Appropriating the abject: an anthropophagic approach to organizational diversity

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Movement

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Abstract

This paper discusses the concept of organizational anthropophagy, a metaphor describing a unique relationship between identity and otherness. To show how this perspective contributes to understandings of diversity and difference, I read anthropophagy against psychoanalytic discussions of abjection, a process where individuals are simultaneously fascinated by, drawn towards, and horrified by their relationships to outside "others". Stemming from the global periphery, anthropophagy provides a way to combine psychoanalytic with sociological views of otherness. I stress the implications of the anthropophagic approach for organizational theorizing of the "monstrous", placing monstrousness against the political economic context of post-coloniality and discussing its relations with diversity and difference.

"It was my hint to speak, such was my process: and of the Cannibals that each other eat: the Anthropophagi, and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders" (William Shakespeare, Othello, I:iii, 141-144)

In 1557, the German traveler Hans Staden published an account of his travels in Brazil, "a true description of a land of naked, fierce and cannibalistic savages."(Staden,1930: 13). The account included his 9-month capture by Tupi Indians, a description of their ritualistic anthropophagic (cannibalistic) practices, and his narrow escape from being eaten. His captors, he wrote, would engage in ritualistic ingestion of captured enemy warriors, thereby participating in a kind of communion with the powerful outsider. The ritual would result in acquiring a new name for the anthropophage, a transformation of identity. As Staden accounts, as he attempted to reason with Cunhambebe, the village chief, poised between bites of an enemy's leg, he asked "can a man eat another man?", to which the chief responded that he was, in fact, a jaguar. Was this humor, as some claim (Viveiros de Castro, 1986), or a true trans-species predatory being initiated through a symbolic act?

When these accounts appeared in a São Paulo daily newspaper in 1926, they were read by modernist painter Tarsila do Amaral and poet Oswald de Andrade, recently returned from Paris. They snapped up the idea, recognizing the possibility of re-working anthropophagy away from a tired "civilization versus primitivism" myth, a dominant ethical narrative (c.f. Rhodes, Pullen, & Clegg, 2009) that infantilized intellectuals from the periphery. From the early accounts, they transformed anthropophagy into a Brazilian take on the avant-garde European cultural movements they had devoured in France (e.g. Ferreira, 2002). Andrade had been reading Montaigne's account of Brazilian cannibals while in Paris (Cocco, 2009), and had discovered himself in the foreign: "If there is something I have brought back from my travels in Europe between the wars, it is Brazil itself" (Andrade, in Cocco, 2009:46). He had

found himself in the humorous, monstrous, and inconstant personage of the anthropophage, recognizing with Montaigne how well this description resonated with his own, modern identity.

The figure of the cannibal is both hidden and ubiquitous in modern thinking[i]. From colonial attributions of indigenous cannibalism (e.g. Sanborn, 1998; Obeyesekere, 1992), to theological debates on the ingestion of symbolic blood and flesh during the Christian mass (Lindenbaum, 2004), to uses of the cannibal to characterize modern boundarylessness (Cottom, 2001), the cannibal has both shocked and fascinated modern thinkers, suggesting that its relationship to modern thought is less than straightforward. Some have compared modern capitalism to a cannibalistic process (Meritt, 2010; Rhen & Borgerson, 2005), whereby society devours its own members in a quasi-organized space between civilization and chaos. Alternatively, anthropophagy has played in a role negotiating inner/outer boundaries (Islam, 2012; Rehn & Borgerson, 2005), mediating between desire and violence, and reimagining the relationship between the self and the body (Lindenbaum, 2004).

This paper follows recent scholarship in recognizing the relevance of anthropophagy for understanding the monstrosity and "inconstancy" of modern selfhood (Cocco, 2009; Viveiros de Castro, 2009; 2002). As a way of establishing a self-other relation, anthropophagy represents an ambivalent identification with and aggression towards the other, outlining an understudied outlook on difference and diversity. Although the metaphor of anthropophagy has only recently been applied to organizational practices and values (Faria, Carvalho & Collares, 2001; Islam, 2012; Rhen & Borgerson, 2005; Wood & Caldas, 2002; Wood & Caldas, 1998a, b), its ability to juxtapose key elements of contemporary organizing, namely the centrality of the body, the grotesque and the visceral in organizing (e.g. Islam, Zyphur & Boje, 2008), the hybridity and relationality of organizational identity (e.g. Islam, 2012), and the co-existence of desire and aggression in relations with organizational "others" (e.g. Rehn

& Borgerson, 2005),   makes it a powerful trope to use in organization studies.   Recent attempts to theorize "monsters" of organizing, marked by cross-identities, excess, and abjection (Thanem, 2011; Thanem, 2006; du Gay, 1994), coalesce well with the viscerality and excess of the anthropophagic perspective. This paper contributes to the understanding of monstrous transgression by arguing that these aspects of boundary-crossing, excess and viscerality unite anthropophagy with the notion of *abjection* (Kristeva, 1982). By reading anthropophagy together with abjection, I argue, a unique interpretation of difference and otherness can be outlined that is relevant to monstrousness.

As the anthropophagic perspective has elsewhere been described more generally (e.g. Islam, 2012; Wood & Caldas, 1998a), this paper focuses on the most "monstrous" aspect of anthropophagy, namely, transgression of the self-other boundary by incorporating the Other, in a simultaneous act of love and violence. This boundary transgression stems from an ambivalent identification that is constitutive of anthropophagic subjectivity (Rolnick, 1998). Anthropophagy in this way is aligned with abjection and the abject (e.g. Kristeva, 1982), linking perspectives on the body with issues of subjectivity and self-other boundaries. The relational perspective implicit in the anthropophagic metaphor provides a novel take on relations of difference and diversity, while its border-crossing aspect makes this act monstrous. As abjection has recently emerged in the organizational literature around bodily excess (e.g. Tyler, 2011, Fotaki, 2011), the abject is a useful concept to discuss transgression as a monstrous, anthropophagic aspect of difference. I hope to thereby illuminate issues around the excessive elements of our organizational lives (e.g. Thanem, 2011; 2006; 2004). The current paper thus proposes that the figure of the anthropophage provides a unique vantage point from which to consider the abject, and to confront the implications for subjectivity and difference when we re-inhabit the monstrous.

The rest of the paper unfolds as follows. First, I discuss abjection in view of the relation between abjection, subjectivity, and identity, to contribute to an exploration of relations of otherness, a topic key in understanding diversity (Durand & Calori, 2006). Second, I link the anthropophagy cultural movement to abjection, overviewing anthropophagy with this objective in mind. Next, I describe the anthropophagic viewpoint as relational, arguing that abject horror and fascination for the other impacts reactions to organizational diversity and difference. Here, I place emphasis on how valuing diversity implies a willingness to engage in a self-other dialectic, a concept central to modernist perspectives in critical theory but formulated somewhat differently from the point of view of abjection. Finally, I discuss the implications of this approach for organizational theorizing, noting important areas for development as well as limitations of the anthropophagic metaphor.

This paper contributes to understanding difference in organizations, first by giving an illustration of a creative appropriation of abjection by a group from the global periphery, and second, by exploring the conceptual underpinnings of this movement. Given that a cannibalistic ethos was self-consciously used by these actors to send messages about relations between core and periphery, self and other, provides an interesting and illustrative bridge between monstrosity and diversity.

The Idea of the Abject

Kristeva (1982) theorized the notion of the abject as arising from a psychological space that was neither subjective ego nor object of knowledge, but rather an externalized, originary ground of subjectivity. This ground, according to Kristeva (1982), becomes disavowed by the subject, yet remains present as a threat to subjective stability. Similarly to the psychoanalytical "repressed", yet predating symbolic understanding, the abject concerns a "twisted braid of affects and thoughts" Kristeva (1982: 1). It is inarticulable, and marks the boundary between self and world, a boundary heavily guarded and maintained through

feelings of disgust and rejection. As a boundary marker, abjection is a constitutive element in subjectivity, and is most salient in "liminal" states where identity is uncertain. Kristeva associates such spaces of "constitutive repression" in the maternal, the semiotic, and the female body (Perelberg, 2005, p. 578). In describing this space which is both non-being but is pregnant with the possibility of being, Kristeva draws on Plato's notion of the *chora*, a space which in which ideal forms materialize, caught between being and emptiness, and also signifying the space of the *polis* or civic space. Here, the boundary less area which is shorn apart by abjection represents both individual and civic unity, pointing to the ethical possibilities of a pre-abject state of being. From Plato's (1929) *Timeus*, the chora is undefinable, except through "bastard thinking", thinking which is left unidentified, nameless, and metaphorical. For Kristeva (1982), this space characterizes the abject because it gives rise to being but cannot itself be defined. The subject, in its first gesture of narcissistic autonomy (Moi, 1986), rejects this space, but ironically searches ever more to recreate through representation this sense of primal unity, which would be a space of non-differentiation with the Other.

Given that the abject is both "expelled" from the subject's being and constitutes a ground for becoming (Kristeva, 1982), it provokes reactions of both horror and fascination on the part of the subject. Kristeva (1982) considers the abject as the self outside of the self, at once self and other, pulled between ambivalent instincts of rejection and identification. A definitive response to this ambivalence, however, is undermined by the fact that the abject is not really an "it" at all, but a pre-cognitive ground for an individual's ego identity. The abject thus escapes final categorization, and becomes a driver or generator of elusive representations that do not capture their objects.

Abjection entered the organizational literature from the recognition that subjectivity within organizations often retains a non-symbolized component, in the form of a rejected

identity trace (e.g. Linstead, 1997). As a disavowal of this identity trace, abjection involves rejecting a part of the self in the paradoxal attainment of a stable self (Phillips & Rippin, 2010). This dual nature of selfhood as disavowal of the source of identity cannot be accounted for by traditional views of organizational identification that stress coherence and stability (e.g. Albert & Whetten, 1985). The simultaneous fascination with and rejection of the abject self produces a complex and ambivalent experience of identity at work, causing work to be experienced as meaningful yet also as tainted or dirty (Tyler, 2011).

Importantly, because of the relative neglect of abjection in traditional approaches to organization, some organizational scholars have recommended exploring alternative approaches, such as aesthetic or artistic approaches, in order to stimulate theorizing on organizational abjection (e.g.Warren, 2008). Recognizing the importance of Kristeva's (1982) psychoanalytic work, the abjection concept has also expanded beyond its psychoanalytic origins. For example, Phillips & Rippin (2010) analyze organizational abjection using a New Historicist approach, which emphasizes the use of anecdote and juxtapositions to unveil underlying themes within diverse historical representations.

Anthropophagic thinking fits well in this regard, because it represents a set of historical and cultural logics that diverge across historical periods, social classes, and media of expression. Anthropophagy is at once an indigenous logic of predation and pacification (e.g. Conklin, 2001; Vilaça, 1998), a modern logic of surrealist post-colonial reflection (e.g Dunn, 2001), and an organizational reflection on globalization and hybridity (e.g. Wood & Caldas, 1998a, b). Indigenous anthropophagy, while probably practiced (Lindenbaum, 2004), was grossly distorted in a European reflection on its own self-anxieties (Cottom, 2001), then fed back to Brazilian modernists, who reappropriated the notion and turned it back against Europe (Andrade, 1990). Its appearance in the organizational literature (Wood & Caldas, 2002; Wood & Caldas, 1998a, b; Faria et al, 2001) brought to light post-modern questions of

authenticity, hybridity, and corporality that were themselves eating away at European notions of civilization (c.f. Islam, 2012).   Within Brazilian thinking, anthropophagy was never a dominant paradigm, but it persisted in the margins over centuries. Following Phillips & Rippin (2010), the abject may be traced by juxtaposing images of anthropophagy that "flashed up" at key moments (Benjamin, 1973), revealing briefly the underbelly of abject relations.

Although not an historical study per se, as it does not deploy "data" in terms of historical archives or representations, the current paper does provide some historical background for the anthropophagic movement. In several aspects, I follow Phillips & Rippin (2010) in evoking concepts from the New Historicism.   First, I focus on the metaphorical representations rather than the reality of cannibalistic practice, following, for example, Obeyesekere (e.g. 2005), who also brackets the question of historical practice.   Additionally, as described by Phillips & Rippin (2010: 2), these texts cannot be separated from their historical and social contexts, which I frame as crisis points in Brazilian history (Islam, 2012). Juxtaposing representations from different time periods, this approach uses analogy to reveal similarities between periods.   Finally, admitting (following Rehn & Borgerson, 2005) the limits of metaphorical approaches in studying such a visceral topic, I also recognize the materiality inherent in metaphor itself (e.g. Ricoeur, 1977), and thus do not view metaphor as doing injustice to a discussion of bodily transgression .

Anthropophagic Approaches to the Abject

West (2007) notes the relative lack of discussion of anthropophagy with regards to the abject, despite their clear overlaps. As West (2007) argues, the closeness of the anthropophagic taboo with the incest taboo derives from similar sources, namely, the cultural requirement for identity-establishment through distancing from the maternal body, the same basic act described by Kristeva (1982) as the basis for abjection. However, because of the essential orality of both abjection (cf. Kristeva, 1982, p. 3), and anthropophagy, versus the

later Oedipal, "genital" nature of the incest taboo (West, 2007), anthropophagy may be an even closer conceptual fit with abjection. Further, while some approaches to anthropophagy focus on the instrumental use of others as "object" (Rehn & Borgeson, 2005), bringing in the abject offers a somewhat different view of the relationship between the anthropophage and his/her "victim".   Rehn & Borgerson (2005) describe capitalism as cannibalistic and instrumentalizing (an "objectifying" relationship). Yet, the relationships of desire and incorporation seen below in non-capitalistic accounts (from indigenous to artistic to theoretic) focus more on fusion with the abject nature of the sources of self.

In this way, a movement to re-appropriate notions of anthropophagy as orientations for thought and practice may be considered an attempt to "appropriate the abject", with all the ambiguities for subjectivity that this brings. The intentional occupation of a transgressive position by placing oneself as the abject confers monstrous power, as a sublime transgressor, and source of subjectivity. To provide a background to how forms of anthropophagic representation developed, most centrally within the Brazilian context, the next section juxtaposes key moments of the appearance of these representations. This provides a brief historical groundwork for developing ties between anthropophagy and abjection in discussing organizational diversity and difference.

Anthropophagy through History

Representations of anthropophagy are diverse and loosely related to each other through circuits of colonial domination and representation (Anderson, 2010; Lindenbaum, 2004; Obeyesekere, 2005). These representations varied across colonizer and region (Islam, 2012). Many "tall tales" were exchanged between Spanish, Portuguese, French, British and Dutch colonizers, building upon previous European cannibalism myths, and evolving into pseudo "mythemes" that mixed reality and fantasy (Obeyesekere, 2005). Given this diversity of colonial traditions, the fact that I focus on Brazil, where the *modern* anthropophagic

movement developed from a reconstruction of mythic origins, must be read within the larger colonial and post-colonial enterprise.

Although anthropophagy in indigenous Brazil is colored by a colonial lens, most scholars today acknowledge the use of ritualistic anthropophagy among diverse groups in Brazil (Conklin, 2001; Viveiros de Castro, 1992; Vilaça, 1998). However, different from colonial representations of ravenous wild feasts, ritualistic anthropophagy in most groups entailed sacred representation and was highly symbolized (Obeyesekere, 2005). The form of these rituals, as well as the "victims", varied somewhat across groups, with some regularities. In all cases, "displacing frontiers" (Budasz, 2005) was a central function of ritual anthropophagy, where differences between living and dead, predator and prey, or in-group and out-group were represented through eating the flesh of the outsider (or in some cases, the dead in-group member, Conklin, 2001). Such consumption was a *performative* act (Viveiros de Castro, 1992), whereby the eating itself fused the anthropophage with the other, creating a harmony between opposing forces, sometimes across species (for example, eating an enemy warrior could transform an anthropophage into a "jaguar", a predator of humans (Holanda, 1994). This context illuminates the meaning of later anthropophagic rituals directed at European colonizers (c.f. Agnolini, 2002), as an attempt to make sense of, pay homage to, and generally mediate the relationship between two different worlds.

European colonial characterizations of indigenous cannibalism largely bypassed the complex symbolic interpretations of the rituals, mostly characterizing anthropophagy as barbaric and proof the inferiority of local groups (Anderson, 2010; Biber, 2005). More subtle thinkers did, however, take on the issue with greater sensitivity (Cottom, 2001). Perhaps most well known is Montaigne's (1964) *Des Cannibales* (Of Cannibals), which questions whether Brazilian anthropophagy is so primitive, considering the tortures and punishments found in Europe (Nunes, 1990). *Des Cannibales,* followed by similar considerations about cannibalism

from Diderot (in Cottom, 2001), was one of the first examples of social theory that decentered the mores of European civilization, considering seriously the presence of legitimate alternative ways of life. As an early foreshadowing of perspectives later sharpened in twentieth century post-colonial and post-modern thinking, Montaigne's discussion of Brazilian cannibalism was considered one of the first examples of relativistic thinking, and a predecessor of later critiques of modernity (Cottom, 2001).

As suggested earlier, the resurgence of anthropophagic thinking in the twentieth century was not a function of indigenous resurgence per se, but a modernist appropriation of the anthropophagic spirit to confront the contemporary European cultural scene. Galvanized first by the surrealist and other modernist movements of the inter-war period, and later by the cultural gyrations of the 1960's, experimentation around new cultural forms became way for thinkers from the periphery to both invoke European movements and assert their autonomy with respect to these movements. The anthropophagic movement in Brazil embodied both a reverence for European high art and an acknowledgement of the precariousness of the hegemonic status of Europe (Rolnick, 1998).

Anthropophagy provided the perfect way to express this dual relation with European modernity, leading to an aesthetic style based on remix and ironic usage of imported ideas from psychoanalysis, anthropology and older Jesuit notions of conversion and catechism (Ferreira, 2008). By mixing these influences with a primitivist activism, a posture of indigenous identity, artists such as Oswald de Andrade and Tarsila do Amaral could demonstrate their cultural pedigree without mimicking European styles. By "digesting" Freud, these modernists could focus on the desirous and visceral without falling into a romanticized primitivism.

Inaugurating the anthropophagic movement as an attempt to promote a philosophy based on the "concept of life as devoration" (Andrade, 1954), Oswald and Mario de Andrade

founded   the *Revista Antropofágica* (Anthropophagic Review), a multi-media display of poetry, essays and artwork that formed the central forum for a semi-unified cultural movement. Later, anthropophagy would be used sporadically by artists, but the initial group was organized around the magazine, dedicated to founding a unique Brazilian interpretation of nature, art, and the foreign, and avoiding overtly political demands (c.f. Islam, 2012). In a sense, rather than a political movement per se, which would have involved fixing a political identity, the anthropophagic movement attempted to establish a *chora*, where new forms could emerge whose political implications were not manifest. The anthropophages used grotesque humor, sexual imagery, and other iconoclastic symbolism to mark the opening of this space. The initial launch in Sao Paulo caused an outrage among the cultural elite and would be remembered as a key event in twentieth century Brazilian art (Freyre, 1946).

Andrade's (1990) *Manifesto Antropófago,* a founding document, was the most direct statement of the anthropophagic perspective. Opening with "Only anthropophagy unites us. Socially. Economically. Philosophically", and leaving the referent for "us" open, Andrade challenges identity borders, searching for a cultural position for Brazil but also for humanity more generally.   Throughout the manifesto, comparisons are made with humanism, universalist revolution and with catechism (literally "universal"), showing cosmopolitan bent of the anthropophage.   Yet the very reaching into indigenous roots for this metaphor invariably Brazilianizes the discourse, with locality equally stressed, as Andrade uses indigenous words and renames Brazil "Pindorama", an indigenous appellation echoing a pre-colonial era. Andrade's famous "Tupi or not Tupi, that is the question" combines the universal reflection on human essence from Hamlet with a situated reflection on local identity. The humanist question is thereby localized, and moreover, confronted with the question of being from within the prosaics of a *foreign* literature. Rather than a homogenizing

humanism, the *Manifesto* confronts difference with boundary crossings, in a spirit of philosophical pillaging that slips between the reverent and subversive.

The *Revista Anthropofágica* was short-lived, with its major artists fragmenting into different artistic and political directions. Yet, the anthropophagic approach remained as a salient cultural trope and would emerge again within the cultural scene of the 1960's (Islam, 2012). Against the backdrop of the military dictatorship that had come to power in Brazil in 1964, and the hardening of censorship and persecution against artists, anthropophagy took on renewed meaning (Young, 1998). Many exiled artists, with new material to "digest", developed new cultural and theoretical currents.

Anthropophagic perspectives became felt in literature (Perrone, 1990), music (Dunn, 2001; Veloso, 1997), and cinema (Nagib, 2007, Young, 1998). Films such as *Macunaima* (directed by Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, 1970) and *How Tasty was my Little Frenchman* (*Como Era Gostoso o Meu Frances*, directed by Nelson Pereira dos Santos, 1971) used stereotyped images of Brazil to satirically present social and political issues, and overtly made use of the cannibalism theme. For example in *Macunaima,* a business magnate fills a swimming pool with stewing human limbs and black beans, in a anthropophagic version of the Brazilian bean stew *feijoada*. This extends a long line of comparisons between cannibalism and capitalist exploitation beginning from Marx and moving into contemporary organizational thought (c.f. Rehn & Borgerson, 2005).

In music, the *tropicalist* movement, with musicians like Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil, self-consciously extended the anthropophagic movement, using Andrade's manifesto as a template for their own approach, as a generational evolution of the concept (Veloso, 1997). Their aesthetic demonstrated both self-doubts about Brazilian culture and a celebration of the tropical (Dunn, 1993), and included scenes of spectacle and debauchery to parody the military regime, contrasting its hegemonic insistence on modernization and order with circus music

and reverence to African and indigenous deities, layered on a rock and roll beat. These influences were explicitly referred to as forms of devoration (Veloso, 1997).

These three appearances of anthropophagic mobilization– the indigenous, modernist, and tropicalist – were all *organizational* movements, in the sense that they defined, more or less self-consciously, the approaches of organized groups with regards to their porous organizational environments. However, it was only recently that organizational theory took seriously the notion of anthropophagy (Wood & Caldas, 1998a, b). These writings used anthropophagy to describe creative appropriation in international business contexts, where Brazilian firms would appropriate foreign knowledge while adapting and re-mixing this knowledge locally. Wood and Caldas (1998) described the roots of anthropophagy in indigenous ceremony, but focused more on the *epistemic* or knowledge-based aspect of appropriation than the ambivalent *relational* aspect whereby cultural borrowers both identify with and reject the other (although some other work more clearly touches on such relationality, cf. Caldas, 1997). Other perspectives (Faria et al, 2001) noted that anthropophagy was an important link between organizational theory, anthropology and the arts, and saw it as having critical potential. Recently, Islam (2012) summarized and elaborated this perspective in terms of post-colonial organizational theory.

What was left largely undeveloped in these accounts, however, was the shocking nature of the metaphor (Rehn & Borgerson, 2005), the fact that it relied for its force on an allusion to the monstrous act of people eating each other, an act of taboo even in societies where it existed, and always highly ritualized and controlled (Lindenbaum, 2004). The carnal evocation links anthropophagy to the abject, such that theorizing anthropophagy through this lens shows its ambivalence in terms of the inconstancy of subjectivity (Viveiros de Castro, 1998).

Abjection and Anthropophagic Subjectivity

That the clear link between anthropophagy and abjection was left largely untheorized was noted with surprise by West (2007). This link, which did appear briefly in some works (e.g. Rehn & Borgerson, 2005, Kutzbach, & Mueller, 2007), was made explicit by Biber (2005), where claims of cannibalism among Australian aboriginal peoples were used as markers of their absolute unassimilability under "civilized" order[ii]. Kristeva's (1982) discussion of the abject as an aspect of the foreigner became radicalized in the figure of the indigenous as at once the originary, primitive human and as the utterly outside and foreign. The view clashed in the legal system with the notion of total assimilability under the law, such that it became questioned whether natives could be tried for cannibalism as a crime, where a legal treatment would both condemn the act and establish the perpetrator as a responsible legal subject, bringing the abject "inside" of the system.

While this case is interesting, it may foreclose on the discussion of the abject as a constitutive feature of the normal, a limitation that is much less the case in the Brazilian context. Within Brazilian history, indigenous peoples have at once been excluded (e.g. Perz, Warren & Kennedy, 2009) and have simultaneously been acknowledged as fundamental to Brazilian culture, both ethnically through mixture and culturally (e.g. Ribeiro, 1996). In addition, while the cannibal label was used to exclude the anthropophage, the Brazilian version involves identification with the anthropophage, assuming a taboo identity as a condition of sociality (Hence Andrade's statement, "Only anthropophagy unites us."). The simultaneous acknowledgement and exclusion of indigeneity in Brazil paints a clearer picture of the ambivalence of abjection as a source of the self. Furthermore, the ritual of anthropophagy *carried over* into modern society, at least in metaphorical status, with modernists and contemporary thinkers and artists' attempts to assimilate or embody an anthropophagic perspective.

The excessive nature of the abject (Kristeva, 1982) problematizes somewhat the aesthetic and cultural uses of anthropophagy in Brazil, because aesthetization may involve a sublimation of real, carnal consumption into an intellectualized and metaphorical anthropophagy. Indeed, the claim that Andrade engaged in sublimation is taken as given by some authors (e.g. Almeida, 2008).   Yet this point overlooks the observation that anthropophagy was always symbolic, insisting that name, essence, and identity take the form of flesh. By turning flesh eating into an intellectual and artistic movement, modernist thinkers may have simply been fully exploiting the other side of this subversion, asserting that discussions of the body must take form of art or ideas. This is evident in Kristeva's (1982, p 4) description of abjection: "It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection, but what disturbs identity, system, order".   Although framed in bodily terms, it is the symbolic weight of the body as a carrier of order or disorder that is key to abjection. This focus on the body as the limit of articulable identity and order (see also Butler's 1993 discussion of the abject) runs though the abjection literature as much as in anthropophagy. As one might moreover note, it would not take much exploration into the anthropological literature to find parallels in indigenous approaches to the body (e.g. Levi-Strauss, 1964).

Why, then, is the incorporation of the other so significant as a cultural response to the abject? Most discussions of abjection stress the *exclusion* of the abject as foundational for subject formation. Butler (1993, p 3), for example, claims that "the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, an abjected outside, which is, after all, "inside" the subject as its own founding". Although the abject holds fascination for the subject, it is a taboo fascination, kept outside of the social order to protect identity boundaries. As West (2007) has noted, the disgust with cannibalism may be rooted in the recognition that autonomy and identity involve *weaning,* a basic maturational process by which individuals establish identity by no longer depending on

another's body for sustenance.   For West, a cannibalistic turn is tantamount to a loss of subjectivity through its very search for its primitive sources.   This, recognized by West (2007), aligns anthropophagy with the abject, which is likewise a source and a threat for subjectivity.

Re-appropriating anthropophagy as a cultural principle, however, inverts this relation by stipulating inclusion of the other as a basis for identity. In the words of the *Manifesto*, anthropophagic subjectivity turns "taboo into totem", an inverted reference to Freud's (1913) *Totem and Taboo*.   In the psychoanalytic version, the establishment of social norms (i.e. taboos) is based on the internalization and abstraction of prohibitions from a totemic figure, whereas for the anthropophage, the commission of the taboo act is itself a mode of appropriation of totemic qualities (Levi-Strauss, 1964).   According to Levi-Strauss (1964), anthropophagy involves the establishment of a common substance between the anthropophage and the eaten, and is the converse of anthropopoemic (or people-vomiting) approaches, where the abject is rejected or distanced. Similarly, Leach (1971) describes anthropophagy as the establishment, not of common abstract ideals through rejecting the materiality of bodies, but rather of a common substance through the symbolic ingestion of bodies.

As an approach to organizational diversity, then, anthropophagy offers a particular twist on the question of abjection as a boundary between self and other.   It creates a space in which commonality in diversity can be found, not in the repression of difference, but in the *ingestion* of difference as a source of self-identity. Similarly to abjection, it requires us to recognize that the other is a constitutive feature of the self, but it moves a step further in urging this difference to be assumed, taken up as a subject position, gaining a name in the process, but losing the constancy of identity (Viveiros de Castro, 1998).   In the next section, I will elaborate on this identity position with regards to its implications for organizational diversity.

Diversity as Consumption of the Other

Although the study of organizational diversity has included a wide variety of approaches and schools of thought (e.g. Ozbilgin, 2009), a key feature of critical approaches to diversity has been a focus on the notion of difference or "otherness" as a central problematic in diversity issues (e.g. Zanoni, Janssens, Benschop & Nkomo, 2010; Zanoni & Janssens, 2003; Prasad, Prasad & Mir, 2011).   Otherness is important because diversity research is essentially about understanding the interfaces between different identity groups, and how to manage these interfaces within and between organizations (Prasad et al, 2011). Critical approaches also share the feature of viewing the identities in diversity situations as socially co-produced between actors within organization-specific discourses, performances and contexts (Zanoni et al, 2010).

The centrality of identity and subjectivity involved in the above approaches opens up a theoretical space in which the abjection concept provides a mechanism for the production of subjectivity. Moreover, the contingency of identity presupposed by these approaches makes them particularly compatible with anthropophagic perspective, which views the self as radically co-constructed. What these two views jointly contribute to critical diversity perspectives is thus an elaboration of the two axes of relation to difference, namely, the boundary negotiation involved in establishing self-other relations, and the fluidity involved in boundary crossing, with anthropophagy providing a unique framing to such crossings. From the previous discussion of the relationship between abjection and anthropophagy, therefore, several areas can be opened up in diversity research.

First, critical diversity scholars have discussed how marginalized groups strive to construct and maintain positive, empowering identities in organization s (e.g. Zanoni et al, 2010). This work (e.g. Zanoni et al, 2010) stresses how agents negotiate identity positions with powerful groups in a politics-infused process of identity work.   In this context,

identification with the abject other could form a kind of "weapon of the weak" (Scott, 1985), similar to other cases of double identification in situations of power asymmetry (c.f. DuBois, 2003). However, the role of ambivalent identification in the negotiation of empowering identities is left largely undiscussed in the diversity literature, leaving identity struggles framed as largely adversarial processes between disparate parties. The impossibility of completely distinguishing the internal from the external in anthropophagic thinking lends a unique understanding of the search for positive identity among organizational members.

Specifically, anthropophagy constitutes a strategy whereby identity is produced without the negation of the other, but rather a particular form of adulation for the other. Different from humanist notions of universality, tolerance, or acceptance (Andrade, 1990), anthropophagy does not deny the abject nature of the other, but neither insists on the exclusion of the abject as a condition for identity formation. Rather, it intakes the abject in recognition of its constitutive properties, and thereby benefits from the self-unity that it finds in its fusion with the other. Conversely, the price it pays for this is to forego a stable self as opposed to the other, and to remain in a state of "soul inconstancy" (Viveiros de Castro, 1998). To elaborate, through incorporating the other, the anthropophage sacrifices the individual autonomous self that emerged out of disgust (Kristeva, 1982), ritually enacting the pre-abject fusion of self and other. To do this requires identifying with the abject itself, turning oneself into a monster, but a monster that evokes pathos in that its desire for communion was so great as to sacrifice itself to that union.

Second, the adversarial approach to diversity, whereby differences and sameness are considered the "properties" (whether objective or socially constructed) of discrete and separable individuals, reflects a vision of diversity management as the capacity to negotiate social dilemmas (e.g. Barry & Bateman, 2010). As long as interests are seen as resulting from stable, individualized identities, the task of diversity management appears as one of ordering

these interests into coherent schemes whereby individual and group interests, as well as a long and short term interests, are harmonized (Barry & Bateman, 2010). But if one posits, as do abjection and anthropophagic perspectives, that individuals do not simply desire together in social aggregates, but desire *each other* as excluded or lost elements of the self, the harmonization of diverse interests looks quite different. Diversity, in such a vision, provides an opportunity for empowerment and self-respect due to the recognition of a fundamental link between diverse members (c.f. Pless & Maak, 2004). On the other hand, such an approach provides an explanation of conflict, not as a divergence of individual interests, but as a resentment of the other's very being, the injustice of their separateness, the source of both desire and aggression. As Andrade rightly noted, this very aggression, once recognized as a common condition, can create a basis for solidarity by promoting the mutual recognition of each person's emotional connectedness with the others, and simultaneously acknowledging the ambivalent and even violent reactions that such connectedness can give rise as a common shared "being" is shorn into separate bodies. Anthropophagic ritual is, in this light, a symbolic communion to mourn the artificial separateness of bodies, and to remember the underlying bond between beings.

Third, a key issue in the diversity literature has been how to reconcile universalistic conceptions of values with the promotion of diverse ways of life in organizations (e.g. Banerjee & Linstead, 2001). On the one hand, promoting diversity implies a universalistic conception of value by which openness is considered an ideal or value (e.g. Fowers & Davidov, 2006). On the other hand, universalistic conceptions may have had the paradoxical effect of covering over locally embedded identities that were central to actors, undermining diversity at the very moment of claiming it as a universal value (c.f. Nkomo, 2011). Underlying this seeming paradox of diversity is an ontology by which the particular is radically distinct from the general, such that it would be logically incoherent to expect a

universalistic conception of the particular. To value individual diversity as a principle would be to abstract it from its individuality, entering into a performative contradiction (Chernilo, 2009).

The above aporia could be resolved, as suggested above, if the absolute boundary between individual and the social could be made porous or flexible. By locating both self and other as emerging from differentiation from an original *chora,* from an act of rejection of an original sameness rather than from an original difference, it becomes more difficult to see the Other in essentialist terms. By reconfiguring the relationship between selfhood and otherness as one of mutual constitution and desire for difference, the anthropophagic approach creates a theoretical space for such a resolution. Culture in this approach is not considered a coherent and universalistic system of values or principles, but rather a system of mutual desire and exchange of identities. In such an approach, diversity and difference do not stand as obstacles to social communion, but rather are a *sine qua non* for exchange, since individuals rely on the difference of desired others for the very constitution of their own identities, and the subsequent "predation" of these differences as a way of reaffirming a social bond in and through difference.

The idea that self and other co-constitute each other through a kind of dialectic relationship is not by any means new. The fraught self-other struggle which constitutes social bonds may evoke to the reader echoes of older discussions of the master-slave dialectic from Hegel (1977), or its later development through critical theory. In some ways these discussions are relevant, but as Kristeva (1982) emphasizes, the subject-object relationship is distinct from the subject-abject relationship. While the former deals with the instrumental use of others (c.f. Rehn & Borgeson, 2005) to establish subjective supremacy (or "property", in the Marxian version), the latter is about the emergence of subjectivity as such, about the existence of the subject as distinct from its environment, rather than about its essence as a

social actor. Still, while these two relationships are held by Kristeva as distinct, they are clearly related in some way, and serious theoretical work is needed to explore in what way relations with the other as abject are similar or different to relations with the other as object.

Although the above observations are preliminary directions for a larger research agenda, they point to the utility of considering anthropophagic thought, interpreted through the process of abjection, in understanding diversity. Each of the key themes mentioned above (the construction of a positive identity, the ambivalence of desire and resentment, and the paradox of diversity and universality) undergoes a fundamental transformation when one begins to view identity in terms of an abjection of self as external and the re-integration of the external in an act of symbolic devoration.

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper has explored the abject from within anthropophagy discourse, applied to diversity as an organizational issue. Anthropophagy informs questions of relational identity, navigating the dilemma of universalism and particularism in diversity studies. As a root metaphor from anthropology and art, anthropophagy has gained traction in organization studies, illuminating the monstrous in organizational life. This paper takes one step towards digesting this powerful metaphor, bringing it into the core of organizational theory.

Diversity research can benefit from the anthropophagy metaphor as a novel way of theorizing self-other boundaries, and the abjection resulting from boundary tensions, a key aspect of the "monstrous" in organizations (Thanem, 2011). Anthropophagy provides a powerful metaphor (Dunn, 2010), while abjection provides a conceptual mechanism by which that metaphor may be critically unpacked. The suggestion is not that all identity works anthropophagically (although see Sahlins, 1983) but thatanthropophagy illustrates a unique strategy for dealing with key problematics that haunt the diversity literature. Let me therefore end by discussing the conceptual terrain opened by the linkage of anthropophagy and

abjection, as well as the ramifications, positive and negative, of adopting an anthropophagic strategy to diversity and difference.

The discussion of anthropophagy through the lens of abjection opens up several lines of further explorations. For example, as West (2007) notes, discussions of anthropophagy have tended to take two relatively distinct directions. The first focuses on the psychodynamics of infant "cannibalism" and taboo for the establishment of identity (e.g. Klein, 1990), while the second looks at the post-colonial aspects of anthropophagy in order to examine the ideological functions of cannibalism (c.f. Obeyesekere, 2005). Yet, when Kristeva (1982: 8) calls abjection a "land of oblivion", and a place where the "Other has settled in place and stead of what will be 'me'' (Kristeva, 1982: 10), the links to colonialism seem clear. By theorizing subjectivity and the post-colonial together in the notion of the abject, lines are developed within the psychodynamics of excluded or subaltern groups (Islam, 2012), as well as across analytical levels. That the Brazilian modernists hit on the re-appropriation of anthropophagy for just this purpose, and deployed prose thick with psychoanalytic vocabulary, illustrates the points of synergy between these two lines of research.

This connection between the formation of subjectivity and the politics of social exclusion furthers the study of the monstrous in organizations. According to Thanem (2006, p.167), the monstrous is considered that which "disrupt[s] the boundaries between beings that should be kept apart". In this sense, both abjection and anthropophagy are key notions, in that they pertain specifically to moments of fusion and expulsion. The abject is disgusting precisely due to the subject's effort to tear itself away from its sources (Kristeva, 1982), while the anthropophage is horrifying specifically because it denies or attempts to overcome this tearing away, through a reincorporation of its sources (West, 2007). The anthropophage

represents a pathway for the "monster" to confront its own monstrousness, not by overcoming it but by affirming the very relation that defined it as monstrous.

Additionally, approaches to the monstrous in organizations focus on perspectives that move beyond "individuals and unified identity groups" (Thanem, 2011, p. vi). In this sense, the anthropophagic principle of radical relationality fits well with this perspective. It does not imagine that relationality implies harmoniousness; rather, it recasts, for better or for worse, the self-other ambivalence of the subject as a moment of desire but also of aggression, irony, and reversal. Yet, as discussed above, it does so in ways different from older discussions of the master-slave dialectic (Hegel, 1977) that informed critical theory. The current paper does not draw from these conceptual foundations an already articulated ethics of anthropophagic relationality, but it does provide some coordinates out of which such an ethics could be attempted. It remains for future developments to explore the relational, ethical and political directions that could be thus constructed. Working out an "anthropophagic ethics" as a project of diversity research would in this sense be worthwhile, although it remains to be seen if the outcome of such an ethics would be uniformly desirable.

Further, theorizing anthropophagy also contributes to understandings of diversity and difference in two related ways: first, by elaborating an example of where difference is reappropriated by peripheral actors to assert a novel form of subjectivity; and second, by presenting a mode of relation by which questions of difference can be explored in their own right. On the first point, by taking an abject term, and reappropriating this term as a sign of local identity, the anthropophagic movement parallels the reappropriation and ironic deployment of negative terms found in the African American (e.g. Gates, 1988) and Queer Theory (e.g. Jagose, 1996) treatments of language. As in these forms of linguistic politics, anthropophagy recognizes the power bases of language, both in their ideological overtones and polysemic slipperiness. Anthropophagy, however, adds a layer of complexity in that the

term itself, that of incorporating the other, signals appropriation itself. For instance, while the reappropriation of terms like "queer" mark difference and assert identity (Jacose, 1996), "anthropophage" marks both difference and togetherness, creating a dialectic of subjectivity that adds a new angle to the assertion of difference by subaltern groups. In anthropophagy, the diversity literature adds a new and unique illustration of how difference is encoded and affirmed by marginalized groups.

Regarding the second point, anthropophagy asserts a particular form of dealing with difference that offers both promise and has its own problems. Its link with abjection points to anthropophagy as essentially a pre-subjective state (Kristeva, 1982), implying that reversion to this state involves more of a dissolution than a consolidation of identity (West, 2007). This dissolution may link anthropophagy with notions of racial mixture or identity forgetfulness and non-differentiation that some attribute to Brazil (Nunes, 2008). The suggestion of a pre-Oedipal anthropophagic identity also suggests that such a return could be a form of "regression" (Moi, 1986), less a strengthening than a weakening of identity. On the other hand, some might bristle against the seeming violence and aggression of the anthropophagic metaphor (e.g. Nunes, 2008). If the abject is a symbolic rejection of the maternal body (Kristeva, 1982), and the anthropophage re-asserts its incorporating tendency, it is still ambiguous whether this act is misogynistic or feminist. Moreover, the anthropophagic metaphor itself involves aggressive overtones that, while encouraging relationality and overcoming individualism, do so with an aggression that may be disquieting. Combating abject disgust with the other by promoting cannibalistic desire may be trading one problematic standpoint for another. There must be a more constructive way to deal with the Other than cannibalism.

Yet, the anthropophagic movement from the outset asserted itself as humanistic, maternal, and emancipatory. Its often ironic and polysemic prose makes clear analysis

difficult, but such blurring of clear boundaries is inherent in both anthropophagy and abjection. Although the metaphor may ultimately be found wanting as a basis for diversity and intergroup dialogue, one might concur with Cesar & Rocha (2011) that this outlook at least deserves a serious and sustained philosophical treatment, which it has yet to receive.

As a metaphorical strategy, moreover, anthropophagy implicitly suggests that an allegorical or indirect approach to questions of subjectivity is appropriate. Metaphor is a key tool in understanding organizational phenomena (e.g. Cornelisson, Oswick & Phillips, 2008), particularly in situations where fine-grained hypothesis testing is difficult (Tsoukas, 1991). The inarticulability of subjectivity (e.g. Butler, 1993) may benefit especially from such a view, because attempts to directly theorize subjectivity or identity may miss the inarticulable aspects of the abject as a part of the self. In this sense, metaphor could be considered a justifiable approach to reaching understanding.

Noting that the anthropophagy metaphor seems like an extreme way to discuss relational identities may draw questions as to whether the concept is more geared for spectacular effect than for serious conceptual reflection. While it may be interesting to use exotic practices as allegories for modern social dynamics, given the historical, cultural and geographic distance between colonial Brazil and contemporary organizations, does this analogy really hold? It is worth noting that anthropophagy as a modern perspective was deeply engaged with modern thinking regarding art, psychoanalysis and cultural politics. In this way, the later phases of anthropophagic thinking already assumed the relevance of the anthropophagy metaphor in non-indigenous contexts. Further, it is possible that the shocking nature of the trope was itself indicative of its challenge to traditional ways of thinking about bodies, borders, and identity, and would seem shocking in proportion to this challenge. If the horrified reaction to the cannibal is a function of the boundary crossing inherent in the

communion of different bodies, then perhaps this metaphor is ideal for studying identity and otherness.

An additional limitation of the current paper may be the unproblematic way in which anthropophagy is seen to provide a basis for social affirmation and relationality. The gut-level disgust and horror of the abject (Kristeva, 1982) would seem to be a rocky terrain on which to build a feeling of solidarity, even if one based on irony and inversion. In fact, following Kristeva, the abject may be ultimately inarticulable, an odd basis for a literary movement indeed. Addressing this question, Kutzbach and Mueller (2007) discuss the possibility of feigning the abject, drawing on Berrensem's (2007) article on the "faux-abject". In this view, the faux-abject, seen in social appropriations of the monstrous from gothic fashion to aesthetic grotesque, should be distinguished from the gut-wrenching horror of true abjection. The question of the extent to which certain manifestations of monstrosity are truly abject is important, but entails analysis beyond the scope of this paper. It should remain as a caution, however, to those who study the monstrous, that social representations of the monstrousness may work to tame transgression as much as to express it. How to represent the transgressive, without thereby doing injustice to its transgressiveness, remains a question closely tied to that of how to respect otherness and difference.

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[i] I here use the terms "cannibal" and "anthropophage" synonymously, following much of current usage (c.f. Islam, 2012; Ferreira, 2002a; 2002b). It should be noted that this synonymity has been contested, with cannibalism referring to the physical act of flesh eating, and anthropophagy restricted to ritual or symbolic usage. Following Islam (2011), I keep the terms interchangeable so as not to adhere to an ad hoc distinction between the physical and symbolic, which would not do justice to the style of thinking associated with the anthropophagic movement.

[ii] I do not claim any continuity between the examples drawn from Brazil and those from other regions, such as the Pacific or Australia. Both colonizers and colonized were, in both cases, distinct. However, following Obeyesekere (2005) it is worth noting that narrative elements (often false) do seem to cross contexts in sailors representations of cannibal practices across regions. As Obeyesekere argues, this may be due to the spread of sailors "tall tales" across explorer communities, to common stereotypes, or to reader demand in the metropole for similar shocking tales of monstrous cannibals.