



Becoming Other: Cannibalistic Translation as Liminal Transformation

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Résumé de l'article

En combinant la théorie de la traduction de Haroldo de Campos et l'analyse de la métaphysique autochtone d'Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, cet article avance que la consommation métaphorique ou la cannibalisation des textes par la traduction met en lumière le rôle que jouent les influences littéraires dans l'expansion et la transformation des réseaux littéraires mondiaux. Comprendre comment les textes traduits consomment le texte source dans le processus de leur transcréation révèle un échange rhizomatique et une circulation de la littérature qui déstabilisent à la fois les structures de pouvoir traditionnelles et les binarismes conventionnels de la traduction qui privilégient les questions d'originalité et de fidélité. Plus précisément, l'attention portée aux influences littéraires rhizomatiques permet de reconnaître les dynamiques de pouvoir et les inégalités inhérentes à la littérature postcoloniale. Une vision cannibale de la traduction non seulement met en lumière ces déséquilibres, elle vise à les subvertir et à les transformer. La traduction cannibale reconnaît ainsi la traduction comme un processus liminal de devenir autre qui opère la transmutation tant des textes source et cible, que du traducteur, des lecteurs et des réseaux littéraires, un processus qui se répercute à travers les relations dialogiques qui les relient tous. En s'appuyant sur les travaux de Viveiros de Castro sur les ontologies autochtones amazoniennes, cet article met en lumière les façons dont la théorie de la traduction des frères de Campos peut continuer à être affinée.

Becoming Other: Cannibalistic Translation as Liminal Transformation

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Abstract

Combining the translation theory of Haroldo de Campos and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's analysis of Indigenous metaphysics, this essay argues that the metaphorical consumption or cannibalization of texts through translation highlights the role literary influences play in expanding and transforming global literary networks. An understanding of how translated texts consume the source text in the process of their transcreation reveals a rhizomatic exchange and circulation of literature that destabilize at once traditional power structures and conventional translation binaries that give precedence to questions of originality and fidelity. Specifically, attention to rhizomatic literary influences acknowledges the inherent power dynamics and inequalities within postcolonial literature. A cannibalistic view of translation brings into focus these implicit power imbalances while also offering translation as a means to subvert and transform language and cultural hierarchies. Cannibalistic translation recognizes translation as a liminal process of becoming other that transforms not only the source and target texts but also the translator, readers, and literary networks, a process that reverberates through the dialogical relations connecting them all. By drawing on Viveiros de Castro's works on Indigenous Amazonian ontologies, this article demonstrates ways in which the cannibalistic translation theory of the de Campos brothers can continue to be refined.

Keywords: cannibalistic translation, literary influences, liminality, de Campos brothers, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro

Résumé

En combinant la théorie de la traduction de Haroldo de Campos et l'analyse de la métaphysique autochtone d'Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, cet article avance que la consommation métaphorique ou la cannibalisation des textes par la traduction met en lumière le rôle que jouent les influences littéraires dans l'expansion et la transformation des réseaux littéraires mondiaux. Comprendre comment les textes traduits consomment le texte source dans le processus de leur transcréation révèle un échange rhizomatique et une circulation de la littérature qui déstabilisent à la fois les structures de pouvoir traditionnelles et les binarismes conventionnels de la traduction qui privilégient les questions

d'originalité et de fidélité. Plus précisément, l'attention portée aux influences littéraires rhizomatiques permet de reconnaître les dynamiques de pouvoir et les inégalités inhérentes à la littérature postcoloniale. Une vision cannibale de la traduction non seulement met en lumière ces déséquilibres, elle vise à les subvertir et à les transformer. La traduction cannibale reconnaît ainsi la traduction comme un processus liminal de devenir autre qui opère la transmutation tant des textes source et cible, que du traducteur, des lecteurs et des réseaux littéraires, un processus qui se répercute à travers les relations dialogiques qui les relient tous. En s'appuyant sur les travaux de Viveiros de Castro sur les ontologies autochtones amazoniennes, cet article met en lumière les façons dont la théorie de la traduction des frères de Campos peut continuer à être affinée.

Mots-clés : traduction cannibale, influences littéraires, liminalité, les frères de Campos, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro

Introduction: The Transformative Power of Translation

The act of translation extends beyond the mere revision and incorporation of a text into a different language. Translation creates new works of literature, and in doing so, extends and expands global networks of literary texts. Here we might think of Roland Barthes's remark, "the metaphor of the Text is that of the *network*; if the Text extends itself, it is as a result of a combinatory system" (1986, p. 61; italics in original). Translation is thus a clear indication and expression of the dialogic nature of literary influence. I mean dialogic in the sense utilized by M.M. Bakhtin, such that:

Dialogism is the characteristic epistemological mode of a world dominated by heteroglossia. Everything means, is understood, as a part of a greater whole—there is a constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others (1981, pp. 426),

in which heteroglossia is:

that which insures the primacy of context over text. At any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions—social, historical, meteorological, physiological—that will ensure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions. (*ibid.* p. 428)

The dialogue that texts enter into in their production is distinctly web-like, multiple, and relational. Translation extends this web, producing multiplicity and relationality of texts and textual histories.

Language gives form to the dialogical interplay of past and present, of various ideologies and beliefs. As Bakhtin writes:

A dialogue of language is a dialogue of social forces perceived not only in their static co-existence, but also as a dialogue of different times, epochs and days, a dialogue that is forever dying, living, being born [...] Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life. (*ibid.*, pp. 365 and 293)

Words of a text lie dormant, slumbering until we wake them with our gaze, pulling social constructions of the past into the present to be reinterpreted in a new time and place. This intertwining of the past and present, this joinder of different locations, this amalgamation of different values—this is the dialogical nature of language that in texts appears as literary influences.

Utilizing both the cannibalistic translation theory of Brazilian poet and translator Haroldo de Campos and the cannibal metaphysics of Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, I argue that the metaphorical consumption of texts reveals influences as mechanisms of both literary production and literary translation. This attention to the ways in which new literature grows and interacts with previous literary works in turn highlights linguistic and cultural hierarchies but also provides an avenue to subvert normative power dynamics through the act of translation. Postcolonial, globalized translation makes us aware of implicit hierarchies operating both within and between cultures (Merrill, 2012, p. 160). As a form of postcolonial translation, cannibalistic translation not only makes us aware of implicit hierarchies but sees the act of translation as inherently *transforming* such hierarchies—at its best, leveling these hierarchies in a rhizomatic tangle of influences, though also potentially reinscribing hierarchies at its worst. A cannibalistic view of translation sees translation as a tool for leveling stratifications within and between cultures. “Cannibalistic translation breaks with power relations, horizontalizes hierarchies and annihilates the ‘logocentrism’ of language,” writes Alexandre Dubé-Belzile (2019, p. 85). As a liminal act, or even one of rebellion, cannibalistic translation is in some ways idealistic in claiming that hierarchies can be reduced, but in this naïveté it is also radically revolutionary. Overall, a cannibalistic translation both rejects and absorbs power imbalances, acknowledging them but then incorporating them on new terms in order to transform them.

This article explores how a cannibalistic theory of translation reveals the transformative nature of translation as emergent from the

translation process. This transformation alters not only the source and target texts, but also the translator, and the literary networks that all three inhabit. After presenting the translation theory of Octavio Paz, which privileges considerations of literary influences over questions of textual originality, leading to a destabilizing of existing hierarchies, I turn to the cannibalistic translation theory of Haroldo de Campos, who extends this notion of translation as subversive and destabilizing. The notion of translation as destabilizing leads into a discussion of translation as a form of liminality, as expressed by British cultural anthropologist Victor Turner. Framing translation as a liminal process that erases conventional boundaries raises questions of otherness as texts are pulled, through translation, into decentered, rhizomatic literary networks.

Moving beyond de Campos' well-known conception of cannibalistic translation, I then draw upon the seminal work of Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1951-) on Indigenous cosmologies. Viveiros de Castro is known in particular for his work on Amerindian perspectivism, which is regarded as a key influence on the ontological turn in anthropology (see 1992, 1998, 2014). I argue that his metaphysical and ontological analysis of cannibalism within Indigenous Amazonian culture provides a lens through which to extend the metaphor of translation as cannibalism. Viveiros de Castro's work highlights the role of bodies as the site for change, exchange, and transformation, and details the conception of cannibalism as a form of becoming other. Through this transformational becoming, a cannibalistic translation enters a dialogical web of relations and influences that extends literary networks, the self of the translator, and those who encounter the translation. This article seeks to shed light on ways in which, by building on anthropological analyses of cannibalism and emphasizing translation as a transformational process of textual becoming, cannibalistic translation theories can continue to be refined.

Translation, Influences, and Innovation: Octavio Paz

Literary influences are trans-historical and transnational, relational dialogues that transcend time and space; these are relations continually in flux, ones that owe much to the role of translation. Central to the postcolonial notion of translation as a mode of cultural exchange is the recognition that such exchanges are inherently unequal. While translation can uphold hierarchies or destabilize

them, this is not always an either/or proposition, as it is possible for a translation to simultaneously both subvert and reinforce existing inequities. Translation, as a cultural and political interaction, exists within a social framework that values equivalence but cannot dispel difference. While many contemporary translation theorists have focused on postcolonial inequalities that translations must navigate (see Robinson, 2014; Bassnett, 2014; von Flotow and Kamal, 2020; Bielsa and Kapsakis, 2021), there has also, to a lesser extent, been a tradition of what Susan Bassnett describes as “the liberationist theory of translation from Latin American writers” (2014, p. 54). She continues: “for them, it is neither a betrayal of a superior original, nor an instrument of hegemonic oppression, for the emphasis is not on the inequalities between linguistic and cultural systems, rather it is on asserting a right to an alternative conceptualization of the world” (*ibid.*). Such an approach seeks to dismantle the unequal power relations between cultures.

A central figure in Latin America’s “liberationist theory of translation” is Octavio Paz (*ibid.*). Paz saw the activity of the translator as parallel to the poet’s, but with a crucial difference: “as he writes, the poet does not know where his poem will lead him; as he translates, the translator knows that this completed effort must reproduce the poem he has before him” (cited in Biguenet and Schulte, 1992, p. 159). Translation thus runs in “an inverted parallel of poetic creation. The result is a reproduction of the original poem in another poem that is [...] less a copy than a transmutation” (*ibid.*, pp. 159-160).¹ Here we can observe Paz dismiss the question of originality—both the source and target texts are original. For Paz, the notion of originality obfuscates the more interesting dynamic of styles and their influences. Paz writes:

No trend, no style has ever been national. [...] Styles are coalescent and pass from one language to another; the works, each rooted in its own verbal soil, are unique...unique, but not isolated: each is born and lives in relation to other works composed in different languages. Thus, the plurality of languages and the singularity of the works produce neither complete diversity nor disorder, but quite the opposite: a world

1. The notion of translation as “transmutation” is taken from Roman Jakobson, who famously divided translation into three categories: intralingual translation (or rewording), interlingual translation (or translation proper), and intersemiotic translation (or transmutation) (see Biguenet and Schulte, 1992, p. 145).

of interrelationships made up of contradictions and harmonies, unions and digressions. (*ibid.*, p. 160).

Paz's notion of literature based on "interrelationships" contests Harold Bloom's "anxiety of influence": if Bloom sought to impress the ways in which poets are hindered by their ambiguous relationships with past authors, Paz dismisses Bloom's insistence on the desire for individuality, arguing instead (in a manner similar to Barthes') that any notion of original poetic vision is a farcical imagination. All literature is interrelation, he suggests, deeply rooted in influences, which is what enables new literary styles to emerge.² Without influences there is no new literature. And without translation there are no new influences, as I shall argue in the following sections. What Paz and other Latin American translation theorists have achieved is a reframing of translation that situates it within a discourse of influences that acknowledges the unequal power dynamics at play.

Cannibalistic Translation as Transgressive Transcreation: Haroldo de Campos

Another important contributor to "the liberationist theory of translation from Latin America" is Haroldo de Campos (Bassnett 2014, p. 54). He, along with his brother Augusto de Campos, were prominent figures in the concrete poetic movement in Brazil, and wrote poetry, translations, and essays about translation.³ As Bassnett observes:

The principle behind the translation theory of the de Campos brothers was the absolute freedom of the translator to refashion the original in any way they chose, because they were free agents who were showing respect for the original through the act of translating. (*ibid.*)

Central to their theory of translation is the notion of textual, or cannibalistic, consumption, which was inspired by the *Modernista* poet Oswald de Andrade, as well as other Brazilian intellectuals of the

2. I might also suggest that what Bloom recognized as an anxiety of influence for authors seeking to navigate their relations to their influences as they seek to establish their own individual style is in fact simply the result of a period in which the notion of the individual self as a conceptual construct was valued more and more within Western society (see McVeigh, 2016).

3. Ignacio Infante notes how the Brazilian *concretismo* movement was largely inspired by the work of Ezra Pound, and how the de Campos brothers in particular incorporated both Pound's Imagist poetics and his conception of translation as a form of criticism (2013, p. 118).

1920s who established the *movimento antropófago* [anthropophagic movement] in order to foster a genuinely Brazilian literary culture. In 1928, de Andrade published his “Manifesto Antropófago,” which sought to utilize an Indigenous perspective to critique Brazilian colonial culture. The de Campos brothers also used de Andrade’s Indigenous ontology to reconceptualize translation as cannibalistic: “for us, the translation of creative texts will always be a *re-creation*, or parallel creation, autonomous yet reciprocal” (2009, p. 200; italics in original).

Here, the echoes of Paz are almost deafening. By claiming both the source text and the translation as original works, the de Campos’ cannibalistic theory of translation “radically destabilizes the original text” (Leal and Strasser, 2020, p. 21). Overtly questioning the original-translation relation calls into question traditional dichotomies such as European-Indigenous, civilized-savage, colonizer-colonized, and culture-nature, thus highlighting cannibalistic translation’s potential for de-hierarchization (*ibid.*). As both a transcultural and transcreative act, translation is subversive because it defamiliarizes existing hierarchies and destabilizes conventional meaning (see Camps, 2023, pp. 112 and 113). By reducing the source text and the derived text to creative equals in their originality as artistic works, both born of other texts, cannibalistic translation “unsettles the primacy of origin” and “demythicalizes the ideology of fidelity”—and in doing so “disturbs linear flows and power hierarchies” (Vieira, 1999, pp. 95 and 110; see also Lima, 2017, pp. 467 and 473).

Yet the de Campos brothers had more in mind than Paz’s project of liberating translation from the argument of originality. They, like Paz (and Pound), see translation itself as a creative process, but they seek to subvert the old colonial relations that Paz simply seeks to deny. For them, translation is a transformational and a transgressive process. Articulating his view of de Andrade’s famous maxim from his manifesto, “Tupi or not tupi, that is the question,” Haroldo de Campos writes:

Anthropophagy, the answer to this ironic equation of the “problem of the origin,” is a kind of brutalist *deconstructionism*: the critical devouring of the universal cultural legacy, carried out not from the submissive and reconciled perspective of the “good savage,” but from the challenging, aggressive point of view of the “bad savage,” devourer of foreign white people, cannibal. “I am only interested in what is not mine,” states Oswald de Andrade in his “Manifesto,” proposing to change

“the taboo into a totem.” This process of anthropophagic swallowing up does not involve submission (catechizing), but a “transculturation” [...]; rather, a “transvaluation,” a critical reconsidering of History as a “negative function” (in Nietzsche’s sense). The whole past that is alien to us deserves to be denied. It deserves to be eaten up, devoured,—de Andrade would say. This is a non-reverential attitude toward tradition: it implies expropriation, reversion, de-hierarchization. (2009, pp. 239-240; *italics in original*)

For de Campos, literary anthropophagy divests colonial texts of their power over Brazilian literature. Emblems of Western dominance and superiority are toppled; in their consumption, the power dynamics between the cultures in which source and target texts are produced are reversed. The cannibalism of translation not only changes the source and target texts but revises history as well, thereby reconfiguring the hierarchical and exploitative cultural relations between the colonizer and the colonized. Through the consumption of a source text, a translation is a literal becoming other. By consuming the original text, a translation becomes that text. In an anthropophagic conception of translation, the question of originality is radically revised—both texts are original, yet the alterity of translation alters both texts, as the source text enters more fully into a rhizomatic dialogue that extends beyond itself, and as the target text consumes the source and becomes that which it has devoured.

Cannibalistic Translation as Liminal Transformation: Victor Turner

Translation as cannibalism requires that we suspend moral judgment, or as de Andrade understood it, it requires a reversal of “the taboo into a totem” (*ibid.*, p. 200). Unlike postmodern approaches to translation that emphasize difference between source and target texts in order to highlight social and structural inequalities, a cannibalistic theory of translation dismantles such hierarchical inequalities and respects difference that emerges out of sameness. The boundary of such relations, the place where translation occurs, is necessarily liminal. The anthropologist Victor Turner writes that we should understand liminality “as a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise” (1970, p. 97). This realm of possibility is the realm from which translations arise. However, as both Turner and Mary Douglas have noted, the liminal persona is almost universally regarded as polluted. That which is liminal is unconventional, unclear,

and undefined, thus unclean, while what is conventional is clear, defined, and thus clean. Turner, citing Douglas, writes:

the concept of pollution “is a reaction to protect cherished principles and categories from contradiction.” [Douglas] holds that, in effect, what is unclear and contradictory (from the perspective of social definition) tends to be regarded as (ritually) unclean. The unclear is the unclean. (1967, p. 97)

This charge of pollution has often been a struggle that translations—and translators—have had to endure when framed against questions of originality and their own legitimacy. Here, de Andrade’s call to turn “the taboo into a totem” becomes clear: translation is taboo and polluting because it decenters texts, remaking them in a way that is unconventional; yet a cannibalistic translation turns this taboo into a totem, the translation emerging through liminality ritually cleansed, transformed, and clarified.

A liminal state is often part of a rite of passage, a transition between two states. The process of translation is thus a liminal state in the transition from source text to target text. Liminality, Turner tells us, is “essentially unstructured (which is at once deconstructed and prestructured)” (*ibid.*, p. 98). The act of cannibalistic translation, too, can be understood as both deconstructed and prestructured, in that as a creative act it attempts to destructure hierarchies yet does so in a cultural milieu in which these very hierarchies exist. To embrace the act of translation as literary cannibalism thus becomes an attempt to decolonize one’s own mind, even as one acknowledges that the roots of colonialism cannot ever entirely be removed.

The production of a cannibalistic translation is liminal insofar as, at the same time that the creation of the new text establishes a relation between source and target texts, both also stand outside this relation as individual, original texts. As Turner points out, “[t]his coincidence of opposite processes and notions in a single representation characterizes the peculiar unity of the liminal: that which is neither this nor that, yet is both” (*ibid.*, p. 99). This deconstructed duality is what Paz and the de Campos brothers had in mind, I believe, in dismissing notions of originality with respect to literary translations: neither text is original because both are part of a long chain of influences, yet both source and target text are original because they are unique artistic creations.

The Latin American conceptual model of translation that seeks to dismantle questions of originality, instead of pitting source and

target text against each other, establishes a union between them. The liminal act of translation, seen in this light, allows *communitas* to emerge:

Communitas breaks in through the interstices of structure, in liminality; at the edges of structure, in marginality; and from beneath structure, in inferiority. It is almost everywhere held to be sacred or “holy,” possible because it transgresses or dissolves the norms that govern structured and institutionalized relationships and is accomplished by experiences of unprecedented potency. (Turner, 1969, p. 128)

Liminality is a temporary experience, a transitional time between states.

Turner further notes that people are released from social structures into *communitas* only to return to social structures now revitalized by their experience of *communitas*. Individual texts exist within social structures, yet the act of translation creates *communitas*, momentarily untying the meaning of a text from those structures as meaning is made new; once a translation is finished, however, the texts enter back into the social structures in which they will be encountered by readers. The process of translation and the experience of *communitas* that it engenders will have altered and revitalized these social structures. This is the way in which translation grows global literary influences and networks, by the physical creation of another text as well as by altering social structures and encouraging national literatures and literary styles to reach beyond their conventional boundaries.

Cannibalistic Translation and the Question of Otherness

While translation studies scholars have often postulated that translation separates self from other (see for example Rubel and Rosman, 2003, p. 15), a cannibalistic theory of translation recognizes that through translation we understand the self *as other*. Of course, not all translations are successful. One of the dangers translators face is what bell hooks has referred to as “[t]he commodification of Otherness” in which “ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture” (2005, p. 366). For translators, this above all means respecting a source text. hooks warns of the white obsession with consuming the dark Other and the dangers of commodifying (and thus exploiting and dominating) Otherness, a warning that should be taken seriously by anyone articulating theories of textual cannibalism (*ibid.*, p. 371). Yet

the white cultural imperialism that hooks discusses hinges on what she describes as:

the commodification of difference [that] promotes paradigms of consumption wherein whatever difference the Other inhabits is eradicated, *via* exchange, by a consumer cannibalism that not only displaces the Other but denies the significance of that Other's history through a process of decontextualization. (p. 373; italics in original)

In contrast to hooks' "consumer cannibalism," textual cannibalism as construed by the de Campos brothers operates in the opposite direction such that it is not difference that is consumed but rather similarity, and difference is what results in the exchange between source and target texts. Furthermore, though the act of translation is destructured, the translated text that the act produces is never decontextualized, and any consumption of a source text does not eradicate or deny the significance of that text or its history but instead makes it all internal and thus central to the new version produced by translation.

The figure of the cannibal employed by de Andrade and de Campos to characterize the translation of Western texts sought to utilize an Indigenous ontology to disrupt notions of originality and describe links between source and target texts that make their existences mutually dependent (Cisneros, 2012, p. 37). While de Campos was primarily concerned with the destruction and digestion of the foreign, Western text, as well as with the mutual relationship that arises and erases notions of originality, as Michaela Wolf writes:

Translation as cannibalization, on the other hand, does not conjure away the "original," but devours it in order to create a cultural attitude nourished by foreign influences and enriched by autochthonous input which helps to dismantle the traditional asymmetrical power relations between the cultures involved. (2003, pp. 126-127)

Specifically, the autochthonous, or Indigenous, form of cannibalism referred to by both de Andrade and de Campos is that belonging to the Tupi people of the Amazon rainforest in Southeast Brazil. Writing of this group, Philippe Descola notes:

the ritual anthropophagy of the Tupi-Guarani is not a narcissistic absorption of qualities and attributes, nor is it a contrastive operation of differentiation (I am not the one I am eating); it is, on the contrary, an attempt to "become other" by incorporating the enemy's position vis-à-vis me, for this will open up a possibility for me to get out of myself so

as to see myself from the outside, as a singularity (the one whom I am eating defines who I am). (2013, p. 255)

Yet this is not the only conceptualization of cannibalism that exists.

Two primary forms of cannibalism have been widely acknowledged: exocannibalism, in which individuals from outside one's own social group are consumed, and endocannibalism, in which individuals from within one's own social group are consumed (Schutt, 2017). Even within these two categories, the reasons for and beliefs surrounding cannibalistic practices can vary widely. Claude Lévi-Strauss (2016, p. 88) acknowledges as much: "[s]o varied are the modalities of cannibalism, so diverse its real or supposed functions, that we may come to doubt whether the notion of cannibalism as it is currently employed can be defined in a relatively precise manner." What this reveals about texts in the conceptual framework of translation as cannibalism is that translators approach translation with many diverse values and goals. The "translation as cannibalism" perspective acknowledges the diversity of approaches utilized by translators as they engage in the act of translation, leaving room for discussions about what the concerns of the translator should be and what values they should espouse, but at the same time sidelining such critical discussions, instead giving primacy to examinations of influences and cross-cultural exchanges by dismissing and dismantling any questions over primacy and translatability.

More than just a means to navigate boundaries, however, cannibalistic translation erases boundaries and hierarchies (Vieira, 1994, p. 67). By relativizing notions of originality, it becomes a form of activism, calling into question hierarchies and power relations, accepting foreign nourishment but denying imitation, rejecting a linear tautology of literary production that instead reveals texts as inherently dialogic and diachronic. Cannibalistic translation understands that postcolonialism and globalism are marked by interactions of sameness and difference that generate hybridity and multiplicity, and recognizes that the multiple, horizontal relations that emerge from these interactions are in fact a mode of resistance and a means to achieve greater minority representation (Bandia, 2021, p. 62). Textual anthropophagy "allows us to rethink world literature as an open matrix of texts travelling in multiple directions constantly 'feeding and re-feeding' one another" (Lima, 2017, p. 475). This openness, or even eagerness, for its own cannibalization is perhaps one

of the most central aspects of cannibalistic translation (Dubé-Belzile, 2019, p. 85). It creates a model of literary exchange and circulation on a globalized, international scale in which all work is collaborative, all authorship is distributed, and wherein literary networks are built of horizontal and rhizomatic associations, “capable of overturning the asymmetry in global literary relations” (Lima, 2017, p. 474).

In the years since de Andrade and de Campos first developed their cannibalistic paradigms, anthropology has come a long way in articulating the metaphysical conceptual schemas of societies that practice cannibalism. Central to this ontological turn in anthropology has been the work of Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (along with Roy Wagner, Marilyn Strathern, and Philippe Descola). Viveiros de Castro, influenced by Deleuze and Guattari’s non-hierarchical model of culture as rhizomatic, has written extensively about the Tupi people of Amazonia. If we are to expand upon the notion of translation as cannibalism as described by de Campos to better understand what a cannibalistic theory of translation entails, we will need to examine the cultures that practice cannibalism and the cosmologies that produce its meaning.

Creation through Consumption: Eduardo Viveiros de Castro

As just stated, there is not one universal cosmology within which cannibalism exists. American cultural and medical anthropologist Beth Conklin writes:

In contrast to endocannibalism in Melanesia, which aimed to preserve, perpetuate, and redistribute elements of the deceased, South American endocannibalism more often had the objective of *eradicating* the corpse in order to *sever* relations between the dead person’s body and spirit, and between living people and the spirits of the dead. (2001, p. xxviii; italics in original)

Conklin’s study is concerned with the endocannibalism of the Wari’, an Indigenous people of the Brazilian Amazon.⁴ Drawing on the seminal work of Viveiros de Castro (1992, 1998), she emphasizes that the Wari’s cosmological conceptions differ from those we are familiar with in the West:

4. While de Campos and others have focused on translation in relation to South American exocannibalism practiced by the Tupi, it would be interesting to see how one might fit Conklin’s form of endocannibalism practiced by the Wari’ into a new cannibalistic translation theory.

in the body, Wari' do not see just the outer form of the person or a symbol or metaphor for identity; rather, they see the body as a site where personal identity and social relationships develop. Relations to others do not exist in some abstract space located between two bodies; they develop in and through the physical body itself. (*ibid.*, p. 132)

While Western cosmologies typically recognize a similarity of bodies but a difference of souls—we each possess a human body, but our souls are distinctly unique to us—Indigenous cosmologies often understand this relation to be reversed, recognizing a similarity of souls but a difference between bodies (see Steverlynck, 2008, p. 52). In his study intitled “Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism,” Viveiros de Castro argues that the body is the locus of difference in the sense that it endows the wearer with affects and capacities that make difference socially significant (1998, p. 478). He explains that within Indigenous Amazonian ontologies:

The body is the subject's fundamental expressive instrument and at the same time the object *par excellence*, that which is presented to the sight of the other. [...] It is important to note that these Amerindian bodies are not thought of as given but rather as made. (*ibid.*, p. 480; italics in original)

From this perspective, bodies are not fixed or singularly unified; they are assemblages of affects, subject to change and exchange, that allow alterity to be comprehended through their performativity (*ibid.*, pp. 478 and 482). Conklin highlights and develops the originality of Viveiros de Castro's conceptual schema by exploring the effects it has on cannibalism and notions of identity. She writes:

A key trope in the construction of Indigenous Amazonian identities is what Viveiros de Castro has called “ontological predation”—the formation and transformation of self-identity, individual agency, and collective empowerment based on the killing and consumption of others external to the self. (2001, p. 154)

With respect to textual translation, we might use these perspectives as a theoretical lens through which we could recognize the essence of a source and a target text as being the same, while the physical bodies of the texts differ. What changes in translation, in this model, is not the vitality of a text, which remains the same, but the body and the identity of the texts as the source text is transformed by and alters the target text through the act of textual consumption.

A central aspect of cannibalism is the notion of transformation. Viveiros de Castro describes an essential property of the Tupi cannibalism schema as:

a process for the transmutation of perspectives whereby the “I” is determined as other through the act of incorporating this other, who in turn becomes an “I”...but only ever *in* the other—literally, that is, *through* the other. (2014, p. 142; italics in original)

While it is clear that identity is created via the consumption of the other, what, exactly, is consumed remains unclear. Viveiros de Castro continues:

The “thing” eaten, then, could not be a “thing” if it were at the same time—and this is essential—a body. This body, nevertheless, was a sign with a purely positional value. What was eaten was the enemy’s relation to those who consumed him; in other words, *his condition as enemy*. In other words, what was assimilated from the victim was the signs of his alterity, the aim being to reach his alterity as point of view on the Self. Cannibalism and the peculiar form of war with which it is bound up involve a paradoxical movement of reciprocal self-determination through the point of view of the enemy. (*ibid.*, pp. 142-143; italics in original)

In textual bibliophagy, in which a translation consumes the work it is translating, the same paradox holds true. The target text does not consume the body of the source text, but rather its own relation to the source; the target text determines its own identity as a creative work only through the act of being other, of incorporating the source text such that the target text reaches its own self-determination by absorbing the alterity of the source text. This brings us back to the centrality of the notion of reciprocal influences in the production of global postcolonial literary networks.

Viveiros de Castro comments on his epiphany of coming to understand Amazonian conceptions of exocannibalism:

All of this first dawned on me while pondering Araweté war songs, where the warrior, through a complex, anaphoric use of deixis, speaks of himself from the point of view of his slain enemy: the victim, who is in both senses the subject of the song, speaks of the Araweté he has killed, and speaks of his own killer—the one who “speaks” by singing the words of his deceased enemy—as a cannibal enemy (although among the Araweté, it is words alone that one eats). *Through* his enemy, that is, the Araweté doing the killing sees himself *as* the enemy. He

apprehends himself as a subject at the moment that he sees himself through the gaze of his victim, or, to put it differently, when he declares his singularity to himself through the voice of the latter. (*ibid.*, p. 143; italics in original)

Or in other words, as Viveiros de Castro writes further on, “the cannibal internalization of the other as condition of the externalization of the self, a self that sees itself, in a certain way, ‘self-determined’ by the enemy, which is to say *as* the enemy [...]. Such is the becoming-other intrinsic to Amazonian cosmopraxis” (*ibid.*, p. 176; italics in original). This is the goal of the cannibal translator—to see one’s own translation *through* the lens of the source text *as* that text. To do so is to respect both texts, to disregard any question of originality, and to recognize translation as a relational process that emerges through the act of textual consumption.

Rainer Guldin, articulating the conception of the de Campos brothers, describes their view of “the translated text as the site of an ongoing internal process of translation, which does not stop once the translation has taken place” (2008, p. 117). By understanding translation as a process, one directly concerned with identity, we come to see that translation is inevitably ongoing because it is a dialogical relation not only between source and target texts, the immediate relation, but between these texts and their influencing texts, as well as all future texts they will come to influence in turn. As Guldin explains, “[a]s translating cannibals, we are but knots in a global net of creativity spanning many generations and vast geographical spaces, constantly feeding on one another and ourselves” (*ibid.*, p. 120).

Understood as a process, however, translation is not only ongoing because it situates translations within a framework of literary influences, but because translations have the power to alter our perceptions and conceptions of the world. If cannibalism insists that we consume the other in order to see ourselves as other and thus gain a renewed sense of identity, then translation insists that we consume other conceptions of the world in order to absorb those conceptions and strengthen our own sense of identity within that world. Viveiros de Castro argues a similar position:

Good translation succeeds at allowing foreign concepts to deform and subvert the conceptual apparatus of the translator such that the *intent* of the original language can be expressed through and thus transform that

of the destination. *Translation, betrayal... transformation*. (2014, p. 87; italics in original)

Translation is continual because even if the act of transformation (of creating a new translation) is momentary, the effects are lasting, as each new translation alters the literature and literary networks it enters through dialogical relations.

Understood as liminal acts, both cannibalism proper and the metaphor of cannibalistic translation are transformational and unstructured, in which those who participate enter into realms of pure possibility and emerge transformed. Guldin further argues:

the translating cannibal is fundamentally de-centered and “hybrid” (Rocha and Ruffinelli 1999: 348), endlessly navigating between cultures, forming a dialogical knot in a global nexus of translatabilities. [...] The cannibal does not deny otherness outright, but devours it in order to transform and absorb it. (2008, p. 121)

He adds that “the practice of translation, and the translator himself are sites of tension where an unending process of negotiation is enacted [...], creating and recreating an interstitial, hybrid cultural self” (*ibid.*).

As Viveiros de Castro has demonstrated, a central element of cannibal cosmologies is the incorporation of the other in order to achieve a transformation of identity. More significant, however, is that this individual transformation becomes a societal transformation, as the individual who emerges from the liminal experience does so with a renewed vigor and sense of their own import within the social milieu. Steverlynck (2008, p. 66) notes: “[t]he killer achieved alterity and was transformed—reborn—into an adult capable of reproducing society” (2008, p. 66). Emerging transmuted via the liminal act of consuming the other, the cannibal experiences a sense of *communitas*, and reenters the structures of society transformed and ready to transform that society in turn, empowered by their new sense of identity that has been revitalized through consumption of the other.

This transmutation highlights the importance of a cannibalistic theory of translation—it emphasizes not only what translation does (as a textual becoming other) but also why it is important (as a source of revitalization for literary influences and networks). The creation of the “interstitial, hybrid cultural self” referred to by Guldin results from the formation of *communitas* that emerges from the liminal state of translation. It is this creation of *communitas* to which cannibalistic

translation aspires. *Communitas* revitalizes social structures just as translation revitalizes literatures. Guldin concludes:

As cannibalism appropriates colonial appropriation, it should arguably go beyond simple duality by translating de-centered positions into one another, inverting clear-cut oppositions, cultivating involution and mutuality, constantly bending back on itself in creating open-ended structures. To put it another way, it should devour the very border between the foreign and the familiar, devour the devourer and the act of devoration itself. (2008, p. 122)

The de Campos brothers recognized that a cannibalistic view of translation devours colonial oppression, but they did not develop their theory far enough, falling short of demonstrating how such a conceptualization reveals how translation de-centers literature and maintains the emergence of new literatures in an open ended, ouroboros-like structure.

Adopting Viveiros de Castro's ontology of Amazonian exocannibalism as a rhetorical lens through which to understand literary translation frees us from many of the constraints of originality. If we recognize that both source and target texts are original artistic creations, and that the target text comes into being through the cannibalization of the source text, then we will have reached a conceptual space in which we recognize that the essence, soul, or vitality of both texts are equivalent, though their bodies, the physical manifestation of letters in print, differ. Steverlynck writes:

Cannibalism creates both difference (since what is eaten is always an *other*) and identity (through incorporation); it works as an operator in the continuous exchange between *us* and *other*. Through death and cannibalism, while kin becomes an *other*, the *other* becomes part of *us*. (2008, p. 65; italics in original)

In this becoming other, we finally realize what writers have long known, that a text can change one's identity, and that the act of translation not only changes both the target and source texts but the translator and social structures as well. To translate, one necessarily juxtaposes oneself with the author of the source text—yet to translate well, to do service to the text being translated, to treat it with honour and respect, one must consume the text, take on the mind of the author being translated, and become other. To become other through the act of cannibalistic translation is to transform one's identity and enter into a dialogical matrix of literary influences, thus extending the

self as well as postcolonial literary networks. Such a transformation of self and literary networks is destabilizing, disrupting established hierarchies in favour of a rhizomatic becoming.

Conclusion: Consuming Words

A cannibalistic theory of translation acknowledges that the true destiny of a text is its consumption, which remakes both text and reader anew. There is pleasure in this transformation. It is one reason why we like to read and translate. Barthes admits as much, writing that the final approach to a text is “a pleasure of consumption” (1986, p. 63). Within a cannibalistic conception of translation, concerns regarding how to approach a text, the foreignization or domestication of a text (see Venuti, 1995, 1998), textual imperialism (see Robinson, 2014), gender discrimination (see Yao, 2002), and other important issues do not take center stage, as these frameworks become understood as unique ontological concerns not to translation as a whole but to each individual translation and the frame of reference of the translator.

Just as cannibalism can be performed in many different ways for many different reasons, so too can translation. There is more to explore with respect to conceptualizing translation through an Indigenous cosmological lens. Of particular interest is the difference between the masculine sphere of death and predation, central to war and cannibalism, and the feminine sphere of birth and the cyclical beginnings of new life. How these frameworks relate to current queer and gendered analyses of translation deserve to be explored further. An additional area of interest is the sphere of third or non-gendered beings, which are often seen as tied to liminality and which fulfill specific ceremonial roles in certain cultures. For example, Sandra Hollimon has written extensively about the gender roles of the Chumash people, and about the role gender plays in mortuary practices. Examining the role of the *‘aqui*, professionals who presided over the mourning ceremony and “who may have belonged to a third gender,” she notes that “mortuary symbolism is permeated by gendered concepts and actors, such as deities, ritual practitioners, and the mapping of cosmological (i.e., eschatological) space” (2008, pp. 43 and 41). While the current paper has focused on translation as exocannibalism, it would be interesting to further explore other Indigenous conceptions of burial and birth as well as death to more fully articulate an Indigenous cosmology of translation and transmutation. As has been noted, there exists a multiplicity of

Indigenous cosmologies; more time dedicated to understanding these cosmological models can, I believe, help us to better understand our own evolving conceptualizations of literary and translation theories.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the *cannibal cogito*, to borrow a term from Viveiros de Castro, in addition to the fact that Indigenous conceptual frameworks can teach us much about our own ontologies and help us reconceptualize novel ways of examining the world, is that translation lies at the heart of what invigorates and generates literature. Translation transforms old texts, creates new texts, and in doing so revitalizes literary networks. As cultures interact, literatures spread, and when foreign texts reach new audiences through translation, those texts cannot help but influence the literature wherever they arrive. Translation cannibalizes literature because literature nourishes. It feeds even as it is fed on, sustaining the souls of those who read it and invigorating the literary milieus of which it is a part. And we feed on literature not only to be sustained but also to sustain literature itself. Literature needs us to perpetuate itself, just as we need literature to survive. Texts are transformative, challenging us to reexamine and reimagine language and experience, and forcing us to confront our culture and our selves. Through their translation, texts manifest the dialogical formation and dissolution of borders (the individual borders of self, as well as national borders in a globalized world) and enact the rhizomatic nature of literary influences. Though there are numerous literary traditions, all are numinous in their ability to inspire reflection. Cannibalistic inspiration and influences are cornerstones of literary creativity that connect us to disparate times, places, and people. Literature functions in a dialogical matrix that connects all of this—a matrix that translation extends—and in doing so, displaces our hierarchical, essentialist notions of centrality and stability.

Literature and translation, like shared meals, unite, thereby transforming us, making us other than we were. We feed on written words and their consumption nourishes us. Strengthened by what they have devoured, the writers and translators among us use this energy to produce new works. The dwelling place of literary influences, like the act of cannibalistic translation, is liminal—they exist at the peripheries, profoundly altering those who are willing to take a bite.

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