

‘Eat me like a cannibal’?: anthropophagic architecture as cultural criticism

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It is a strange paradox: if one perceives the profound absence of escape, the profound absence of goal and meaning, then — but only then — the mind liberated, we approach practically, lucidly, practical problems.
Georges Bataille (Bataille 2015: 225)

Constituted space

Over the last few decades, *constituent power* has become a common staple of scholarly debates on political and legal phenomena. The term refers to the ultimate power of ‘the people’ as the foundation of popular sovereignty and, consequently, of democracy, as well: the state’s central institutions and practices of government are an outcome of the exercise of a constituent power, and so they owe their existence to ‘the people’, and not vice versa (e.g. Wenman 2013; Arvidsson - Brännström - Minkkinen 2020 [forthcoming]).¹ This focus and the various attempts to resolve the apparent dilemma when a radical democratic rule by ‘the people’ and democratic institutions and principles clash have left the other side of the coin, namely *constituted power*, temporarily a bit more in the sidelines. This term, in turn, refers to the ‘end-product’, to the institutions and practices that ‘the people’ has entrenched into its constitution as the relatively permanent cornerstones of its political existence. These include the legal and political institutions that allow democracies to function: the legislature, the judiciary, various levels of public authorities, and so on. But despite their membership in the seemingly almighty ‘people’, individuals live out most of their everyday lives within the confines of institutionalised power relations that they have little access to or, perhaps, are even barely aware of.

The constituted side of public power has always been the standard focus in mainstream constitutional law and constitutionalism. Both deal mainly with legal definitions of *competencies* that constitutions assign to various government branches and authorities: the legislature passes laws, the executive drafts them and implements them, the judiciary applies them in individual cases, and so on. The focus of this essay is somewhat different. Constituted power namely also embodies a *physical environment* in which the legal and political institutions of the state reside. Think of a

¹ The main reason behind the growing interest in this constituent element has in all likelihood been the rise of populism. Populist politics, namely, makes manifest a fundamental dilemma inherent in any radical definition of democracy. Can the constituent popular sovereign, ‘the people’, really do no wrong? Is majority rule by ‘the people’ always democratic?

public square hosting government buildings, a courthouse, or a monumental statue of a national hero. Individuals, on the other hand, live out a significant part of their everyday relations with public power and domination in and through such *spatially* ordered environments. These environments are most emphatically present in state capitals and government centres that can more generically be called *seats of power*.

Especially after the so-called ‘spatial turn’ in the social sciences, studies on the relationship between power and space have been abundant (e.g. Massey 1994; Allen 2003; Löw 2016). But scholarship that would specifically deal with the spatial dimensions of constituted power, that is, with the *constituted space* of state capitals and government centres, is patchy at best. The broader project to which this essay belongs represents one of the first consolidated efforts to focus on how public power interrelates with the designed and constructed spaces in which statist institutions and authorities operate (for rare exceptions from architectural and political science perspectives, see Aggregate (Group) 2012; Bell - Zacka 2020 [forthcoming]) and how individuals negotiate their relationships with power and domination within them.

The broader contextual framework for this essay would more specifically address the ways in which Brazilian modernism may have influenced the urban planning and architecture of seats of power, and especially whether it is recognisable in the ways in which architects Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer organised the constituted power of the state spatially in Brasília, the country’s federal capital (e.g. Epstein 1973). In a crude taxonomy of constituted spaces, Brasília is ideal-typically a unique case. First, it is a purpose-built national capital. This is, of course, not unheard of: Canberra, New Delhi, and even Washington D.C. come instantly to mind. But Brasília is remotely located close to the geographical centre of the vast country as if the intention was to deliberately weaken the political influence of the two coastal metropolises further south, that is, the former capital Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo, the country’s industrial powerhouse. Second and more significantly, the striking bird-like urban design of Costa’s ‘Plano Piloto’ (*Plano Piloto* 1991) and Niemeyer’s iconic public architecture (Philippou 2008) provide concrete points of reference for evaluating the democratic promises of modernism, that is, whether and how modernist design and architecture enhance democratic principles and values in spatial environments that are saturated with power.

In this paper, my focus is more on the most radical strain of Brazilian modernism that is commonly known as ‘anthropophagy’. I will ask whether (and if yes, how) anthropophagy’s cannibalistic metaphor can provide a platform for a radical spatial politics that might have currency even in more contemporary times (see however King 2000). After identifying some of anthropophagy’s genealogical forerunners and going through some recurring themes, I will present a more detailed elaboration of the architectural ideas of one of anthropophagy’s best-known figures, Flávio de Carvalho (1899-1973). The paper finally suggests that the notion of radical cultural politics that Carvalho’s anthropophagic architecture typifies finds parallels in an anti-instrumentalist position that I have elsewhere, following Georges Bataille, called a ‘politics of the impossible’ (see Minkkinen 2009: 131-144; Minkkinen 2016).

From cannibalism to anthropophagy

So why ‘anthropophagy’?

In his *Histories*, Herodotus famously recounts how the Scythians prepared for war against the great Persian armies by seeking to make alliances with their neighbours: the Tauri, the Agathyrsi, the Neuri, the Man-eaters, the Black-cloaks, the Geloni, the Budini, and the Sauromatae. The list sounds like a voice-over commenting the opening credits of *Game of Thrones*. One of the tribes stands out:

The Man-eaters [Ἄνδροφάγοι] are of all men the most savage in their manner of life; they know no justice and obey no law. They are nomads, wearing a dress like the Scythian, but speaking a language of their own; they are the only people of all these that eat men. (Herodotus 1921: 307 [4.106])

Two extremes are consequently identified. At one end, we have an implied humanity that recognises the rule of law and the principles of justice, and at the other, cannibalism as the ultimate form of savagery that negates both law and justice.² Cannibalism is certainly one of the most recognisable taboos of the west and a benchmark with which a supposedly civilised world has traditionally differentiated itself from the radically ‘other’ of the hinterlands.³ As such, it has made its way into the vocabulary of the west’s pseudo-ethnographic self-reflection as well as the imaginary of its literary culture (e.g. Barker - Hulme - Iversen 1998).

In Freud’s account, cannibalism, like incest, is an atavistic desire that civilisation has consequently prohibited. But because a prohibition — a law — can only deprive the satisfaction of fulfilling an instinctual desire, a certain residue or frustration of the unsatisfied desire will always remain. Of all the instinctual desires that human civilisation has supposedly taken on, Freud suggests that an untrained mind — a non-analyst — may think that of man’s atavistic desires cannibalism alone, perhaps as the most primeval, has been universally proscribed and successfully overcome (Freud 2001: 9-10). But just like incestuous wishes can still be detected in the strength of the prohibition against their fulfilment, even cannibalistic desires find ways to surface from the unconscious:

² Othello’s stories of his own encounters with savages reflect a similar horror by associating cannibals with headless monsters: ‘And of the cannibals that each other eat — / The anthropophagi — and men whose head / Grew beneath their shoulders’ (Shakespeare 2005: 33 [1:3, 143-145])

³ Geraldine Heng turns the perspective around by reviewing Medieval historical accounts of ‘crusade cannibalism’, i.e. starving troops eating their slain Muslim enemies, and how the European imagination simply lacked the ability to comprehend testimonies of fellow Christians committing such atrocities (see Heng 1998).

art offers substitutive satisfactions for the oldest and still most deeply felt cultural renunciations, and for that reason it serves as nothing else does to reconcile a man to the sacrifices he has made on behalf of civilization. (Freud 2001: 13; e.g. Grimm - Grimm 2014)⁴

A less-well-known strain in the narrative, perhaps only familiar to scholars in Latin-American studies, uses cannibalism as a critical postcolonial metaphor. In 1928, the Brazilian author, theorist and cultural agitator Oswald de Andrade published a short text entitled ‘Anthropophagic Manifesto’ (Andrade 1972).⁵ The apparent aim of the manifesto was to distance the emerging Brazilian modernist movement from the traditional European ideals that were both idolised and uncritically emulated by a São Paulo cultural elite, and to combine newer avantgarde trends with aspects, both real and imagined, of the indigenous Amazonian peoples, most notably the Tupinambá, to create a truly national cultural movement.

The anthropophagic metaphor likens the birth of Brazilian modernism to a ritual in which a family member, a clan member or an enemy is consumed in the hope of internalising some of her respected, feared or magical qualities. In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud claimed that the ‘higher motives’ for cannibalism among so-called primitive peoples suggested that ‘by incorporating parts of a person’s body through the act of eating, one at the same time acquires the qualities possessed by him’ (Freud 1995: 81). This incorporation applies to the primal horde and original patricide, as well. The oft-cited passage explains:

Cannibal savages as they were, it goes without saying that they [the fraternal horde] devoured their victim as well as killing him. The violent primal father had doubtless been the feared and envied model of each one of the company of brothers: and in the act of devouring him they accomplished their identification with him, and each one of them acquired a portion of his strength. The totem meal, which is perhaps mankind’s earliest festival, would thus be a repetition and a commemoration of this memorable and criminal deed, which was the beginning of so many things — of social organization, of moral restrictions and of religion. (Freud 1995: 140-141)

⁴ Another well-known line of argument begins with Michel de Montaigne who used the figure of the cannibal to underline the innocence of his ‘noble savage’, that there is, in fact, nothing innately barbarous or savage about eating your fellow human being, except that ‘we all call barbarous anything that is contrary to our own habits’ (Montaigne 1958: 108; on the ‘noble savage’ more generally, see e.g. Ellingson 2001).

⁵ The ‘Manifesto’ was originally published in the first ‘teething’ or ‘dentition’ (*dentição*) of the journal *Revista de Antropofagia* that activists involved in the movement published for a few years (see Jackson 1978). The ‘Manifesto’ was originally translated into English as ‘Cannibalist Manifesto’ (Andrade 1991), but in this essay I am using the more recent — and more accurate — ‘Anthropophagic Manifesto’ that can be found in Pedro Neves Marques’s excellent collection of relevant texts (Andrade 2014).

The manifesto

Although some have argued that Andrade's manifesto never managed to draw the disparate individuals involved together into what might be considered a coherent 'movement', it certainly was influential (see e.g. Castro-Klarén 2000; Siewierski 2007). According to the standard historical account, the founding moment of Brazilian modernism coincided with the 1922 *Semana de Arte Moderna* exhibition in São Paulo, an event organised to celebrate a century of Brazilian independence from Portuguese colonial rule (see e.g. Resende 2000; Di Cavalcanti 2017). Over the course of three days in mid-February, the city's Municipal Theatre exhibited new visual arts and sculpture and provided forums for lectures, concerts and poetry recitals. The critical edge of the event was aimed at the local conservative cultural elite, and due to its radicalness, the event, in turn, was unfavourably received by the general public and prompted a fierce and angry response from the Brazilian press. It did, however, consolidate an emerging cultural movement that had begun to take shape some five years earlier with the return of painter Anita Malfatti to her native São Paulo (see entry in Congdon - Hallmark 2002: 158-160).

Malfatti had travelled in Europe and in the United States and was inspired by the new avantgarde movements that were reshaping the face of art. In an exhibition in 1917/1918 that followed her return to São Paulo, she set the stage for what would eventually lead to the formation of the 'Group of Five', a collective of artists including painters Malfatti and Társila do Amaral, and authors Menotti del Picchia, Mário de Andrade and Oswald de Andrade (no relation, as is customary to point out). In addition to Andrade's manifesto, the group would come to define anthropophagy as the most radical variant of Brazilian modernism through milestone artistic works such as Mário de Andrade's 1928 novel *Macunaíma* (Andrade 1985; see also López 1998), Társila do Amaral's eponymous painting *Abaporu* from the same year (see D'Alessandro - Pérez Oramas 2017; also Damian 1999), and Menotti del Picchia's political poetry (see e.g. Madureira 2005: 52-85; Lopes - Jacobs 1952).

One can, perhaps, approach the group's choice of the cannibalistic metaphor from at least three perspectives.

The first — the least persuasive — concerns the word's supposed shock value in general. So not only a 'regressive' identification with primitive humanity, but also with one of the most persistent taboos of western culture. This first perspective may be more relevant in explaining the hostile reaction of the bourgeois elite than the radical artistic and cultural agenda of anthropophagy itself.

A second perspective serves as a crude genealogy in the charting of anthropophagy's main sources of inspiration (see e.g. Nunes 2008: 25-57). Although anthropophagy is a distinctively Brazilian approach to modernism, many of its representatives had spent lengthy periods travelling in Europe and North America and become inspired by movements such as expressionism, futurism and Dadaism (see e.g. Pouzet-Duzer 2013; on the influence of psychoanalysis, see Facchinetti 2018). Oswald de Andrade himself travelled extensively in Europe and became acquainted with, among others,

French artist and poet Francis Picabia who at the time was one of the leading figures of Dadaism in Paris (see e.g. Karentzos 2014: 252-258). In 1920, Picabia published a short text called 'Manifeste Cannibale Dada' (available in English as Picabia 2007) which, no doubt, served as some sort of template for Andrade's own provocation. In this sense, the genealogy of anthropophagy points to European, white and middle-class origins that coincide with 'primitivist' and ethnological motifs in avant-garde art and culture (see e.g. Jackson 1994).

But despite these international sources of inspiration, anthropophagy did aspire to be a truly *national* movement that, like the Amerindian cannibal, devoured its European counterpart with the aim of producing a unique hybrid combining avantgarde and aboriginal thinking.⁶ The concrete poet Haroldo de Campos claims that this third, distinctively Brazilian take on cannibalism involved:

the critical devouring of universal cultural heritage, formulated not from the submissive and reconciled perspective of the "noble savage" ... but from the disabused point of view of the "bad savage," devourer of whites, the cannibal. This last view does not involve submission (conversion) but, rather, transculturation, or, even better, "transvalorization": a critical view of history as a negative function (in Nietzsche's sense), capable of appropriation and of expropriation, of dehierarchization, of deconstruction. (Campos 2007: 159-160)

From an interpretative point of view, Andrade's humorous and raucous manifesto may seem almost impenetrable (see Medeiros de Carvalho - Coube 2013; Vinkler 1997) although most regard it as critical of the trappings of modernism, as a specifically 'decolonial' project to use Luis Felipe Garcia's expression (Garcia 2020; also Castro-Klarén 2000). One can safely assume that much is lost in translation, especially taking into account that the manifesto was never really intended for 'international' audiences. It is made up of some fifty short fragments often written in a highly metaphorical style with a certain rhythmic repetition betraying Andrade's background as a poet. Carlos Jáuregui (Jáuregui 2012; see also Jáuregui 2009) claims that both the manifesto and the movement were, in fact, so heterogeneous that no single interpretation of its essence could be presented. By the same token, anthropophagy was easily appropriated, resignified and transformed — 'paradoxically consumed and devoured' (Jáuregui 2012: 22) — for a plethora of purposes such as the *tropicália* or *tropicalismo* movement in Brazilian music and cinema (see e.g. Canejo 2004; Young 2001).

This relative success, as Pedro Neves Marques notes, also domesticated anthropophagy and diluted it into a general cultural style of hybridity (as in Alvarenga de Souza 2015). By contrast, as an *anthropology*, anthropophagy had

⁶ Of the 'Group of Five', it was especially Mário de Andrade who displayed a more systematic interest in Tupinambá languages and thinking as a self-professed 'idiosyncratic ethnologist' who recorded and analysed his observations on several expeditions to the Amazonian forests (see e.g. Rosenberg 2006: 106-135).

enabled examining the Amerindian cannibal as a transformation of western capitalist predation and the sterilisation of the world with reason. Anthropophagy was not only an anthropology of otherness, but also an *inverted* anthropology of ourselves, ‘neither as the study of others or as the study of oneself, but the study of our world through the other; and the rupture with the Indian as the pure (purified), natural (naturalized) other’ (Marques 2014: 30-31). It is in the same vein that Eduardo Viveiros de Castro sees an indigenous anthropology as a ‘permanent decolonisation of thought’:

If the goal of multiculturalist European anthropology was to describe human life as it is experienced from the indigenous point of view, indigenous multinaturalist anthropophagy presumed as a vital condition of its self-description the “semiophysical” prehension — taking life through eating — of the point of view of the enemy. Anthropophagy as anthropology. (Viveiros de Castro 2014: 143)

The ill-mannered archaeologist

So how has Brazilian modernism that was launched at the 1922 *Semana de Arte Moderna* event in São Paulo influenced the way in which Costa and Niemeyer spatially conceived and designed the constituted power of the state in Brasília (see also Philippou 2004; Philippou 2005)? We do know that in 1938, Niemeyer, who was based in Rio de Janeiro, designed a house for Oswald de Andrade and Társila do Amaral in São Paulo, and that this collaboration is a somewhat unusual ‘tale of two cities’ that can be taken as evidence of some reciprocal aesthetic and political acknowledgement (see e.g. Cavalcanti 2003: 192-193).⁷ But the true anthropophagic representative of architecture must surely be the extraordinarily versatile avantgarde artist Flávio de Carvalho (see e.g. Leite 1995).⁸

Carvalho’s background is in many ways similar to his anthropophagic colleagues’. After spending his childhood in France, he studied civil engineering and the fine arts in Northern England. During his university years, he became acquainted with Vorticism, the British modernist movement founded by artist and author Wyndham Lewis (see e.g. Edwards 2000). Through Vorticism, Carvalho absorbed influences from expressionism and primitivism that would, upon his return to Brazil in 1922,

⁷ I would, however, argue that the close relationship that the Rio school of Brazilian modernism forged with Le Corbusier’s ‘*esprit nouveau*’ diluted its potential radicalness in the same way as anthropophagy gradually morphed into the hybridity of ‘*tropicália*’. The elaboration of this claim will need to be worked out elsewhere.

⁸ Rui Moreira Leite has written a general analysis of Flávio de Carvalho’s artistic profile in Portuguese (see Leite 2008), but no definitive introduction to this remarkable character is available in English. To my knowledge, only one text, included in Pedro Neves Marques’s collection, is available in English (Carvalho 2014). In addition to the individual publications referred to in the main text, I would recommend the translated essays appended to an exhibition catalogue dedicated to the self-professed ‘ill-mannered archaeologist’ (see Bonan - Rezende 2017: 128-144).

both define his own work as an architect and artist, and align his interests with representatives of anthropophagy who were becoming more active at the same time. The extent and intensity of Carvalho's affiliations with the group are, however, not entirely clear.

During his first years in his native Brazil, Carvalho concentrated on architectural designs of which the best known are a proposal for the Governor's Palace in São Paulo from 1927, and his entry for the competition of the Columbus Memorial Lighthouse in the Dominican Republic the following year. The anthropophagic spirit of these designs is, perhaps, best captured in their clear intention to function as statements or provocations rather than as realisable building projects.

Carvalho's sketches for the Governor's Palace project are not technical drawings from which a building could be completed, but, rather, graphic prints some of which were deliberately optimised for the crude newspaper printing techniques that were typical at the time. This conscious use of mass media to promote his work is a recurring feature that both distinguishes Carvalho from his own contemporaries and, in many respects, makes him an international artistic forerunner well ahead of his time (see e.g. Leite 2004). Apart from the graphic sketches, there is very little information available — at least in English — on the proposal even though its power-related theme would fit in well with the more general aims of my project (see however Segawa 2013: 40).

We know a bit more about the lighthouse design because the competition itself was well-known. Carvalho's entry was not chosen for the second round. But in a report prepared by the organisers after the first round, it was presented in a section called 'Comments and appreciations' as one entry among others reflecting 'the variety of the ideas submitted, and quite regardless of their architectural merits or of their, in some cases, very obvious architectural shortcomings' (Kelsey - Union 1930: 51). Carvalho would seem to fit into this latter category. As an architect, he is described as an 'extreme modernist', and his entry *Criação* ('Creation') is said to display 'a deeply founded sympathy and an almost mystical belief, anxious to interpret hieroglyphs and ideograms and the books of magic of various Indian civilizations ... though we do not like it' (Kelsey - Union 1930: 94-95).

A few years later, the São Paulo collective of artists and activists that had come together under the anthropophagy umbrella sent Carvalho to Rio de Janeiro to represent the group at the Fourth Pan-American Conference of Architects (see e.g. Lira 2014: 53-55). As a delegate for the group, Carvalho's address to the conference clearly echoed themes that had already been introduced more generally in the earlier anthropophagic texts like Andrade's manifesto. Carvalho's address was entitled '*A cidade do homem nu*' ('The Nude Man's City', see Carvalho 2010a), and it was once again closer to a provocative political and cultural statement than an attempt to present any realisable architectural or urban design.

Drawing his theoretical inspiration liberally from Freud and Nietzsche, Carvalho envisioned a city in which the weary 'machine-man of classicism' will be 'crushed

under foot, in the logic of natural selection, by the more efficient natural man' (Carvalho 2010a: 22). The humans of so-called classical societies would see this as a welcome development because they wished to 'throw off the repetitive destructive churning movement of their souls, to seek out a way of thinking that does not stifle their desire to explore the unknown' (Carvalho 2010a: 23). Carvalho's city was clearly of the 'new world':

American cities are no longer the fortress-cities of the Conquest. They are geographical, cities for critical times, cities of nude men, of free rational thinkers and eminently anthropophagic men. The anthropophagic city satisfies the nude man because it suppresses the taboos of matrimony and property; it belongs to the whole collective, it is an enormous monolith functioning homogeneously, a gigantic motor in motion, transforming the energy of ideas into the needs of the individual, realizing collective desires, producing the happiness which lies in understanding life or movement. (Carvalho 2010a: 25)

The anthropophagic city was to be built on seemingly contradictory principles. On the one hand, the 'nude man' represents pure science and reason. One of the curious dichotomies with which Carvalho operates apparently has to do with measures that seek to 'transform a *non-metric* into a *metric* world, creating new taboos to yield new benefits, encouraging reason to strike out into new fields' (Carvalho 2010a: 24 [my emphases]). In the city, the 'nude man':

can find his ancient soul, can project his free energy in any direction, without repression, discover new desires, impose on himself a strictly efficient selection, shape his new ego, guide his libido and destroy the illogical, thereby approximating to the symbolic god the sublime anguish of the Unknown of non-metric changeability. (Carvalho 2010a: 28)

But in anthropophagic city life, erotism and desire are equally important:

Sex [*a erótica*] plays a vital role in the life of the nude man. The nude man will choose his own sexual proclivities; there will be no restrictions and no need for renunciation; his own mental energy will be sufficient for controlling and selecting his desire. (Carvalho 2010a: 27)

The reason why Carvalho's choice of words is worth opening up here is that 'sex' is not just a reference to some superficial notion of Brazilian 'sensuality' that is often associated with, for example, the *tropicália* movement. It is much closer to 'erotism' and an indication of Carvalho's rather complicated relationship with Freud, a relationship that subsequently allows us to assess anthropophagy's genealogical kinship with, for example, the French post-surrealists. I will return to this kinship in the final part of the essay.

As a mathematical representation of the man freed from the 'scholastic dogma' of the old colonialist world, Carvalho's anthropophagic city is organised into three

concentric circular ‘zones’ with the most important aspects of city life concentrated into the outermost rings. The most significant of these rings is a research centre that is also the only established authority in the city. It selects, orders and distributes the city’s resources and ‘energies’ according to scientific criteria. It is ‘a mutable god, a god in continuous movement, a god who symbolizes the marvellous desire to reach out into the unknown’ (Carvalho 2010a: 27). The research centre includes three annexes: an educational facility, a ‘huge machine where life is studied and catalogued’ (Carvalho 2010a: 27) for management purposes, as well as a small hospital as hygiene in the city is second to none. The second most important ring is the sex zone, a ‘vast laboratory where a wide range of desires are indulged in’ (Carvalho 2010a: 28). The sex zone also includes designated areas for religion and food, both, perhaps, reflecting the underlying principles of anthropophagic desire. The central nucleus of the city includes less significant government administration and a residential area that is built around it, while a transportation network operates underground connecting the nucleus with the city’s more exterior zones. Finally, industry and farming are situated further away beyond the city’s perimeters.

Given the nature of his works, Carvalho’s ‘career’ as an architect is perplexing. Contrary to what Lauro Cavalcanti claims (Cavalcanti 2003: 100-107; for a more accurate description, see Segawa 2013: 40-41), he never won competitions, and to my knowledge only two of his designs, both from the 1930s, were actually realised: a set of residential houses on the Alameda Lorena in central São Paulo, and his personal estate in Fazenda Capuava on the outskirts of the city (see Anziché - Kon 2012). But even so, Carvalho could not really be described as an ‘unsuccessful’ architect. Inti Guerrero (Guerrero 2010) quite rightly claims that Carvalho’s architectural work must be assessed in the context of his other art, and especially in light of his two performance art ‘happenings’ serialised as *Experiência n.2* and *Experiência n.3*.

In the former ‘experiential’ urban performance from 1931, Carvalho deliberately disturbed São Paulo’s religious Corpus Christi procession by defiantly walking against the flow of the large crowd turning it into an angry lynch mob. He later wrote and illustrated a book on the performance that reflected on his own experiences of mass psychology and crowd behaviour (see Carvalho 2001). For the latter performance from 1956, Carvalho designed a businessman’s outfit that he deemed more appropriate than sweaty suits for Brazil’s tropical climate. The design included a white pleated miniskirt, a silk blouse with puffed sleeves, fishnet stockings and sandals. Carvalho called his outfit the ‘New Look’ as a reference to fashion designer Christian Dior’s postwar modernism (see e.g. Benaim 2015), and even in this case, he launched his design by dressing up in the clothes himself and walking through the financial district of São Paulo in drag (see Carvalho 2010b). Both performances were supported by intense media coverage which had become a general trademark of Carvalho’s artistic profile.

It is this association with performance art that, to my mind, also defines Carvalho’s radicalness as an architect. His most significant architectural designs and plans for public buildings such as the competition entry for the Governor’s Palace in São Paulo and ‘The Nude Man’s City’ initiative were both bold modernist statements, supported

by media spin generated by Carvalho himself, but that were never really intended to be realised. The gist of Carvalho's 'performative architecture' (see e.g. Feuerstein - Read 2013; Kolarevic - Malkawi 2005) is perhaps best captured in his claim that, in the unrealised Governor's Palace project, what would prevail was the 'modernist doctrine by Le Corbusier, only modified for better: in the building, the most important thing is the plan' (cited in Segawa 2013: 40).⁹ Carvalho rendered his anthropophagic architecture 'useless' in the sense that, rich in metaphor and symbolism but poor in function and utility, it really had no other purpose than to communicate its own impossibility. In this way, he paradoxically also captured what is truly radical about the São Paulo variant of Brazilian modernism. And at the same time, with the design and construction of Brasília, Carvalho's colleagues from Rio had put into effect an internationally celebrated and exportable 'made in Brazil' modernism which bore little resemblance to the basic principles of anthropophagy. There is nothing particularly local about Brasília, and certainly nothing indigenous. In many ways, it is the antipode of Carvalho's anthropophagic architecture.

The impossible

Unlike his many anthropophagic contemporaries, Carvalho is hardly known outside of his native Brazil. Even so, his avantgarde approach to architecture — and art more generally — align him much more clearly with certain strains of European cultural radicalism. In particular, I see a kinship with Georges Bataille and with the broader agenda of various individuals affiliated with the '*Collège de Sociologie*' (see Hollier 1987; Falasca-Zamponi 2011; Arppe 2009). This kinship can be examined on at least two levels.

First, Bataille, just like Carvalho and his fellow anthropophagists, draws much from a Freud-inspired notion of cannibalism as a sacred society-founding phenomenon. Humans do not consume each other for sustenance, and cannibalism will always include ritual elements. To eat human flesh is always a wilfully forbidden act, but the fundamental taboo is religiously violated all the same:

The object some indiscriminating animal is after is not what is desired; the object is "forbidden", sacred, and the very prohibition attached to it is what arouses the desire. Religious cannibalism is the elementary example of the taboo as creating desire: the taboo does not create the flavour and taste of the flesh but stands as the reason why the pious cannibal consumes it. (Bataille 1986: 72)¹⁰

⁹ Saulo Gouveia has analysed, among other things, the complicated relationship between Le Corbusier and the São Paulo modernists through Mário de Andrade's early works (Gouveia 2011).

¹⁰ Elsewhere Bataille addresses misconceptions about his thinking. He points out that while cruelty against fellow human beings may be wrong in principle, it is a fact. And this relates to cannibalism, as well: 'Exploitation of man by man, as hateful as it is, is given in *humanity*. Even anthropophagy, when this is the convention, coexists with the prohibition of which it is the ritual violation' (Bataille 1991: 207).

Second, if we interpret Carvalho's projects as indigenously inspired critical responses to colonial 'classicism', we can clearly see similarities with Bataille's deeply-rooted distrust of all things architectural. For Bataille:

only the ideal being of society, that which orders and prohibits with authority, expresses itself in what are architectural compositions in the strict sense of the term. Thus, the great monuments are raised up like dams, pitting the logic of majesty and authority against all the shady elements: it is in the form of cathedrals and palaces that Church and State speak and impose silence on the multitudes. (Bataille 1997: 19; see also Hollier 1989)

Carvalho's confrontation with architecture was more humorous and subtle. He seemed to emphasise the deviant art that architectural design produced as sketches and media representations at the expense of tangible buildings that, coincidentally, were seldom even realised. The central thematic focus on the relationship between architecture and power is, however, clearly shared by both Bataille and Carvalho, as is the need to progress from a predominant stale classicism to something more radical: 'strange though it may seem, when it is a question of a creature as elegant as the human being, a way opens — as indicated by the painters [i.e. by art] — towards a bestial monstrosity; as if there were no other possibility for escape from the architectural galley' (Bataille 1997: 20). This 'contestation' of public power through the 'impossible' (see Besnier 1990) is something that is clearly missing in Costa and Niemeyer's aestheticised LeCorbusierian designs for Brasília.

Finally, there is even a factual historical link. Carvalho travelled through Europe in the mid-1930s, and during the trip, he also interviewed representatives of the surrealist movement for the Brazilian media. Among his interviewees was Roger Caillois, Bataille's 'Collège' collaborator. Some ten years later during his stint in Buenos Aires, Caillois paid a return visit to São Paulo staying at Carvalho's house. Although not much is known about these meetings, Veronica Stigger (Stigger 2017: 134-135) draws on James Clifford's notion of ethnographic surrealism to speculate on what might have brought the French ethnologist together with a representative of Brazilian anthropophagy:

Ethnographic surrealism and surrealist ethnography are utopian constructs; they mock and remix institutional definitions of art and science. To think of surrealism as ethnography is to question the central role of the creative "artist," the shaman-genius discovering deeper realities in the psychic realm of dreams, myths, hallucinations, automatic writing. This role is rather different from that of the cultural analyst, interested in the making and unmaking of common codes and conventions. Surrealism coupled with ethnography recovers its early vocation as critical cultural politics, a vocation lost in later developments ... (Clifford 1988: 147)

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