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THE COLONIALITY OF PERCEPTION: THE OTHER AS A CANNIBAL

Abstract

The article addresses the problem of the coloniality of perception, or visual-semantic manipulation of racial context which accompanied the development of the modern/colonial capitalism. In this regard, I demonstrate that the figure of cannibal as a cultural trope played a key role in the symbolic appropriation of the New World by the Europeans, which paved the way for its military, political and economic conquest. By drawing on the source accounts, I show how the cannibal trope changed its geographical and semantic range, arranging the colonial discourse on the Other.

Key words

the Other, cannibal, cannibalism, Cannibalia, difference, anthropophagy, the New World, cartography, cultural trope

Coloniality is a fundamental analytical category employed by intellectuals gathered around the "modernity/coloniality" project, which was born in Latin America in the last decade of the 20th century[1]. According to Aníbal Quijano[2], coloniality may be defined as structures of knowledge, social notions as well as exploitation and domination practices engendered in the course of the conquest and colonisation of the New World, which have persisted uninterruptedly until today, in the refurbished forms of colonialism and capitalism. Coloniality, apart from the three levels, i.e. the epistemological (knowledge), ontological (being) and corpocratic or corpopolitical (power) as Grosfoguel[3] calls it, possesses yet another, fourth level, the visual-semantic one. It establishes a theoretical counterpoint for the three previous levels of coloniality. From the perspective of that decolonial *quadrivium*, the coloniality of perception offers a new domain of analyses of the visual and semantic manipulation within the racial context, which accompanied the development of the modern/colonial capitalism[4]. The issue in question are the relationships between the modes of perceiving otherness and that which Gustavo Cruz defines as "racialización de la subjetividad india"[5], or ascribing specific racial traits to the indigenous populace of America which define their subjectivity and which entail negative judgements.

Although the East, as Said argues in "Orientalism", with all its otherness and dissimilarity turned out to be but a remote neighbour of Europe, the New World brought the Western ethnocentrism a discovery of radical otherness, a difference so extraordinary and unexpected that it caused a veritable shock in the West. The European saw America as something fundamentally alien, as an utterly new anthropological, social, cultural and symbolic reality, one which had never been seen or heard of before. This extreme dimension of radicalness of

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[1]The project is discussed by the author in greater detail in: Nowoczesność, kolonialność i tożsamość: perspektywa latynoamerykańska, [in:] M. Forycki et al. (eds.), Polska–Francja––Europa. Studia z dziejów Polski i stosunków międzynarodowych, Poznań 2011, p. 293–312.

[2]A. Quijano, Colonialidad del poder, eurocentrismo y América Latina, [in:] E. Lander (ed.), Colonialidad del saber, eurocentrismo y ciencias socialep. Perspectivas latinoamericanas, Buenos Aires 2000, p. 201–246.

[3]R. Grosfoguel, La descolonización de la economía política y los estudios poscoloniales, Tabula Rasa 4, enero-junio de 2006, Colombia, p. 20 et seq.

[4]J. Barriendos, La colonialidad del ver. Hacia un nuevo diálogo visual interepistémico, Nómadas 35, octubre de 2011, Universidad Central de Colombia, p. 26, note 2.

[5]G.R. Cruz, La liberación indígena contemporánea en Bolivia. Crítica filosófica a una política-estética racionalizada, Córdoba 2009, p. 195.

the difference which was revealed to the Europeans with the "discovery" of the New World, brings to mind the effect of an encounter with jellyfish described by Baudrillard: "The figure of the jellyfish is an embodiment of otherness so radical that one cannot look at it without losing their life at the same time"[6].

The arrival of Columbus in America, which brought about the conquest and colonisation of new territories, means an epistemological rift in the West with respect to otherness stemming from the European confrontation with different cultures[7]. The emergence of the Other as a dissimilar entity is the trigger of "spontaneous ethnography"[8] which, in a Eurocentric approach, offers the ways to name, understand and interpret the Other, its thinking and customs, yet without taking the worldview of the observed peoples into account. The brutal encounter with the other is a source of new application of historical and ethnographic writings on the part of Europeans, who devise discourses and modes of perceiving the Other, or, to be more precise, of inventing the Other, which becomes the practice from the 16th to the 17th century. In this context, Michel de Certeau observes that:

"The discovery of the New World, the division of Christianity, the social disproportions which accompany the birth of new policies and reasons, generate a new functioning of the writing and the word. Enclosed within the orbit of the diversified modern society, they acquire epistemological and social validity they had never had previously. In particular, they transform into an instrument of twofold work concerning the relationship with the «savage» man on the one hand, and the relationship with religious tradition on the other. This serves to classify the problems, which open themselves to the understanding of rising sun of the 'New World' and the decline of the 'medieval' Christianity"[9].

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[6]J. Baudrillard, Przejrzystość zła, transl. by S. Królak, Warszawa 2009, p. 125.

[7]Tzvetan Todorov, who studies the encounters which modified the way in which the West perceives different cultures, presents the relation to the Other in three dimensions: on an axiological plane, which relies on the evaluation of the significance of the difference between good and evil; on a praxeological plane¸ marked by the temptation to conquer the Other; and on an epistemic plane, which stems from the need to learn about the Other or to ignore him. See T. Todorov, Podbój Ameryki. Problem Innego, transl. by J. Wojcieszak, Warszawa 1996.

[8]L.W. Miampika, De la invención del Otro a las travesías transculturales postcoloniales, [in:] J.A. Sánchez, José A. Gomez (coord.), Práctica artística y políticas culturalep. Algunas propuestas desde la Universidad, Murcia 2003, p. 85.

[9]M. de Certeau, L'écriture de l'Histoire, Paris 1975, p. 217.

As we now, one of the first neologisms to be coined by the expansion in the New World is the word *cannibal* which, as an ethnographic notion, an erotic trope or a frequent cultural metaphor establishes the way in which Others are understood. In his extraordinary book entitled *Canibalia*[10], Carlos Jáuregui shows how, in the 16th and the 17th century, the New World was constructed socially, religiously and geographically as the realm of the *cannibal* (the cannibal's homeland). Therefore, "in the history of Latin American culture, the *cannibal* should be associated with *thinking* and *notion,* rather than with *eating*; rather with *coloniality* of modernity than with common cultural rhetoric"[11]. Let us draw attention to the fact that a similar semantic affinity with cannibalism appears in the 19th century with regard to Africa and in the 20th to New Guinea.

Cannibalism played a fundamental role in the symbolic appropriation of the New World by a part of European culture. It involved not only profound ramifications for the perception of the Other but also for the perception of oneself, since the European began yet again to define the boundaries of what was human. The starting point is in the image of the overseas dominions, devised on the basis of cosmological visions which are powerfully anchored in the theories of the bygone era, which spoke about the existence of lands and peoples on the antipodes of the traditional ecumene[12]. Jan Kieniewicz emphasizes that:

"The New World was first created in Europe, among people who recognised their civilisational community through the sensation of its dissimilarity from the 'new' — different world, and in this sense the experience of the discoverers shaped the attitude towards the discovered reality"[13].

Le Goff does not see it as anything out of the ordinary, since:

"Each culture has its own way (or even better, its ways) of classifying people. From Enkidu, the barbarian brother of Gilgamesh, the Mesopotamian king of Uruk, to Tarzan and Bigfoot, through cyclops Polyphemus and Kaliban,

[10]C.A. Jáuregui, Canibalia. Canibalismo, calibanismo, antropofagia cultural y consumo en América Latina, Madrid 2008.

[11]Ibidem, p. 16.

[12]P. Vignolo, Hic Sunt Canibales: el canibalismo del Nuevo Mundo en el imaginario europeo (1492-1729), Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura 32, 2005, p. 151.

[13]J. Kieniewicz, Wstęp, [in:] Listy o odkryciu Ameryki, Gdańsk 1995, p. XIV.

literature simultaneously determined the concept of the human with regard to the gods and animals as well as with regard to other people; a concept which classifies, excludes or includes depending on periods and figures. Not only literary works reflect those circumstances, as by means of the figure of the savage, societies also arrange their relations with the more proximate or more remote environment"[14].

However, the perception of the American Other cannot be compared with any other case, because no other "encounter" of different cultures has had such a far-reaching consequences for the entire world: the exclusion of individuals and communities considered barbarian due to their otherness from history, a practice which became established with the discovery and colonisation of the New World. That period marks the beginning of the inventory of endless defects, shortcomings and deformations which were ascribed to the inhabitants and the entire American continent[15]. In one of his essays, Octavio Paz writes thus:

"For all civilisation, the barbarians were invariably the people 'outside history'. That being 'outside history' would always mean the past; barbarism is a blank page of history, it is a primeval state of man before the coming of history. By virtue of a singular reversal of the usual perspective, the American modernity, a result of four millennia of European and world history, was deemed a new barbarism"[16].

It is therefore no surprise that the new anthropological discourse was founded on the opposition civilisation/barbarism. As Michèle Duchet writes, in this alignment:

"The barbarian human is an object and the civilised a subject; he is the one who civilizes. For it is his mode of action, speech and thought which leads to civilisation, and becomes a reference of its own discourse. Whenever pos-

[14]J. Le Goff, Lo maravilloso y lo cotidiano en el Ocidente medieval, Barcelona 1996, p. 95––96.

[15]F. Rivera, Paraíso Caníbal. Cosmografía simbólica del Mundus Novus, Tabula Rasa 10, enero–junio de 2009, Bogotá–Colombia, p. 292.

[16]O. Paz, Pochmurno, transl. by R. Kalicki, E. Komarnicka, Warszawa 1990, p. 34.

sible, philosophical thought recommends violence towards the barbarian, in the name of superiority that it advocates; although it states that all people are brothers, it cannot renounce the Eurocentrism, whose best alibi is the idea of progress"[17].

The opposition civilisation/barbarism, a legacy of colonialism and those who, like Sarmiento, accepted the term of barbarism when referring to the region later called Latin America, functions as a starting point of the Latin American discourse[18]. Hence the aforementioned appropriation of the New World by Europeans took place not only through military, economic and ideological conquest, but also by means of discursive representations[19].

In the initial stages of the discourse, cartography played a particular role. In this regard, Jáuregui writes:

"*Canibalia* is therefore a result of a cartographic view of the Other, a panoptical view, which validates colonialism epistemologically, comprising not only the numerous maps where the sign of the cannibal presents and denotes America as a place of domination, but also other ethnographic works which align the system of showing Otherness along the axis of human sacrifice and cannibalism. Those ethno-cartographic works create — employing the cannibal trope — a special place; place which is morally and politically colonised and its *savage* time or *asynchrony* with respect to the season of civilisation (savagery, immaturity, inferiority). At the same time they institute the modern colonial and Eurocentric subject who looks [from the perspective of] 'here and now' of civilisation to the 'there and then' of the savage. Synchronisation of these temporalities is colonial, regardless of the denomination it is given (evangelisation, development, modernisation, globalisation)"[20].

Usually, maps provide concrete information on the distances, dimensions and the nature of specific places in the world. Yet, in the context of the discussed process of representation, cartography may be useful for those social sciences

[17]M. Duchet, Anthropologie et Histoire au Siècle des Lumières, Paris 1971, p. 17.

[18]W. Johnson, La ansiedad de ingestión: el latinoamericanismo antropófago, Confluencia 18, 2 (Spring 2003), p. 28.

[19]B. Pastor, Utopía y conquista: dinámica utópica e identidad colonial, Revista de crítica literaria latinoamericana XIX, 38, Lima, 2do. semestre de 1993, p. 108.

[20]C.A. Jáuregui, Canibalia, p. 27–28.

which are interested in strategies employed by societies to define the world[21]. Thus approached, maps are not mere sheets of papers with signs denoting coordinates, names and places, but also material objects infused with tensions which shape the societies of their makers. Here, Emanuele Amodio distinguishes two kinds of geography: the first is empirical geography, which is created by "adding and processing of empirical data, the fruit of experience amassed by every society"; the second kind, the extraordinary geography develops on the basis of cultural determinants of the symbolic kind, capable of transforming areas of space delimited by a group of individuals who accept the burden of the task[22]. If the first kind of maps is concerned with establishing coordinates and rendering exact measurements of space, the second organizes special facts according to a myth-based system. The two kinds of geography are categories which imply two different visions of the world, and therefore they do not feature on the same maps. However, in the maps of the 16th and the 17th century both visions are mixed and placed on the same maps, providing information on the coordinates of specific places and the characteristics of their mythical entities. The navigations maps known as *Cartas Portulanas* or *Portulanos* (harbour maps), which began to appear in Europe already in the late 13th century offer a typical example[23].

Most expeditions setting out to conquer and explore the newly discovered continent took graphic artists on board, so that the latter may give testimony to the colonial differences. Such visual representations were a "desired commodity and conveyed concrete information from the colonial world"[24]. The imagery was a proof for the existence of the Other, therefore they were considered to be genuine evidence. The predominant images of the natives during conquest and colonisation showed them as monkeys, people with canine tails or heads, walking around naked, which was to suggest congenital sexual dissipation as

[21]M. Lira, La representación del indio en la cartografía de América, Revista chilena de antropología visual 4, July 2004, Santiago, p. 86.

[22]E. Amodio, Formas de alteridad. Construcción y difusion de la imagen del indio americano en Europa durante el primer siglo de la conquista de América, Ecuador, Quito 1993, p. 18, quoted after: M. Lira, La representación del indio, p. 86.

[23]Ibidem, p. 87.

[24]C. Lutz, J. Collins, Reading National Geographic, Chicago–London, p. 28, quoted after: A. Ulloa, Las representaciones sobre las indígenas en las discursos ambientales y de desarrollo sostenible, [in:] D. Mato (coord.), Políticas de economía, ambienta y sociedad en tiempo de globalización, Caracas 2005, p. 94.

well as general shortage of morality. They reflected the notions and conceptions of the Middle Ages, showing that the natives were completely different from Europeans. The reference to otherness and dissimilarity made sense because as Baudrillard writes:

"The one who commands the universal symbols of otherness and dissimilarity, rules the world. The one who thinks in the categories of difference, is superior to all in anthropological terms (which is obvious, as he was the one to invent anthropology). He is entitled to all the rights, as he lays them down. Those who do not grasp the difference, who do not play its game, are doomed. This is the fate that the Spaniards dealt to the Indians when they landed on the coasts of America. The Indians knew nothing about the difference, they did not comprehend it, being radically different (Spaniards were not different from them, they were only gods and that was that). This is the reason for the ferocity with which Spaniards began to exterminate them; not justified by any religious or economic consideration, nor any other, since the only redeemable guilt of the Indians was the ignorance, the incomprehension of the difference"[25].

Describing inhabitants of America by means of maps reveals the strategies of symbolic dominations, employed by the European conquistadors. Showing Indians on the maps was intended to engender notions about America which would justify the necessity of its conquest. In this sense, the likenesses, reproduced and presented on the first maps of America were to show which spaces and which tribes are to be subdued. From the 16th century onwards, they were also consistently included in the accounts of travellers, so as to support the descriptions of the faraway lands. The images of the natives, expressing the intentions of the authors, were determined by the Western cultural constructs regarding the Other, organised around gender and race[26]. What is more, the maps showing the shape of the world at the time reflected strictly Western (European) point of view. In the words of Peter Hulme, "through the projections of designers of the 16th century maps, especially those made by Gerard Merkator, Europe produces the image of a world so powerful that the West still believes

[25]J. Baudrillard, Przejrzystość, p. 147–148.

[26]Ibidem.

that this is how you see the world: with Europe in the centre, Africa underneath, and America and Asia on both sides"[27].

With the invention of print, cartography lost its exceptional role in shaping the image of the Other. On the other hand, printed texts were a substantial supplement to the map with representations of the Other, contributing to their even better understanding. It cannot be denied that the accounts of eye witnesses were the fundamental and credible source by means of which the desired picture of the Other was drawn. The moulded space of the new continent turns out to be an appropriate domain to legitimise the empire as well as to assert the value of writing. This concerns travelling and writing, and imagining while travelling. A journey implies that a distance is covered, but so does inventing things, therefore it needs to be seen as combined with those two activities: with travelling across a distance and with inventing, by means of story-telling, of a place which may be invoked (meaning reconstruction of the story told) in the act of reading. Thus giving account of one's journey is associated with the opportunity of cognition. In this context, only that which has been recounted may be learned, read[28]. In *The Order of Things*, Foucault draws attention to the privileged status of writing in the 16th century, which dominated the entire renaissance and undoubtedly represents one of the grand events in Western culture. According to the French philosopher, there is no difference between what one sees and what one reads:

"The primacy of the written word explains the twin presence of two inseparable, despite their apparent opposition, forms of 16th century knowledge. First is lack of differentiation between the seen and the read, between observation and account, which produces a uniform layer where the observation and the language interweave endlessly. Conversely, there is also the immediate dissociation of any language which is duplicated by a repeated commentary to the point that it has no determinable limit"[29].

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[27]P. Hulme, Beyond the Straits: Postcolonial Allegories of the Globe, [in:] A. Loomba, S. Kaul, M. Bunzl, A. Burton, J. Esty (eds.), Postcolonial Studies and Beyond, Durham 2005, p. 47.

[28]M.C. Zinni, El descubrimiento de América y la invención de un nuevo espacio hermenéutico: alternativas de la mimesis y el surgimiento de una modernidada, [thesis, typescript], University of Pittsburgh 2008, p. 33-34.

[29]M. Foucault, Słowa i rzeczy. Archeologia nauk humanistycznych, transl. by T. Komendant, Gdańsk 2000, p. 66.

Foucault emphasizes that language's inherent principle of proliferation, which decides on the inevitable relationship that the 16th century language maintained with itself. The property in question is the "absolutely open dimension of language"[30] geared towards ceaseless interpretation. Here, the account of the travels contains the prolific language of nature, which must be translated into words, so that the relation may serve cognition. Perception, stigmatization and identification of the Other were marked by the characteristic duality of colonial culture, which was evinced in the semantic oppositions such as the civilised/the barbarian, them/us, culture/nature. As previously observed, such approach was to facilitate the otherness-based identification of Europeans themselves, but its prime aim was to control the Other. Consequently, the visual-semantic representations of the other performed varied functions. And so, the vision of the Other as cannibal or savage suggested the necessity of conquest, so as to erase the natural difference. In turn, the image of the Other as a member of the human kind, yet with an incomplete identity (sub-humans) warranted taking care of and civilising the Other. Those two concepts co-existed in the creation of a space of terror, through exclusion and violence, either physical or symbolic[31].

Such a state of affairs resulted from the fact the Europe sent the worst of its representatives to make the first encounter with the Other. As Ryszard Kapuściński writes:

"The image of the Other harboured by the Europeans who at the time set out to conquer the planet is an image of a naked savage, cannibal and heathen, whose mortification and debasement is the sacred right and duty of the European — the white and the Christian. One of the causes for the unprecedented brutality and cruelty which characterised the white man was not only the lust for gold and slave, which consumed the minds and blinded the European elites, but also the indescribably low culture and morale of those who were sent into the world as the vanguard of encounter with the Others"[32].

The fact would cast a dark shadow on the European relations with the Others, because it would reinforce the stereotypes, prejudices and phobias that the

[30]Ibidem, p. 68.

[31]A. Ulloa, Las representaciones, p. 94.

[32]R. Kapuściński, Ten Inny, Kraków 2006, p. 16.

first conquistadors had with regard to the natives. The figure of the cannibal became one of the "most obsessive and recurring tropes"[33] of Latin America. Its origin should be credited to Columbus himself, who used the term for the first time in his *Diary* under the date of November 23rd, 1492. The admiral writes that according to Indians:

"[…] that east [of Cuba] there is island of Bohio[34], of which it is said that it be very big and that it is inhabited by people with one eye on their foreheads as well as others, called *caníbales*, that they [the Taino] have great fear of"[35].

Columbus obtained information from the Taino people, whom the sailor met on Cuba. Their true name is Arawak, but in view of their kindly disposition the Spaniards called them Taino (in Arawakan *taíno* means good, noble). The island of Bohio, on the other hand, was inhabited by the *caribes* Indians, or the Caribs, who were distinguished by belligerent nature and exceptional cruelty. Diego Alvarez Chanca (a medic taking part in Columbus' second voyage) wrote in a letter to the Council of the city of Seville:

"The customs of the Caribs are savage […] The Caribs are capable of unbelievable cruelty: they eat children born of slave women, and raise only those born of their wives. Men whom they capture alive are taken to their huts to be made into meat, while the dead are eaten on the spot. They say that there is no better thing in the world than human flesh. And so it must be, for the bones that we found in their huts were so cleaned of meat that nothing remained, bar those fragments that due to hardness could not be consumed"[36].

While the Taino were indigenous to the Antilles, the homeland of the Caribs lay on the coasts of the present day Guyana, Surinam, Venezuela and Columbia. The division is important in the sense that it served some Spaniards to draw

[33]J.P. Dabove, C. Jáuregui, Mapas heterotrópicos de América Latina, [in:] Heterotrópías: narrativas de identidad y alteridad latinoamericana, Pittsburgh 2003, p. 11; preface available at www.enfocarte.com.

[34]Bohio or Haiti is the future island of Hispaniola.

[35]C. Colón, Diario de a bordo, Edición de Luis Arranz, Madrid 2006, p. 142.

[36]Listy o odkryciu, p. 17–18.

a clear distinction between the good and the evil Indian[37], which would soon be reflected in the two opposed categories: the "good savage" (*buen salvaje*) and the "evil savage" (*mal salvaje*), epitomised by the barbarian Carib (*el caribe salvaje*)[38].

Interestingly enough, some three weeks earlier (November 4th) Columbus recorded in his *Diary* the information provided by the Taino on the island of Bohio and the Caribs:

"I have also learned that from what they say, [Caribs] have great boats and goods and all that is to the east. I have also learned that far away from here people have one eye and faces like muzzles of dogs, and that they eat human flesh and upon capturing one, they cut off his head, drink his blood and quarter him […]"[39].

Let us note that Columbus does not use the word anthropophagy[40] (man-eating), although such association seems justified. The first chroniclers of the New World sought to explain the mysteries of the "Discovery" through classical texts. As we know, the term antropófago originates from ancient Greece and was linked with the barbarian peoples who lived farther away from the Black Sea and, according to some ancient historians, they ate human flesh. We also know that in general Greeks referred to all peoples who used languages other than Greek as barbarians. If there is something that all chroniclers of the first ages of the conquest share, it is the constant reworking of the antique mytholo-

[37]Such approach is contradicted by Hayden White, who claims that the "good savage" is opposed to the "good man" not the "evil savage". Given the fact that what is human (and civilised) is seen as being in opposition to 'nature', the formula 'savage man' is an oxymoron whose tremendous political symbolic stems partly from the vagueness of two notions (humanity and savagery). H. White, The Noble Savage Theme as a Fetish, [in:] F. Chiapelli (ed.), First Images of America: The Impact of the New World on the Old, Berkeley 1976, p. 129-130, quoted after: C.A. Jáuregui, Canibalia, p. 65-66.

[38]Y.A. Chicangana-Bayona, El nacimiento del Caníbal: un debate conceptual, Historia Crítica 36, Bogotá, julio–diciembre 2008, p. 154-158.

[39]C. Colón, Diario, p. 124.

[40]Columbian historian Chicangana-Bayona uses this term precisely in his translation of Columbus' words: "[…] Entendió también que de lejos allí había hombres de un ojo y otros con hocicos de perros, que eran **antropófagos** y que, cuando capturaban a alguien, lo degollaban, bebiéndole la sangre y le cortan su natura […]". Y.A. Chicangana-Bayona, El nacimiento del Caníbal, p. 158 (highlighted by author). Let us add that in the relevant place Columbus writes about people who "comían los hombres" and such expression is commonly found in various editions of his Diary.

gies to describe the indigenous people of America. Instead of attempting to understand a strange culture, the writers and the clergy evaluated it according to their own beliefs and convictions[41]. As America was defined by way of opposition to Europe, the inhabitants of the new continent could not have been complete and normal humans. Being beyond Europe they had to be Other. In her *Introducción* do *Crónicas de Indias,* Mercedes Serna aptly stresses that the new continent, "before it became a reality, was a fairy-tale pre-figuration of the European cultures"[42]. Columbus was a passionate reader of writings of travellers and cosmographers, biblical, theological and philosophical works, while the opus of Marco Polo was his essential source of knowledge about Asia and the state of the Great Khan, Polo's destination. It seems therefore that Columbus might have considered the denominations of *caníbales* and antropófagos as synonymous. Also, María Moliner in her *Diccionario de uso del español*[43] does not see any substantial difference: "Caníbal — from caríbal; antrópofago from the Antilles"[44]. One way or another, the concept of cannibal was not an outcome of ethnographic observation but resulted from the word of mouth and information processed from the writings of others.

Also, it has to be stressed that the origin of the word cannibal is not European and was coined by Columbus to denote the Antillean tribe of the Caribs. The image of the cannibal as an opposite of the good savage was to justify the conquest and taking American natives into captivity, under the pretext of protecting the gentle and innocent Indians against the cruel cannibals, as well as served to convert Indians to Christianity. In reality, the opposition good–savage/cannibal served the founding paradigm of the Western civilisation. From this point of view, cannibal was a "transition between the paradisiacal and the hideous"[45].

Castoriadis writes that the symbolic is found both in language and in institutions, symbolic systems which enable certain act to be assigned meanings

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[41]One could say that the conquistadors and the clergymen who came to the New world to subdue and catechize, developed a strong psychological disposition with which they justified the desire to acquire lands and souls, regardless of the committed transgressions. In other words they developed that which psychology calls cognitive dissonance, i.e. they adopted certain convictions and ideas in order to have an excuse for certain behaviours. Ibidem, p. 145.

[42]Crónicas de Indias, edición de M. Serna, Madrid 2007, p. 56.

[43]M. Moliner, Diccionario de uso del español, Madrid 1999.

[44]Ibidem, p. 495.

[45]C.A. Jáuregui, Canibalia, p. 62.

and values which bind groups or a society together[46]. Thus, the conquest of the American continent seems a logical and premeditated enterprise since the very outset. It is difficult to imagine anything more symbolic that the Spanish taking possession of the new lands. This was effected through the *requerimiento*, a procedure in which the Indians were called upon to submit voluntarily to the rule of the Spanish Crown by virtue of papal gift, upon reading of an eponymous deed. It was the first legal document justifying war against Indians, which was inevitable should it have been rejected. Considering the fact that the document contained references to the history of the world since its creation by God, to the act of pope Alexander VI decreeing donation to the Spanish monarchs and given that it summoned Indians to recognise the authority of the Catholic church and the remote rulers, the act was actually unilateral. It seems that the *requerimiento* was addressed to the European rulers rather than Indians who, for obvious reasons, understood very little of it. The Spaniards sought legal vindication of the conquest; Spain wished to reserve the right to the conquered territories and forestall potential protests of the European rivals. This is no accident that the text of *requerimiento* was drafted by the royal jurist, Juan López de Palacios Rubios, an adherent of the theory that the pope disposes of the highest spiritual and worldly authority (*potestas directa*). From this he inferred that the legal title to the conquest may originate solely from the pope. As a result, over several months (May-September) in 1493, Alexander VI issued five bulls addressed to Ferdinand and Isabel, the Spanish monarchs, which not only ensured their power and jurisdiction over the lands discovered by Columbus, but also introduced a new division, into Christians and barbarians, replacing the medieval distinction between Christians and infidels. While infidels (Muslims) were considered *hostes perpetui*, or those that cannot ever be hoped to be converted to the true faith, the barbarians (Indians) were considered by the papacy to be fit to accept Christianity from the very beginning[47]. Thus the papal legitimization of the conquest was also intended to serve evangelisation among the American natives. The inclusion of the Christian religious doctrine to authorise conquest and property rights (*dominium*) in America was to secure the interests of the Spanish empire, which was becoming a global power.

[46]C. Castoriadis, La institución imaginaria de la sociedad, [in:] E. Colombo (ed.), El imaginario social, Tupac y Nordan, Montevideo–Buenos Aires 1989, p. 38-39.

[47]W. Buchner, Wojna i konkwista. Hiszpańska myśl polityczna Złotego Wieku, Kraków 2007, p. 193.

Joseph Pérez observes that "a simple and pure conquest seemed insufficient [to the Spaniards], it also had to be justified in law"[48].

This polarised the dichotomy in which the native is seen either as a vile barbarian, justifying war and his later exploitation, or as a harmless savage, which warrants his protection through evangelisation[49]. Foucault draws attention to the definite difference between one and the other spectrum:

"The barbarian is opposed to the savage, but how? Foremost in the following way: the savage is savage only in the state of savagery, together with other savages, but ceases to be so upon entering into a relationship of the social type. In turn, the barbarian is someone who can be conceptualised and characterised, defined only in juxtaposition to a civilisation outside which he lives. There is no barbarian if there is a civilisational point with regard to which the barbarian is external and against which he acts. The civilisational point — which the barbarian despises and desires is a point towards which the barbarian is hostile and wages a permanent war on. There is no barbarian without civilisation he tries to destroy and appropriate. […] Unlike the savage, the barbarian does not have a natural origin. He appears only with the civilisation against which he acts"[50].

This semantic violence was not a mere legal figure, as it opened the way for political, economic and physical violence. With the advance of colonisation, the definition of the cannibal is extended: if at the outset it referred to the Carib due to his barbarity, soon the denomination of cannibal was employed for Indians who resisted colonisation on the territories where the *encomenderos*[51] needed workforce. Consequently, not only cannibal's semantic range but also its geographic boundaries changed. In order to remedy the shortage of work-

[48]J. Pérez, Mitos y tópicos de la historia de España y América, Madrid 2006, p. 205.

[49]S. Leetoy, Las justificaciones, de la Guerra de conquista a través de la mitología del Otro: las dicotomías del buen salvaje y el bárbaro en crónicas de los siglos XVI y XVII, Redep. Com. 5, p. 148-149; article available at www.compoliticap.org/redes/pdf/redes5/9.pdf.

[50]M. Foucault, Trzeba bronić społeczeństwa, transl. by M. Kowalska, Warszawa 1998, p. 195.

[51]Encomendero — person whom the Crown granted encomienda, or an estate (frequently a group of Indian settlements) inclusive of their inhabitants. Encomendero had numerous obligations on that account, especially of taking care of the Indians and their Christianisation. In return, he was entitled to exact services from the Indians, chiefly in the form of forced labour.

force, Spaniards introduced slavery of Indians, and again Columbus was its originator. In his letters to the Catholic Kings, he would justify turning Indians to slaves with the proclivity for cannibalism, which most probable convinced Queen Isabel to legalise (October 30th, 1503) slavery, despite her own previous (April 12th, 1495) ban on public sale of Indians. It was also under Columbus that the first system regulating usage and distribution of Indian workforce was introduced in the Antilles. This arrangement, called *repartimiento*, consisted in temporary allotment of a specific number of Indians to each colonist, so that the Indians could perform unpaid work for him. The system of slave labour of Indians[52] contributed considerably to the underdevelopment of the conquered lands which, despite being granted formal independence in the early 19th century, fell into a trap of colonial dependency.

This shows that the "matter of cannibalism is less and less an issue related to the consumption of human flesh by some of the Caribs, and more and more a consumption of the workforce by the *encomenderos*"[53]. European conquistadors increased their appetites, using the word cannibal to refer to the American Other, whose body they wanted to consume politically, economically, and sexually. As a result, the population of the Antillean Indians diminished dramatically. The statistics of the Indian population on Hispaniola is very vivid in that respect: there were 60,000 Indians on the island in 1508, but only 3,000 in 1520. When Francis Drake invaded and sacked Santo Domingo, he did not meet a single Indian there[54]. The causes of such a drastic depopulation of the Indian inhabitants are among the most controversial issues. Some researchers speak of a "demographic disaster which has no precedent in human history"[55], others go as far as claiming genocide[56]. Here, a remark of Arens's seems exceptionally apt:

[52]During the entire colonial period the system of forced labour in Hispanic America evolved and transformed. This issue is discussed by the author in Kontrola siły roboczej w gospodarce kolonialnej Ameryki hiszpańskiej: repartimiento, encomienda i niewolnictwo, Studia Europaea Gnesnensia 4, 2011, Poznań–Gniezno, p. 9–44.

[53]C.A. Jáuregui, Canibalia, p. 79.

[54]F. Moya Pons, Manual de historia dominicana, Santo Domingo 1977, p. 27.

[55]M.L. Laviana Cuetos, La América Española, 1492–1898: de las Indias a nuestra América, Ediciones Temas de Hoy, Madrid 1996, p. 42.

[56]A detailed analysis of the thesis suggesting genocide of the American natives [in:] L. Pereña, Genocido en América, Editorial Mapfre, Madrid 1992; see also: Demetrio Ramos, Genocido y conquista: viejos mitos que siguen en pie, Madrid 1998.

"There is reasonable doubt as to who ate who, but there is no single hesitation as to who condemned whom to annihilation"[57].

The issue of Indian extermination turned out to be so serious that it provoked a reaction of the royal court. First, in 1512, the *Laws of Burgos* (*Leyes de Burgos*) were enacted on the initiative of Ferdinand the Catholic, in which Indians are deemed to be free people, but unable to take advantage of their freedom. Such understanding of freedom tallied with the concept of natural slavery, on which the aforementioned Palacios Rubios founded *encomienda*, an institution upheld in the *Laws of Burgos*. Now the Indians were obliged to work for Spanish colonisers in the field or in mines for nine months in a year. During the reign of Charles I, in 1542, the *New Laws* (*Las Leyes Nuveas*) were decreed, which forbade enslavement of Indians and restricted the rights of *encomenderos*. Since that moment, Indians were to be hired to work based on a free contract and upon remuneration. However, the rights of Indians were not respected in practice, and with the territorial growth of the colonies, the exploitation of the Indian populace increased as well.

In the first half of the 16th century, *Canibalia* moves from the Antilles to the continent, shifting the frontier of European colonisation from the Caribbean to Mexico, Panama, Brazil, Peru and the rest of the continent. Cannibal appears everywhere, but it is also accompanied by doubt in the rightfulness of European expansion and philosophical reflection on the rights of the conquered. The qualms caused by the brutal conquest and the destruction of the Aztec civilisation led to the famed debate of Valladolid, where Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda and Bartolomé de Las Casas clashed. In the debate[58], which took place in two sessions (1550–1551), Sepúlveda defends the conquistadors advancing four essential arguments: first, according to the Aristotelian doctrine, he argues that in view their mental inferiority Indians are slaves by nature, which justifies the rights of the Spanish, a nation on a higher intellectual and civilisational level, to rule the New World. This justifies the war with natives who oppose their rule; secondly, Sepúlveda finds it legitimate to wage war which will put a stop to the hideous Indian practice of eating human flesh and to the acts of idolatry and the custom of human sacrifice; thirdly, it is right to wage war to deliver

[57]W. Arens, Mit ludożercy. Antropologia i antropofagia, transl. by W. Pessel, Warszawa 2010, p. 64.

[58]Details of the debate, [in:] T. Todorov, Podbój Ameryki, p. 163–186 and W. Buchner, Wojna i konkwista, p. 232–253.

innocent Indians whom the barbarians annually offer to their gods as sacrifice; fourth, since Indians do not know Christian religion, the war opens the way for evangelisation and facilitates the work of missionaries. Unlike Sepúlveda, Las Casas does not draw on Aristotle but on the teachings of Christ. For Las Casas the difference does not mean inferiority, because barbarity is a category which characterizes both American Indians as well as civilised societies. The Dominican refers to inhumane acts and the extraordinary cruelty of the Spanish conquistadors, which he expressed in his *Brief account on the attrition of Indians*[59], published in 1552 in Seville. The barbarity of Indians is not motivated by natural factors, but their different culture and language, in the same way that Greeks took peoples who did not know Greek to be barbarians, as well as the lack of Christian faith. La Casas rejects the Aristotelian opposition master-slave and adopts the opposition of Christian — non-Christian as a fundament. In acknowledging the universal nature of Christian religion, he recognizes that Indians do possess Christian virtues, such as gentleness, obedience and peaceful disposition, which enable them to embrace Christian religion. However, the opinion of Las Casas about the ritual human sacrifice remains controversial. The bishop of Chiapas seems to condone such practices of American Indians, observing that the ritual existed in all primeval societies.

Although the debate in Valladolid did not result in any formal conclusions, the pragmatic stand of Sepúlveda's, which protected the interests of the Spanish colonisers, prevailed. The aftermath of subjugating Indians to the Spanish rules of social and religious life persists until today, because the Spanish model was later passed on to the Latin American republicans[60]. This is the root of the obsessive search for what is Latin American and the dissension as to the status of the indigenous populace. It should be stressed that Todorov finds Sepúlveda's account of Indians to be more reliable than that of Las Casas, whom he accuses of manipulation[61]. The problem is that both adversaries may be accused of manipulation[62], but unlike Sepúlveda, who had never been to America, Las Casas spent many years there, received *encomienda* on Hispaniola in 1511, which he

[59]B. de Las Casas, Krótka relacja o wyniszczeniu Indian, transl. by K. Niklewiczówna, Poznań 1988.

[60]A. Dembicz, Filozofia poznawania Ameryki, Warszawa 2006, p. 155.

[61]T. Todorov, Podbój Ameryki, p. 184.

[62]Por. A.Y. Martínez, Y. Santamaría-Benz, La manipulación del discurso en relación al concepto del bárbaro en los indios, FERMENTUM, September–December, 2004, Mérida, Wenezuela, p. 561-579.

gave up several years later, devoting the rest of his life to the defence of Indians. Hence his relation is based on more empirical foundations. We also know that already in 1545, at the request of Cortés himself, Sepúlveda defended the institution of *encomienda*, using cannibalism of Indians as one of his arguments[63]. In those days there existed a kind of conspiracy between the conquistadors and certain scholars. As Rubert de Ventós writes:

"Examples of such complicity are many and well-documented: from direct collaboration in the legal fraud of *Requerimientos* (an unclear combination of legal-theological requisition and declaration of war, which had to precede each attack) to political-sociological sanctions provided by Sepúlveda or Oviedo, to plunder and exploit the natives"[64].

If at the beginning of the conquest the objective was to enslave Indians using cannibalism as a pretext to ensure workforce, during the colonisation period, with the European nations contending for American market, the denomination of "cannibal" refers less to the Indian who resists assimilation but rather to the one who refuses to participate in the trade. The testimonies of such Europeans as Hans Staden[65], André Thevet[66] and Jean de Léry[67], who stayed in Brazil in the latter half of the 16th century, show that the Spaniards, Portugese, French, Dutch and English compete for trade territories and use "cannibal" as a derogative term to describe Indian tribes who traded with their European rivals. For this reason, they draw a distinction between tribes considered as allies, whose anthropophagy is presented in the categories of ritual, and the tribes outside their trade area, described as crudely savage, whose cannibalism stemmed from the pure pleasure of eating human flesh. Léry claims that the cannibalism of the Tupinamba tribe is not dangerous for the French, as the savages eat their enemies without much hesitation, but "cherish deep love for those who are their

[63]P. Vignolo, Hic Sunt Canibales, p. 162–163.

[64]X.R. de Ventós, El laberinto de la hispanidad, Barcelona 1997, p. 28.

[65]H. Staden, Verdadera historia y descripción de un país de salvajes desnudos y feroces caníbales, situado en Nuevo Mundo América [1557], Barcelona 1983.

[66]A. Thevet, Les singularités de la France antarctique autrement nommée Amérique et de plusieurs terres et îles découvertes de notre temps [1558], Paris 1982.

[67]J. de Léry, Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil, autrement dite Amérique [1578], Paris 1780.

friends and allies (just as we are friends of the Tupinamba nation)"[68]. Léry assures that unlike other cannibals, "our Tupinamba" (cannibal allies) are "mortal enemies of the Portugese"[69] and do active trade with the French. Admittedly, they consume human flesh, but they are friends and partners, while their anthropophagy is related to the code of honour and war, something ritual, or at any rate less perverse from the persecution of Protestants in Europe. Therefore for Léry, as Jáuregui concludes, "the commercial appetite is inversely proportional to the barbarity and voracity"[70].

The depictions of the Tupinamba tribe made by Staden, Thevet and Léry, which focus on cannibalism as a trope which regulates the definition of the Other, are paradigmatic for what may be called "ethnographic matrix of colonial modernity"[71]. Staden's work in particular had a substantial influence on the perception of America in Europe and Brazil itself. Staden was a German mercenary who went with two Portuguese expeditions to Brazil. During the second voyage, in 1552, his ship sank and Staden was captured by the Tupinamba Indians who took him for a Portuguese. After several months he managed to escape and return to Europe. In his book, Staden claimed that during his captivity he witnessed many cannibal feasts, living in constant fear of being eaten himself. The second part of the book is devoted to the customs of the Tupinamba, and offers descriptions of ceremonies in which the Indians kill their enemies and eat them[72]. Women played an important role in the rituals, although the act of killing itself was performed by men. Interestingly enough, in Staden's account, the women of the Tupinamba are presented as the most dangerous. To Staden, the cannibalism of the Tupinamba is not related to voracity but ritual violence: their eating of the human flesh is connected with war and ritual retribution. This does not mean that Staden seeks to excuse their anthropophagy; on the contrary, as he writes "it seems appalling to me that they eat them [the captives]; that they killed them was not as terrifying"[73]. In Staden's opinion, consumption of human flesh is a definite proof of the bestial nature of the Tupinamba Indians.

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[68]Ibidem, p. 169, quoted after: C.A. Jáuregui, Canibalia, p. 126.

[69]Ibidem.

[70]Ibidem.

[71]Ibidem, p. 110.

[72]H. Staden, Verdadera historia, p. 211–219.

[73]Ibidem, p. 123, quoted after: C.A. Jáuregui, Canibalia, p. 112.

The Franciscan Thevet, who took part in French expedition aimed to establish a colony on one of the islands in the Guanabara Bay distinguishes between Tupinamba, the cannibal allies of the French, who practice ritual anthropophagy as vengeance on their enemies and cannibal allies of the Portugese, as well as Caribs and other cannibals who may be encountered outside the trade territories. According to Thevet, the cannibals living on the north-eastern coast of Brazil and in the Caribbean are characterised by "lion-like craving for food and burning thirst for human blood […] they do not feed on other meat than human, just as Europeans eat beef or mutton"[74]. Thevet deplores the fact that the presence of those savage cannibals impedes trade, which causes severe "loss", bearing in mind the "great fertility of the cannibal lands and its abundance of gold and precious stones"[75].

As may be seen, the manner in which cannibalism of American Indians is presented has little in common with pure ethnography, but the context of the expansion of European trade capitalism seems to be a key element here. This undermines the credibility of accounts concerning the actual cannibalism of Indians. It is highly likely that many natives who did not practice it but inhabited frontier areas or resisted European conquistadors, were classified as cannibals. In his polemical book, Arens claims that anthropophagy never existed in the New World. To him, the accounts of cannibalism should not be trusted, because they are based on hearsay, suspicion and accusations spread by those who had never seen anyone eating human flesh. Arens questions the existing sources concerning cannibalism, denouncing their lack of empirical basis and ethnographic backing:

"This conclusion is based on the fact that, excluding survival conditions, I have been unable to uncover adequate documentation of cannibalism as a custom in any form for any society. Rumours, suspicions, fears and accusations abound, but no satisfactory first-hand accounts. Learned essays by professionals are unending, but the sustaining ethnography is lacking. The argument that a critical re-examination is both necessary and a profitable exercise is based on the premise that cannibalism by definition is an observable phenomenon. Following this, the evidence for its existence should be derived from observa-

[74]A. Thevet, Les singularités, p. 179, 245, 363, quoted after: C.A. Jáuregui, Canibalia, p. 125.

[75]Ibidem.

tion by reliable sources. Again, it is worth asking, why is it that an act which is both so fascinating and repugnant to us should merely be assumed to exist rather than documented? This study examines some of the facts of this peculiar situation and suggests that for layman and scholar alike the idea of cannibalism exists prior to and thus independent of the evidence"[76].

Arens's conclusions are certainly generalising and radical, yet it is worth noting that the American anthropologist recommends far-reaching caution in the assessment of sources, where the suspicion of cannibalism had existed before it was empirically validated. Such forms of presenting cannibalism stem not so much from ethnographic observation but from the rhetoric and the medieval literary tradition, which is manifested in the numerous references that the authors of the aforementioned accounts make to Bible and the writings of ancient classics.

Cannibalism proved not only a tool generating American otherness, but also a cultural trope which exposes the modern European subject. In the period of religious wars following Reformation, the Catholics became "literary" cannibals to the Calvinists. Léry, when referring to the massacre of the Huguenots on St. Bartholomew's Day (1572), writes that there is no shortage of cannibals "among us, there are people alike, or even worse and more abominable […] one does not need to flee the country, or go to America, to see things so curious and monstrous"[77]. Léry's countryman, Michel de Montaigne, who met several Brazilian Indians in Paris, observes that the violence practiced by Europeans during religious wars is more barbaric and less justified than cannibalism of American Indians. This is what Montaigne writes about Indians in his well-known essay:

"[…] I find that there is nothing barbarous and savage in this nation, by anything that I can gather, excepting, that every one gives the title of barbarism to everything that is not in use in his own […] They are savages at the same rate that we say fruits are wild, which nature produces of herself and by her own ordinary progress; whereas, in truth, we ought rather to call those wild whose natures we have changed by our artifice and diverted from the common

[76]W. Arens, Mit ludożercy, p. 52.

[77]J. de Léry, Historie d'un voyage, p. 132–133, quoted after: C.A. Jáuregui, Canibalia, p. 182.

order. […] These nations then seem to me to be so far barbarous, as having received but very little form and fashion from art and human invention, and consequently to be not much remote from their original simplicity. The laws of nature, however, govern them still, not as yet much vitiated with any mixture of ours"[78].

Montaigne, unlike his compatriots, is more reserved in judging American natives. Let us note that the word "cannibal" appears only in the title of that essay. For the French humanist, barbarity is more a question of degenerated morals than customs which are diametrically different from European ones. In his opinion, one must not take American natives for barbarians or savages, as they live in harmony with nature. Without doubt, Montaigne's "cannibals" are cultural artefacts which represent not so much the American barbarian as the strayed modern ego. The icon of the colonial cannibal is therefore more of a mirror reflection of the European self than a factor facilitating the knowledge of the American Other.

In her history of the imperial creation of sense and meaning, Mary Louise Pratt draws attention to the following fact:

"If we choose to analyse only that which was seen and written by Europeans, we reproduce their alleged monopoly for knowledge and interpretation, which once was the goal of the empire. Thus we commit a tremendous distortion of the affairs, for such monopoly has never existed. People who were subject to the effect of European imperialism, also arrived to their own cognitive and interpretational conclusions, resorting sometimes, like Guaman Poma, to the tools of Europeans themselves"[79].

Therefore Pratt devises the term of "contact zone", which refers to:

"[…] the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical

[78]M. de Montaigne, O kanibalach, [in:] idem, Próby 1, transl. by T. Żeleński Boy, Warszawa 1985, p. 312.

[79]M.L. Pratt, Imperialność spojrzenia. Pisarstwo podróżnicze a transkulturacja, transl. by E.E. Nowakowska, Kraków 2011, p. 25–26.

inequality, and intractable conflict. […] «Contact zone» in my discussion is often synonymous with «colonial frontier». But while the latter term is grounded within a European expansionist perspective (the frontier is a frontier only with respect to Europe), «contact zone» is an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect. By using the term «contact», I aim to foreground the interactive, improvisational dimensions of colonial encounters so easily ignored or suppressed by diffusionist accounts of conquest and domination. A «contact» perspective emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other. It treats the relations among colonizers and colonized, or travelers and «travelees», not in terms of separateness or apartheid, but in terms of copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power"[80].

Such perspective challenges the Eurocentric system of values. The notion of the "contact zone" renders the hierarchy of difference more dynamic and questions the inflexibility of identity of the coloniser/colonised. In the colonial period, the cannibal became an essential trope in constructing discourse of the Other and served to delimit the boundaries between the human and the non-human. In the subsequent centuries, the cannibal trope is still present in the Latin American reality, albeit in a mutated form, just as the imperial relationships it encodes. As 19th century dawns, the cannibal trope performs various functions: in the era of independence numerous authors draw on the Indian traits in order to demonstrate the social, cultural and historical difference between what is European and what is American; when nations are taking shape, the dichotomy civilisation/barbarism serves to define the nation as opposed to the internal Other. In the 20th century, the trope of the cannibal is replaced with the metaphor of Kaliban, with whom Latin America is identified.

[80]Ibidem, p. 27.

Filip Kubiaczyk

KOLONIALNOŚĆ SPOJRZENIA: INNY JAKO KANIBAL

Streszczenie

Artykuł analizuje sposób postrzegania inności przez zachodni etnocentryzm, który ukazało „odkrycie" Nowego Świata. Jednym z pierwszych neologizmów powstałych w wyniku ekspansji w Nowym Świecie jest słowo „kanibal", które jako trop kulturowy ustanawia sposób rozumienia Innych. Dlatego w historii kultury latynoamerykańskiej kanibala trzeba łączyć bardziej z myśleniem i wyobrażeniem niż z jedzeniem. Figura kanibala stała się jednym z najbardziej obsesyjnych i powracających tropów Latynoameryki, który zdominował dyskurs kolonialny na temat Innego. O ile na początku konkwisty pojęcie kanibala odnoszono do tubylców ze względu na ich barbarzyństwo, o tyle wraz z postępem kolonizacji terminu tego zaczęto używać w odniesieniu do Indian opierających się kolonizacji na terenach, na których brakowało siły roboczej. W ten sposób sprawa kanibalizmu staje się coraz mniej kwestią spożywania mięsa ludzkiego przez Indian, a coraz bardziej konsumpcją siły roboczej ze strony *encomenderos*.

Świadectwa takich Europejczyków, jak Hans Staden, André Thevet i Jean de Léry, którzy w drugiej połowie XVI wieku przebywali wśród brazylijskich Indian Tupinamba, dowodzą, że sposoby przedstawiania kanibalizmu Indian amerykańskich niewiele mają wspólnego z czystą etnografią, istotny natomiast okazuje się kontekst ekspansji europejskiego kapitalizmu handlowego. W relacjach wspomnianych podróżników czyni się rozróżnienie między plemionami uważanymi za sojuszników, których antropofagię przedstawia się w kategoriach rytuału, a plemionami spoza obszaru handlowego uważanymi za wrogie, których kanibalizm uzasadnia się zwykłą przyjemnością spożywania ludzkiego mięsa.

Od czasu uzyskania niepodległości przez kraje latynoamerykańskie na początku XIX wieku trop kanibala nadal jest obecny w rzeczywistości kontynentu, choć w zmutowanej formie. W XX wieku trop kanibala zastępuje metafora Kalibana, który symbolizuje to, co latynoamerykańskie.