinking the act of eating as a relational encountering of bodies guided by the proposed construction of the Self through the non-consumerist incorporation of the Other. This action, as individual as it may seem, provokes an infinite relational and collective approximation toward the Other(s). The Amerindian cosmologies behind cannibalism, calling for a metaphysics based on perspectives instead of the possession of attributes, allows the act of eating to be repositioned as one which is not looking for consumption and does not act as an oppressive way of establishing subjectivity. On the contrary, it locates the act of eating as a push toward a relationality that is embodied, material and that sees the Other as fundamental for the development of the Self. Again, in this claim for an embodied and visceral way of relating, I also draw attention to the potentiality of looking into the biology of our own bodies, a biology that is spontaneous – not full of axioms – in order to widen our ways of thinking.

Against the Derridean idea of infinite hospitality (cited in Perullo n.d., 8), that also embraces the enemy and their unpredictability, the *cannibal feminist ethics* rests upon the consideration of the enemy as one who is desired and who can also become kin. While Derrida calls upon a double entendre – which could also be called *ambivalence* or *indiscernibility*? – of the host/guest (Perullo n.d., 8), potentially connecting to Viveiros de Castro's conflation of eaters/enemies, I claim instead for a reciprocity of the roles across time and a constant

relationality between a community and their enemies. In this sense, I agree with the final reflection of Derrida in “Eating Well”: “One never eats entirely on one's own” (1998, 115). However, instead of the assimilation and understanding of the Other (Derrida 1998, 115), I claim for an incorporation. The incorporation of the enemy envisions a politics of enmity in which the Other is fundamental and desired, but not for the oppositional construction of the Self, but for the relational incorporation of their positional value. On the other hand, the politics of enmity between killer/enemy are radicalized through the kinship that is created among them. This kinship removes the important positional value of the enemy as such and is a way of publicly recognizing the violence of cannibalism. Against the sacrificial Western logic which authorizes a veiled violence, the mourning of the killer represents the communitarian recognition of the violent act that takes place in Tupinamba cannibalism. Therefore, while violence is the goal of the sacrificial structure — it must be released to avoid the conflict within the community — the violence of Tupinamba cannibalism is simply a stride toward the final end of the cannibal act of eating: the ethical encounter between bodies within the community and with the enemies. While the Western idea of sacrifice is related to the protection of the individual human community through the killing of animals — which also entails the ontological and hierarchical separation of human/animal — the Tupinamba's violence is related to the importance of relations between communities for the formation of the Self and the collective body of the community — which does not imply an ontological differentiation between human/non-human. This displacement of the Western notions of sacrifice, enmity and violence appears to be one of the most important potentialities offered by rethinking the cannibal and their politics.

Having said this, and despite my arguments entangle and feed each other, I would like to list (with the purpose of organization) the main interventions I bring with this thesis as well

as their political, theoretical, and epistemological implications. First, by arguing for the inclusion of biological and scientific insights in theoretical conceptualizations, I make a conceptual incorporation of the notion of tasting into that of eating. There is an ontological approximation between the human, the animal and the cannibal accompanying this claim, but also a claim for an epistemological destabilization of the disciplinary compartmentalization between gender studies, science, and biology. Second, I argue for the conjunction between the symbolism and the materiality of the act of eating as a way to contravene the act of eating as oppressive and conceptualize it as relational. In that way, the relation between Self/Other based on the act of eating is that in which the subjectivation of the Self always need from the perspective of the Other. Again, the implication of this rests on the inclusion of the body's biological functions as a way of theorization. And the third and last argument is related with the innovative politics of enmity and logic of violence displayed in Tupinamba cannibalism that allows an intervention in the colonial and anthropocentric Western notions. Both the politics of enmity and the recognition of violence in the ritual show that violence is not intrinsic to society or that is the final goal itself, but a stride to the aim of cannibalism, that can be conceptualized, in summary, as a relational way of encounter between Self/Other. Furthermore, all these arguments rest and demand the embracement of Indigenous cosmologies and the deconstruction of the marginalized sides of history for the creation of innovative and radical ways of thinking, which in turn, bring new political, material, and epistemological developments.

Finally, I would like to end this thesis with the possibility of further research given by all the deconstructions and conceptualizations opened in these pages, including those that I hoped to further explore and could not due to space and time restraints. In this sense, I believe that the integration of indigenous cosmologies and new materialist perspectives, both

recognizing the agency of humans' bodies and non-humans, is a potential place of conversation that should be investigated. One of the connections I already see between these two scholarships is the new materialist emphasis of ontology over epistemology (Alaimo and Hekman 2008, 11) that could be discussed with the Amerindian perspectivism that presumes "an epistemology that remains constant, and variable ontologies" (Viveiros de Castro 2014, 73). Moreover, and according to Elizabeth A. Wilson in *Psychosomatic Feminism and the Neurological Body* (2004), "psychoanalysis has had plenty to say about the psychology of the openings of the digestive tract (orality, anality)" (33), which I think is an interesting analysis that I did not approach and that could be expanded with a cannibalistic perspective. But following Wilson's claim about the lack of exploration of the psychological events taking place in the gut (2004, 33), this is another perspective, that together with new materialist insights and indigenous cosmologies, would be worthy of research.

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