

Stuffing the Other: Tropes of Incorporation in Coco Fusco's and Nao Bustamante's *Stuff*

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Well Mr.Spica — no power, no light, no heat — no cooking — were you thinking of a cold buffet tonight Mr.Spica? Pâté de foie gras aux truffles...pâté d'alouettes with chicory sauce...terrines de caneton...cold turkey with lemon and basilica...anchovies in garlic vinegar...salade niçoise...? Perhaps, Mr.Spica, you'd like your name on the menu? ...or sewn into the tablecloths...once in capital letters and then in italics? Maybe you'd like your name on the lavatory paper...in a dye that would transfer itself to the customer's backside...? Then, Mr.□Spica, you could pretend you own us all. — Richard the Cook

...it is necessary to overcome the ideological understanding of consumption as a process of craving and pleasure, as an extended metaphor on the digestive functions — where the whole issue is naturalized according to the primary scheme of the oral drive. It is necessary to surpass this powerful imaginary preconception in order to define consumption *not only structurally as a system of exchange and of signs, but strategically as a mechanism of power.*

— Jean

Baudrillard

Hors d'oeuvre or Foreplay

Sopa de Lima

1 cup chopped onions
 4 large garlic cloves, minced or pressed
 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
 1½ minced chiles (1 inch long, or to taste)
 1 teaspoon ground cumin seeds
 ½ teaspoon dried oregano
 3½ cups chopped fresh tomatoes
 3 cups vegetable stock
 1/3 cup fresh lime juice
 salt to taste
 grated Monterey Jack cheese
 tortilla chips, crumbled
 chopped fresh cilantro

In a medium soup pot, sauté the onions and garlic in the oil until the onions are translucent. Add the chiles, cumin, and oregano, and sauté for a few more minutes. Add the chopped tomatoes and sprinkle with a little salt. Cover the pot and cook gently until the tomatoes begin to release their juices. Stir occasionally. Add the stock and simmer, covered for about 15 minutes. Add the lime juice and salt to taste. Serve topped with grated cheese and crumbled tortilla chips. Garnish with finely chopped cilantro, if desired. (Wilchman, 1990: 455).

To make the above appetizer and any recipe work you will need a “gossipy small talk of history [that] reduces *the thing itself*” (Derrida, 1981: 10), anticipates and recapitulates it, demands what is excessive and “cannot be mastered” (Ibid: 20) to fit into the pot. You will need:

A dexterous Cook for “mix[ing] the signs of [cultural] difference – particular herbs, spices, and *other* ingredients” (my emphasis. Morse, 1994: 174). S/he can be a servant, “indigenous to the Americas, or [one]... whose ancestors were brought here [to the U.S.] as slaves or indentured servants... a worker who flips burgers, who speaks the... speech of McDonalds” (Sandoval 1995: 408); or a black slave whose “cannibalistic appetites” and “hungry sexuality” can now be re-directed to the more “civilized” and “*reproductive*” cause of cooking for and serving, or nourishing, the white body; or a mestiza (the ideal cook) who knows literally with her/his skin how to mix cultural and culinary boundaries.

2. An engorged, preferably insatiable Thief with previous experience in usurping land, destroying its ecological systems and devouring – or fucking up, to connect eating with sex – its inhabitants via hunger, torture and rape, and currently specializing in more subtle, but still, expansionist aims. Note that the Thief is also a euphemistic name which indicates “Europe [sic] and America’s ravaging of Latin American resources” and symbolizes “cultural consumption [that] in our current moment involves the trafficking of that which is most dear to us all: our identities, our myths and our bodies” (Fusco and Bustamante, 1997: 63).²

3. A Wife, “[a] ‘virgin’ land [which] is presumably available for defloration and fecundation; ownerless [yet], it becomes the property of its ‘discoverers’ and ‘cultivants’” (Shohat and Stam, 1995: 142). She can be represented as in Jan Van der Straet’s painting of Vespucci as “a welcoming

naked woman, the Indian America” standing before Vespucci while “in the background are visual hints of cannibalism” (Ibid.). Or, in an inversion of the colonial sexual anthropophagic myth, she can be Donne’s female body of America awaiting depletion, sodomy and rape: “License my roaving [sic] hands, and let them go, / Before, behind, between, above, below. / O my America! my new-found-land, / My Kindome, safeliest when with one man man’d ...” (Cited by Sawday, 1995: 27).

4. A Latina/o hot Lover (the “sexually hungry subalterns,” Shohat and Stam, 1995: 157) who is a slight variation of the Cook: s/he is the colonized for whom – unlike Greenaway’s film from which this “recipe” borrows the allegory – revenge does not merely aim at repulsion but involves subverting the trope, in Coco Fusco and Nao Bustamante’s words, “of the colonized who feed off the colonial” (63).³

Main Course or Intercourse: The Trope of Incorporation or Stuffing the Other

Filetes de cerdo con salsa de tomate

(Pork Fillets With Tomato Sauce)

Escoger filetes de cerdo con poca grasa. Extenderlos en una fuente y sazonar con sal, ajos y perejil picado, aceite crudo y un poco de zumo de limón. Dejar en reposo durante una hora. Momentos antes de cocinarlos se les quita el adobo, pasándolos por harina y friéndolos en aceite o manteca caliente. Colocar en una fuente de servir y rodear de cuartos de limón. Servir, en salsa aparte, una salsa de tomate bien espesa. (Ramírez, 1974: 231)

If we are to exchange recipes with *Stuff*, let us also exchange with it some “gossip.” We shall briefly summarize the play here, as a note to a recipe that indeed does not work. We shall summarize it not because we swallow the hook of the thing (the Other as the play’s “object” of knowledge and emancipation) *Stuff* reduces and noisily rumors about, but precisely because its vociferous reclamations to recover the Other as Subject has some other ideology or some other private affairs to hide.

The play loves eating. It is according to its creators a cannibalistic “revenge of the colonized who feed off the colonial”(63). Fusco and Bustamante write that “*Stuff* is our look at the cultural myths that link Latin women and food to the erotic in the Western popular imagination. We weave our way through multilingual sex guides, fast food menus, bawdy border humor, and much more. In the course of the performance, we mingle with audience members, treating them to a meal, a host of rituals and exotic legends, an

occasional rumba, and at least one Spanish lesson” (ibid). Indeed, the play, under the auspices not of Latin women, but of a Latin man, Triple E (who is a New Age Latin guru appearing only through a TV monitor as if he were the devouring Latin eye or the native as a surveillance camera) invites the audience or the West to “go native.” Such an experience according to the performance’s premises involves: the offering of an exotic meal; a dance ritual of a voracious goddess that consumes her lovers; the almost masturbatory extraction from the audience of its sexual appetites by a Latin sex educator; an invitation to the world of the Other (for example a prostitute, a transvestite) that sells “her” body to the Western tourist, only to transform him into food for her own survival (“Cuando traigo un gallego a la casa, mi familia no lo ve a él – ven un pollo, arroz, frijoles y plátanos, ven un refri lleno” [73]); a rumba lesson given by Triple E’s female escorts (Blanca and Rosa); a mocking enactment of a sexual exchange between a Cuban prostitute and a Travel Taster (a member of the audience who is symbolically a Western tourist). I shall come back in more detail and in more analytical terms to all these presumably vengeful acts to raise a number of questions.

For the moment let us return to the four categories referred to in the “hors d’oeuvre” of this paper which “feed” on various discourses: historical, cinematographic, pictorial and poetic. There is a common denominator between them which informs the staged “revenge” of Fusco’s and Bustamante’s *Stuff*. It appears in the form of a metaphor which explores the theme of eating and being eaten in its relation to sexual intercourse, colonialism and imperialism. Anthropophagic practices conflate with cultural assimilation, consumption and consummation. There is the obese and hypertrophic body of the colonizer (the eater) and the atrophic body, or the body in hunger of the colonized (the eaten). They, in turn, correspond to the body of the pervert, a White rapist clothed in Adamic prelapsarian innocence, and the nymphomaniac body or the violated body-in-rags of the oppressed, according to which angle is adopted.

Incorporation in all its manifestations in Fusco’s and Bustamante’s *Stuff* is a problematic metaphor that, as I shall argue, does not facilitate the disruption of colonial stereotypes such as the transformation of the colonized into a voracious female monster. It *falls prey to* Western discourse binaries, albeit inverted, perpetuates questionable inversions, and loses sight of their limits. *Stuff*, through this metaphor, dangerously reduces humans into food. It flirts with revenge but without moving beyond it, becomes itself incorporated into the very colonizer’s incorporations that it strives dramatically to negate.

This approach to *Stuff* will be motivated by suspicion against the dialectical categories implicit in the oral logic of incorporation, for a number of reasons, but mostly because of orality's connection to Oedipal syndromes and infantile "development." For it is as if the already infantilized colonized is not allowed to escape her/his Oedipalization or to quit sucking her/his thumb, precisely because s/he has also been portrayed by colonial discourse as an innocent cannibal (indeed, a cruel infant), whom the Western man (or psychoanalyst) rescues. I ironically refer to thumb-sucking to allude to Freudian incorporation: that is, an unnecessary adherence to Occidental psychoanalytic complexes, scenarios, and their interpretation to describe domination experiences and resistance against the West. Here is Freud on "love bites," animal (infantile) sexuality, cannibalism and the masturbatory (food, sex-wise) sucking of the thumb:

We shall give the name of "pregenital" to organizations of sexual life in which the genital zones have not yet taken over their predominant part. We have hitherto identified two such organizations, which almost seem as though they were harking back to early animal forms of life. The first of these is the *oral* or, as it might be called, *cannibalistic* pregenital sexual organization. Here sexual activity has not yet been separated from the ingestion of food; nor are opposite currents within the activity differentiated. The *object* of both activities is the same; the sexual *aim* consists in the *incorporation* of the object – the prototype of a process which, in the form of *identification*, is later to play such an important psychological part. A relic of this constructed phase of organization ... may be seen in thumb-sucking, in which the sexual activity, detached from the nutritive activity, has substituted for the extraneous object once situated in the subject's own body. (Freud, 1996: 111)

Let us outline very schematically the psychoanalytic notion of incorporation and its derivatives, introjection and identification, as the supporting, theoretical props of Fusco's and Bustamante's cannibal other. According to Laplanche and Pontalis, incorporation is:

[a] process whereby the subject, more or less on the level of phantasy, has an object penetrate his [sic] body and keeps it 'inside' his [sic] body. Incorporation constitutes an instinctual aim and a mode of object relationship which are characteristic of the oral stage; although it has a special relationship with the mouth and with the ingestion of food, it may also be lived out in relation with other erotogenic zones and

other functions. Incorporation provides the corporal model for introjection and identification... It means to obtain pleasure by making an object penetrate oneself; it means to destroy this object; and it means, by keeping it within oneself, to appropriate the object's qualities. It is this last aspect that makes incorporation into the matrix [sic] of introjection and identification. (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973: 211-212)

In identification "the subject assimilates an aspect, property or attribute of the other and is transformed, wholly or partially, after the model the other provides" (Ibid: 205). The three terms are in turn connected to cannibalism – or the "cannibalistic (oral) stage" – which describes:

the various dimensions of oral incorporation: love, destruction, preservation within the self of the object and appropriation of its qualities... Freud brings out the belief that is implicit in this practice [cannibalism] of 'primitive races': 'By incorporating parts of a person's body through the act of eating, one at the same time acquires the qualities possessed by him.' (Ibid: 55)

Incorporation, identification, and introjection rely on a spatial opposition between the inside and the outside of the body, whereby the inside is the superior domain of the good and the outside is the realm of the bad, the *alien* – which is etymologically related to the Greek *allos* or other – and by extension, the threatening. For Maggie Kilgour this is one of the most infantile oppositions, "projecting a desire for assimilation from a center to a periphery, a tactic that has been shown to be at work in psychic defenses, misogyny, racism and imperialism" (1990: 5). Eating dramatizes the opposition between eater and eaten in a non-reciprocal relationship in which aggression dissolves into consumption, absolute control, and mastery of the alien or of what lies outside of the devouring body: "Man is fed at the world's expense" (Ibid: 6).

Incorporation refers both to food and to sexual intercourse – as, for example, in colonial discourses where the Aztecs were both sodomists and cannibals (Arens, 1979: 58) – as well as being related to verbal communication. Kilgour argues that "if cultures are defined by what they eat, they are also stereotyped by how they speak, as 'barbarian' referred originally to those who could not speak Greek. Food is the matter that goes in the mouth, words the more refined substance that afterward come out" (Kilgour, 1990: 8). Incorporation, introjection and identification, as assimilation and unification, designate the power struggle between two unequal and hierarchized terms: subject and object. They objectify and regard the other as a lost possession

which has to, and must, be internalized and identified with the self, so that the self can in effect ingest and obtain the other's power which the self lacks. The erroneous assumption underlying the three oral activities is that there is a clear-cut and always stable distinction between inside and outside boundaries, between subject or eater and object or eaten.

Incorporation can also be exemplified in the infant-mother relationship and is associated with the act of breast-feeding in a fantasy of cannibalization and destruction of the mother and the maternal breast. The scenario (Abraham and Klein) of infantile cannibalism can be reversed: although the oppositional relation between self and other is not disavowed, this fantasy enacts the drama of a voracious, biting object, a *vagina dentata* that gluttonizes, swallows and destroys the subject. As Margaret Morse suggests: "Bodies in oral logic can range from very small (usually, but not always, the eaten) to the immense (often, but not always, the eater). The body of the other can be as large as an intrauterine-stomachic-intestinal interiority... within which one is 'immersed'" (1994: 160).

Finally, Freudian cannibalism dwells explicitly on patricide or the consumption of the father whose power has to be internalized by the son (the eater): "Oedipal rivalry is itself oral cannibalism... The representative of authority and separateness, the Father, is an outside alien who must be brought inside and his power appropriated, lest it retaliate from within" (Kilgour, 1990 : 233). Cannibalism is a form of the self's sublimation by "subsuming what is outside the self, another kind of colonial discourse that makes the strange familiar" (Ibid: 17).

I would like now to turn my attention to the tropes of incorporation or the oral logic of *Stuff*. Fusco's and Bustamante's performance floods its audience with an avalanche of stuff. The title of the play refers associatively to material excess, to a plethora of objects, to junk, to Levi-Strauss's "culinary adversary" of the cultural, civilized, cooked – namely, the natural, savage and cannibalistic raw – to household goods, to inebriation, to narcotics. It alludes to filling an animal with seasoning before roasting it, to cramming and overloading, to blocking and choking up, to eating too much, to engorging with excessive food. The title of the play sets up the hyperbolic, predatory and indeed harassing mood of the performance. It creates the reality of excess, of an unbearable and haunting weight of objects, of stuff threatening to inundate and asphyxiate, or more precisely, being shoved down the throat of the performance's receiver, that is, the audience. It calls forth an obese rawness that, disguised in the artifice of fetishized objects, flexes its stomatic muscles

(stomachic would also do) in anticipation of cannibalizing the stuffed and roasted animal of the American and European cultures. It evokes a gargantuan Occident bloated with fast-food and fast-bodies (the ready to serve and be served “Third” World prostitutes), chips and salsa, culinary, ethnic or sexual signs of “difference.”

The title vociferates the play’s retaliatory intentions. The stage becomes a voracious mouth unfolding into other inner stomatic cavities in which the audience (or the West, according to the play’s premises) is absorbed and cannibalized. Enacting fantasies of incorporation, the stage breaks into multiple mouths from which escape is, or seems to be, illusory. Gaping orifices are represented by: 1) the “virtual reality” of Triple E, the ubiquitous eye of video or TV which offers “exotic,” New Age “delights of post-spatial travel” (65); 2) a gigantic mouth-like book is “lowered from the ceiling” (66) and frozen open throughout the first scene; 3) a caricature of a voluptuous bloodthirsty, but absent (Aztec?) goddess is alluded to through her sacred book; 4) the overweight, seemingly insatiable body of the goddess’s priestess, is dressed-up as a 20th century maid and grotesquely “tearing away at the [goddess’] food in a frenzy” (67); 5) there is a mail order sex educator who cannibalizes her “customers” sexual desires by forcibly inquiring and extracting from the audience its erotic fantasies of incorporation – namely, fantasies of consuming food and sex; and 6) a postcard, as the mouth or speech of the “barbarian,” announces the anthropophagic banquet of the play:

COCO: (*Reads a postcard.*) [Date and place of performance] – Dear audience, I think it’s time to explain why we are so interested in Latin women and food. Actually, this piece is about consumption – of our bodies and our myths – and food. Let’s start with Anthropophagias. That’s what the Brazilians used to call it in the 1920s. An-thro-pha-gi-a. That was supposed to be our great, creative, cannibalistic revenge. Absorb our sacred enemies and transform them into totems, they said. Take everything that is thrown our way and have our way with it. That’s how we were supposed to live up to our ancestors. So when you come charging in our direction, running from whatever it is you’re running from, you may not think that we who serve you could be eating as well. But we do. Gently but efficiently, we devour you. The more visceral your desires, the more physical our labor. (71-72)

The alien other with its multiple mouths – and one is reminded here of the motion-picture *Alien* and the extraterrestrial monster’s female mouths within mouths and their savage appetite for the American colonizer of outer

space – assimilates its oppressor by appropriating its means (such as technology, proper to, or property of, the West), in order to fight against it. This incorporation borrows from a Brazilian modernist movement of “anthropophagy” which, as Ella Shohat and Robert Stam suggest, started around 1920 and:

made the trope of cannibalism the basis of an insurgent esthetic calling for a creative synthesis of European avant-gardism and Brazilian “cannibalism,” and invoking an “anthropophagic” devouring of the techniques and information of the superdeveloped countries the better to struggle against domination. Just as the aboriginal Tupinamba Indians devoured their enemies to appropriate their force, the modernists argued, Brazilian artists and intellectuals should digest imported cultural products for a new synthesis, thus turning the imposed culture back, transformed, against the colonizer. (1995: 307)⁴

Such a trope of incorporation becomes clear in *Stuff*, when one considers the mouth of Triple E’s video offering hyperreal adventures of “native” food, sex and ritual, devoid of the unpleasurable avatars of the real: “tropical storms, masked bandits, parasites and poverty” (66).

The audience is invited, and presumably assimilated, to the virtual banquet, and significantly (re)named Travel Taster. There is a “native” female escort (Fusco as Blanca) who leads each victim Taster into the mouth of the monster or into the hyperreal onstage. The word “escort” appears in the play as a verb and it evokes “high class” prostitutes and the West’s call-girls. Blanca’s name indicates that her “presence” has no reference in reality for she is part of the fantastic and spectral reality. She is Blanca, that is, an oxymoronic native in white skin – although Fusco’s skin is visibly dark – and a chaste prostitute (an ironic allusion to the Occidental virgin/whore binary). The vehicle for sublimation for Triple E’s white client, she is the Other as the Same. Because she represents the White Man’s projections, her presence is a synecdoche of the imaginary realm of both client and virtual space, devoid of epidemic contagions such as “going native” or dysentery. Blanca is a fantasy of the customer’s desire for a reality that can never be real, a sanitized “personification” of a commodity exchange culture. She is a Western discursive representation, a fixed and determined category which does not signify desire for anything “real,” but is defined in terms of the desire for an illusory exotic other. Since the client in the play *is fixed as* the Western

Consumer *who only desires a representation* of some non-existent “real,” Blanca, as a commodified object (and by extension the fetishized other), does not incorporate and destroy her oppressor’s desire (although she attempts to), for she simply satisfies it by offering him what he demands, namely, a true fantasy. The native does not exist; she is absent, she is absence. What exists instead is the White Man, an all-powerful and omnipotent Western subject that acts and desires the other. This is a subject that is present, that is presence, that devours the alien, albeit a representation of her. And the native? The native voluntarily disappears, or else her very existence depends on the whims of desire of the Western self. She is a “not,” a lack at the mercy of a determining West and its desires.

This dependence on the Western masculine subject that forces her to be defined as that *which is not* is due to the dichotomic conception of binary categories, posited in more general terms as the opposition us/them (colonized/colonizer, Latin America/West, and so on): “Within [this]...binary structure, only one term has positive value [a self-adequate, ever-present and desiring Western subject]. The second term is defined as the negation of the first: it is simply the absence or privation of the defining attributes of the first. It is not recognized as possessing any...value of its own” (Grosz, 1989: 106).

Thus, Blanca is “not real,” but a desired exotic object formulated, represented or projected (and eventually assimilated as such) by the desiring Occident. Or, to put it in more familiar words, the negative (or the negated) other is inadvertently caught in the representational system of phallogentrism, “a more general process of cultural and representational *assimilation*[:] [p]hallogentrism [as]...the use of *one* model of subjectivity, the male [read also West], by which all others are positively or [in *Stuff’s* case] negatively defined” (Ibid: 105).

Triple E, played by Adam Bresnick, personifies a caricaturistic, ironic “native” version of the biblical Adam of Genesis – a god-like creator symbol for the colonizer, as he landed in the “New” World plagued by “savages,” “anthropophagues” and “chaotic wilderness” (Shohat and Stam, 1995: 141-142). At a level (that may be too obvious), Adam Bresnick plays the reverse role of the “native” Adam, the eater of the colonizer. Possessing, or having absorbed, the technological means implicitly located in the West, he performs the “native” perspective. But like a peripatetic traveler himself, Triple E can dwell on and perceive the optical angles of both his Western customers and the natives. His eye, situated on both periphery (the margins of the other) and the center (the West), is the eye of God. In the Western colonizing logic of

the circle, the TV's as well as Triple E's eyes wander and gaze post-spatially and simultaneously at two different, fixed perspectives and geographies, in what Derrida has called "the heliotropic movement" (Derrida, 1986: 218). Thus, distant worlds are drawn into proximity – a violent incorporation of the panoptic, rational Eye of the other, constructed here as an imperialistic and voracious mouth!

Let us also note that this other is connected with the pornographic industry of triple E-triple X videos, and is further portrayed as a disembodied Christ (the new Adam) whose prostitute-assistants (or in a sense, disciples), Blanca and Rosa, are instructed to entertain their customer-audience. Triple E's figure, a simulated New Adam, is the Other transformed into a carnophallogocentric subject, resembling the body of the "host" – I use this word in two different senses, to refer to Triple E as the Christ-host of a mocking Eucharist, and the one who hosts the West in the cannibalistic banquet. He can certainly eat, but cannot be eaten, for his body's flesh and blood have become *virtual* and are replaced by electronic signals. The connection to virtual reality of Triple E's "device" and the acts it generates is emphasized by the fact that most of the performance refers to a "reality" created by, and belonging to a machine (the video) and its absent inventor (Triple E). The mythical dimensions the audience experiences, or consumes, indeed the audience itself, Blanca and Rosa as escorts, prostitutes, music and food, symbolic sex are "personifications" of an electronic reality generated by a machine which in its turn is begotten and fathered by its ethereal owner, Triple E, the New Adam, a father who names and creates. But Triple E is not only the father, but also the son and the absent ghost who consumes, destroys and cannibalizes the West: he is three persons in one substance, and his nickname (made up of three Es, which stand for Elizardo, Eduardo, and Encarnación or Incarnation) evokes also an obscene and anthropophagic trinity.

In another part of the performance, Triple E and his virtual reality, chameleon-like, become a mother in whose womb ("the safest setting possible," Adam Bresnick explains) the West can be "immersed and interculturally grow" (75). Here, *Stuff* once more adapts colonial myths and metaphors through the feminization of virtual reality and the transformation of the Western consumer into a Superman, a voyeuristic male who experiences, explores, penetrates, incorporates, and one can even say rapes, the virtual worlds of the so-called native through what Simon Penny calls the "penetration shot" of a phallic gaze (1994: 239). These are certainly familiar metaphors of colonization. As Avitar Ronell remarks, virtual reality "is a system dependent

on classical tropes of representation, imagination, the sovereign subject and negated otherness (negated otherness is what Hegel called the enemy)" (1992: 73-74). The expedition to, and domination of, the other's space, as in the virtual war launched by the States against Iraq, implies the subject's paranoia and aggressivity in respect to the mother's body: "through her [Klein] we have the cartography of the mother's internal empire, the historical atlas of the intestinal divisions in which the *images* of the fathers and brothers (real or virtual, says Lacan)...dispute their deleterious (destructive) dominance over her sacred regions" (Ibid: 78).

In *Stuff*, such a mother takes revenge through the tale of "la puta madre" (the mother whore), goddess Cuxtamali, who creates her lovers with food and then consumes them. Cuxtamali is the cannibal m-other who invites the Western consumer (or colonizer) into a ritual banquet to tear him to pieces and consume him. The Travel Taster's enclosure at the table where the banquet is supposed to take place imparts the idea that he is not the taster but the tasted; he does not eat but is the stuff that is being symbolically eaten; converted into the cannibal's victim and unable to escape he is dropped into the anthropophagous pot. Cuxtamali's act, also generated by Triple E's virtual reality, tells the parable in which the other's "exotic" culture as a commodified object becomes the maternal breast supplying its myths and cultural sap to a cannibalistic or colonizing West, and finally taking revenge by ingesting it.

This is a bizarre story: biology in the service of ideology. The dominatrix m-other of male (Freudian, colonial and imperialistic) fantasies takes revenge: "she" has to destroy that which destroyed "her," or to put it more simply, "she" trades places with "her" oppressor and becomes the tyrant! Whether father, son, or mother, the Oedipal holy trinity once more strikes back, and *Stuff's* other, inspired by the heroic atrocities of Western consumption, is armed vengefully and hungrily indeed, with reliably brutal tropes of domination; for such tropes were certainly and efficiently put to work (or to death) by 500 years of Western colonial history and by many mestizo, immigrant, diasporic and alien bodies dropped into the melting pot of the United States of America.

The revenge of the goddess Cuxtamali, or of the other, presupposes the inversion of a series of dichotomies relevant to the trope of incorporation. This inversion results in a reconceptualization of the other as: 1) a universal and essentialist category that agglutinates Brazilians, Cubans, Mexicans, Latinas, lesbians, prostitutes, transvestites, and so on; 2) a unified humanist subject that demands its own right to, and incorporates for its own benefit the

imperialistic and colonizing practice of its enemy, the West, simultaneously denying humanity to that which it excludes, by transforming it into a consumable object; 3) a consumer, albeit of other human beings who are also assumed humanistically as such in the first place, in order to be easily turned into objects; and 4) woman as consumer, that is, an image that reiterates questionable patriarchal and colonial representations of women in conjunction with natives: to cite only one example, the assertion of an anthropologist in 1880 “that women ‘have larger teeth than men *relative* to the cranio-facial axis,’ and that [cannibal] Africans, Fijians, and Australian aborigines had the largest ‘dental index’ of all” (Burke cited by Malchow, 1996: 86).⁵

In this sense, *Stuff* presents us with the dangerous ideology of an inverted “selfsame obsessional dialectic of ego and other” (Baudrillard, 1995: 130) and the dead-end of *structural* difference, which establish differentiation between subject and object only to annul it in favour of a narcissistic self. For even this difference introjected initially by the self (here, the Latin Woman) precedes and subsequently resolves into the self’s mastery and domination of the other (here, the West). Baudrillard’s suggestion as an alternative to this oppositional politics of otherness is “a dual, not just dialectical, form of otherness” (Ibid: 120), an irreducible and *indifferent* alterity, which he calls a “radical otherness.”⁶

In the first scene of the play, Fusco and Bustamante strategically make the other vanish into a kind of virtual reality; in the second scene they make use of the “reality principle” to unearth her in flesh, bone, and speech. We hear the voice of “actual” natives (a Zapatista, a transvestite), that describes the subaltern’s authentic circumstances, and her alimentary tactics of survival. This is presumably her life, extracted from her “native environment” and transposed into, or rather translated for the sake of an Occidental leftist audience sympathetic of the native’s cause, as the slides with an English translation of the Spanish speaking voices make clear. These voices do not come from the actors portraying endangered species of natives, but from tapes recorded by Fusco and Bustamante during their fieldtrips preceding the play.

The recording and transposition of the voices of “actual” natives, whose lives and circumstances are indeed appropriated – or shall we say cannibalized – by *Stuff*’s creators to make their vengeful point, are authenticated by the biographical note that prolongs the play and which was also part of the invitation to *Stuff*’s staging in Vancouver. There we learned that Fusco and Bustamante had visited reality and done their research. They

had touched the wounds of the “native” in a skeptical, scientifically and politically correct contact with the face of suffering that gave them the right to represent her, *speak for* her and *speak of* her redemption. This is a *taste* of how they describe their ethno-pornographic research:

In 1996, we decided to create a performance that dealt with Latin women, food, and sex... In the course of writing *Stuff*, Coco traveled to Cuba to interview women in this burgeoning industry [prostitution]. Then *we both went* to Chiapas, *the center* of indigenous-culture tourism in Mexico and *the site* of the 1994 Zapatista insurrection. *We spent several weeks in conversation* with women and children whose livelihoods are linked to their daily contact with foreigners. (My emphasis, 63)

Like Travel-Tasters – a euphemistic name Coco Fusco and Nao Bustamante give to the colonizer West – they went to the place of the other, “documented” her, and gorged and *stuffed* themselves with the object that they painstakingly try to subjectivize and instead subject. Thus, their play becomes a museum of suffering (but vindictive) natives, taxidermized victims for public view. *Stuff* is literally a dramatization of the “real.”

With the voice-over the ethno-pornographic task lays claims to objectivity. The voices of the Zapatista Marta and the transvestite Judy, for instance, are separated from, and transcend, their bodies. The tapes used for the voiced-over “native” contain interviews alluding to recorded conversations and interviews with women and children contacted by Fusco and Bustamante during their research. They indicate to us that we are not witnessing a play but a well-documented reality. They comment, document, attest and authenticate; they become the evidence for the true Other and her strategies for survival encountered by Fusco and Bustamante during their fieldtrips; they personify the other, and become the other’s speech, the voice-of-the-native goddess elevated above her “concrete” body, dematerialized and disembodied, flesh becoming objective logos. We are presented here with one of ethnography’s paradoxes: “the disembodied quality of the voice of authority operating behind most ethnographic film,...the...voice-over that speaks on behalf of unrestricted ethnographic knowledge has no body...it [is]...the voice of reason...” (Nichols, 1994: 65).

At issue in the second scene of *Stuff* is not just the forced disembodiment of the native (which, by the way, is another form of disappearance); at issue here is also her incorporation by her “researchers” who render her translatable and transparent through slides. We cannot ignore,

for instance, that slides are used often by ethnography. In the play they contain the English translation of what Judy (the transvestite) and Marta (the Zapatista) “say.” Projected in total darkness, their illuminated content offers us symbolically the radiographic and penetrative vision of the culture they are supposed to translate. It is this dichotomic site of light and dark and what it represents that the slides create, and which is problematic. The slides speak of the light of truth, the transparency of the Other’s truth, and the darkness of the Western lie of an exotic Other. They photograph, translate, decipher and explain in a “common idiom” (English). To put it in other words, their existence in the play is necessary for they are part of the “evidence” (as are photographs, slides, translations, and interpretations) of the ethnographic discourse testifying to the vicitudes encountered during the ethnographic trip and interpreting the culture of the native.

I would further suggest that due to their radiographic properties, the slides instantiate the pornographic view of the native, in which, as if we were shown a close-up shot of the other’s reality – that is, an implicit other is made explicit and translatable – we witness the *shooting* or “the domestication of the Other” (Nichols, 1991: 215). And, as if we were watching close-ups of a pornographic film, *Stuff*’s slides as well as tapes and voice-over “increase our sense of knowledge and access; they make explicit what we might otherwise have to infer” (ibid). They feed the spectator’s “‘natural’ curiosity. This socially constructed and ideological form of curiosity supports both ethnographic and pornographic representations” (ibid).

To return once more to the voice-over, the disembodied native is endowed with an authorial speech which is louder than ever because it tells the truth (of the native’s sufferings, for instance): “[T]he speech of the stereotypical Third World Woman has been privileged ... as that of ‘truth teller.’ In this conception women ... possess a ‘privileged’ access to the ‘real,’ [and] the ‘truth.’” (Laurence, 1992: 183). Laurence sees this authorial voice, this speech conferred on the other – or rather, forced down her throat and into her vocal chords – as a discursive strategy of Western feminism (Fusco and Bustamante exercise their “activist” art from the privileged topos of the Western intelligentsia) to define “Third” World in terms of “their *object status*... that is, as victims with needs or problems” (ibid: 182).

Fusco’s and Bustamante’s other is lack. She is the famished, the exploited, the oppressed, the discriminated against, the one who lacks money, power, food, and youth, while at the other pole the once more sublimated West floats in the bliss of plenitude. As Rey Chow suggests: “the space

occupied by the native is essentially objective, the space of the object. ‘[T]he native is someone from whom something has been stolen. The native, then, is also lack’” (1994: 128).

Dessert for Voracious Palates: A Silent and Inappropriate(d) Other
Ossi Dei Morti

The name of these cookies means ‘dead men’s bones’... Thin and brittle, they even rattle like skeletons when they are shaken in the tin! Ossi dei Morti are traditionally made in Italy for All Soul’s Day... Sometimes they are fashioned into the shape of ears, noses, legs and arms. (Jeni Wright, 1996: 258)

To salvage the native – who suddenly becomes an “endangered species” – to fill in her lack (which is an impossible task, since the native is a priori conceived as such a lack), Fusco and Bustamante pretend to lift her out of silence by attempting to subjectivize her. They create a voice and a conduct that speaks through/*for* her, which is a typical mouthpiece movement. This voice is the ethno-pornographic voice of Fusco and Bustamante, who want us to believe, or rather insist, that it is the native who is speaking.

The problem of *Stuff* lies in its desire to make the native speak, eat, cannibalize, and consume. *Stuff*’s Other is “knowable only through routes [such as Western psychoanalysis] that diverge from their original ‘homes’” (Chow, 1994: 137). Fusco and Bustamante name the subaltern, translate her and *search for* her identity and subjecthood, for she is perceived twice as lack: woman as lack (see, for instance, the Cuban prostitute that needs “More. More power. More money. More food. More youth. More” [81]) and native as lack. They impose on her a common idiom (English) understood by her “discoverers” (Fusco and Bustamante, who have the privilege to engage in “multilingual intercourse” [75]) and their audience (the West). At the same time they impose on her a common *proper name*. Their ethno-pornographic research and play arm them with the right to re-present the native and the right of inflicting on her colonial violence. For to paraphrase Derrida, in seeking to make a name for the subaltern and to give her voice, to found at the same time a universal tongue and a unique genealogy, the creators of *Stuff* want to bring the world to reason, and this reason can signify simultaneously a colonial violence (since they would thus universalize the subaltern’s voice and idiom)

and a peaceful transparency of her human community (Paraphrasis of Derrida, 1991: 253).

Fusco and Bustamante give the other permission to speak, and this is presented as a “progressive” move by the privileged intellectual and artist who grants voice to the native. Yet it is only to appropriate it, and cannibalize her in turn. Spivak calls this gesture “recognition by assimilation” (1988: 294). Avoiding the dialectic trap of subject/object – that is, the subaltern woman who speaks and thus becomes the object to be protected by extinction – Spivak calls for a “subaltern that cannot speak” (308), a “quite,” radical other, opaque, untranslatable, inaccessible and impossible to assimilate. “The subaltern cannot speak” for “if the subaltern can speak, then, thank God the subaltern is not a subaltern anymore” (Spivak cited by Chow, 1994: 132). A silent native cannot become a commodified object to be acquired, whose “exotic” sufferings can be displayed in the museum of the Western left, that sometimes feels compelled to “go native.” A radical other cannot be cannibalized. It cannot be the substance that alimments and sublimates our “progressive,” narcissistic and imperialistic Self. Such a native is a dead species that has long been extinct.

The following conclusion of my analysis of *Stuff* is an *end*. It is a parabolic account of an *end*, of otherness and silence: the imposition of otherness as silence, or rather as voluntary death (similar to that of Bhaduri’s hanging in Spivak, or the indian’s self-immolation in Baudrillard). My account speaks of Montezuma’s ambivalent death intentionally. Both in his assassination or his suicide, Montezuma (the native, the subaltern) dies – either as a subject subjected to, or as an object of Spanish imperial cannibalism. Ironically, the Great Speaker cannot speak. I have also chosen Montezuma’s death because there are two contradictory tales about his final moments that leave no trace about a certain truth of the native’s sufferings. The question of his voluntary death being a strategic move remains all the same unanswered and inaccessible: for even the native’s remedies against imperialism or colonization (in all their forms) can only be a matter of one’s “saying.” Analogically, because of their ambivalence, the “facts” taken from (Spanish) chronicles, history and ethnographic observations and my recounting them make the following parable even more mute. As if it were a parable of a “día de los muertos,” as if it were as dessert offered in an All Soul’s Day, let us *end* by remembering the dead:

Cortes [sic] returned to Tenochtitlan as fast as he could, but this time, instead of welcome, he found a silent city ... No sound was

made and there were no boats on the lake. When they entered the palace the Spaniards were quietly welcomed by Montezuma. Cortes knew, however, that the Aztec nobles who visited the Great Speaker might take messages to the rebels, so Montezuma was seized. Although Cortes tried to prevent it, Montezuma was tortured to ascertain where gold was hidden ... There was nothing to do but to bring Montezuma to the walls so that he could be seen by his people. The Great Speaker signed for them to be silent, and a deadly hush fell upon them. Montezuma probably knew what was to follow. From the crowd a voice called that he was no longer the Great Speaker and has been replaced. He stood quite still, and then three stones flew through the air. His crown was knocked off and fell, scattering turquoise on the ground. His head was gashed, he knelt and fell. That was the signal for a hail of missiles against the palace. Fires were started, and a gate broken but the Spaniards repulsed the crowd.⁷ Montezuma was taken down to a basement, where some say the Spaniards murdered him. Others suggest that he refused treatment and died stoically after tearing off any bandages the Spaniards tried to place on his wounds. Whatever happened, it is certain that Montezuma died on June 30, 1520. (Burland and Forman, 1975: 120-121)

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Notes

1. From Grennaway's film *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*.

2. In my analysis of *Stuff* I will be alluding both to the text and the performance staged in Vancouver in the winter of 1998. From this point on my references to the text of the play will be indicated in parentheses.

3. Our reader might wonder why I have decided to offer her/him our discourse in morsels or sections that recall cooking recipes and give her/him a bite or taste of what we shall soon question on account of Coco Fusco's and Nao Bustamante's incorporating discourse of *Stuff*. This paper is structured as if it were treating our reader to a meal. Such a meal includes: appetizers, "Hors d'oeuvre or Foreplay" (what in academic discourse is called a forward, a preface, or an introduction), a "Main Course or Intercourse," the "main" body of our text that takes us to the analysis of Fusco's and Bustamante's *Stuff*; and a dessert or a conclusion which might still leave us a bit empty, uneasy or unsatisfied (but then again this is one of its purposes), and which nonetheless puts Fusco's and Bustamante's victim(ized) Other out of its misery while bringing our discourse to an end (however such an end might be understood). Both the sections as well as the recipes that introduce them are provisionally, strategically, and methodologically deliberate. They mime Coco Fusco's and Nao Bustamante's assimilating discourse by borrowing, for example, its carnivorous language of incorporation while simultaneously questioning both its ideology and its efficacy, undermining it from within in order eventually to reject it.

The mocking foreplay or preface, for instance, is an attempt to deride *Stuff*'s discursive mastery when it seeks to appropriate (indeed, devour) an "object" of inquiry in full knowledge of

it in order to become a moralizing manifesto that demands the salvation of a victim(ized) Other, based on its woes and derived from some external reality. This *foreplay* brings forth what *Stuff* foresees or foretastes as its ground in reality, namely, its presumed historical context, its connections to the real, “the fields commonly referred to as fields of ‘real’ causality [and casualty] (history, economics, politics, sexuality, etc.)” (Derrida, 1981: 43). Contextual causalities and causalities are in the foreground of *Stuff* and consecrate its mission of emancipating the Other, of mastering and dropping it into its own colonialist pot.

The main course’s menu invites you to pig out with a pig. Although the cook here does not stuff it, the recipe pretends to stuff you with *Stuff*’s Other as a greedy pig, not very different from Greenaway’s Thief, no longer other, but a colonizing Subject of phallic potency and carnivorous virility. For Fusco and Bustamante, the Other’s freedom requires the Other’s transformation into a figure of domination, authority, or its transformation into a pig (which, in slang, is also a police officer or slutty woman – both identified in *Stuff* explicitly or implicitly with its so-called Other). The Other as subject “implies carnivorous virility. [One day] I would want to explain *carno-phallogocentrism* ... ‘becoming-subject of substance,’ ... it suffices to take seriously the idealizing interiorization of the phallus and the necessity of its passage through the mouth, whether it’s a matter of words or of things, of sentences, of daily bread or wine, of the tongue, the lips, or the breast of the other ... And that which I am calling here [the] *schema* [of the subject as carno-phallogocentric structure] ... installs the virile figure at the determinative center of the subject.” (Derrida, 1995: 280-281).

The interiorization of the phallus or of the pig (Other) requires us (according to Coco Fusco’s and Nao Bustamante’s *Stuff*), that we introject, or accept psychoanalysis’ discourse of incorporation (the policing discourse [the pig?] of the West) in order to understand that they are speaking of a free Other as a devouring Subject. We shall find hard to swallow their story, and in fact reject this course, and not eat the pig.

Finally, for dessert we shall offer you “dead men’s bones” or a silent and non-appropriable, non-existing other (non-existing as subject). This is a sweet that becomes poison in Fusco’s and Bustamante’s mouth and its assimilating discourse. To end its life with venom becomes our final response to this discourse, recalling it to the other, a radical other which “must remain nonreappropriable, nonsubjectivable, and in a certain way nonidentifiable, a sheer supposition, so as to remain *other*, a *singular* call to response or to responsibility” (Derrida, 1995: 276).

4. In a similar context, Edward Said alludes to Retamar’s notion of the cannibal Latin American and Carribean as a kind of synthesis, the main symbol of hybridity, with his strange and unpredictable mixture of attributes. This is truer to the Creole or *mestizo* composite of the New America.

Retamar’s choice of Caliban over Ariel signals a profoundly important ideological debate at the heart of the cultural effort to decolonize, an effort at the restoration of the culture that goes on long after the political establishment of independent nation-states. (Said, 1993: 213)

I all together find this symbolism problematic at least as it appears in Fusco’s and Bustamante’s performance, as I hope will be gradually shown. In more general terms, I believe that the problem lies in the appropriation of such imagery, albeit for resistance purposes. For even for its retaliatory reasons we cannot ignore that the notion of the cannibal – even for those who practiced it – did not exist as such. It was a discursive effect of a colonizing, moralizing and often victimizing West. The issue with this kind of assimilation is that the “native” is forced to find modes of resistance and representation that borrow from projections of the West on her/him or stem from the vocabulary, icons and myths of her/his oppressor. Bearing in mind this last observation, I would like to pose the following rather rhetorical questions: who will truly repossess her/his culture and become decolonized if to resist is to depend even on the means and symbolisms of colonization and its delegates? Colonization and dependancy are close allies. And, is it not that

this dependency is a form of infantilizing Latin America once more? Is it not a form through which the oppressed are put in the position of being guided by their oppressor even in resisting? Are they not being supplied – as if they were themselves somehow incapable or insufficient enough to deal with domination on their own terms – with his/her metaphors?

5. Another example recorded by Malchow and which is more relevant to Cuxtamali's character – although it is drawn from a European legend on an African queen – portrays savage desire and bloodthirsty matriarchy secured by the systematic killing of male children. Fierce sexual appetite is served by a “crowd of lovers” (men captured in battle), each of whom she [the queen] first uses to satiate her lust and then kills “with the cruelest tortures.” Their bodies, and those of other captive males who also serve for tribal procreation before being killed, then perform a further service: “The sustenance of her subjects should be the flesh of man; his blood should be their drink.” (ibid: 91)

6. Baudrillard's “radical otherness” is a very useful concept that attempts to free the other from the “physics as well as metaphysics” (126) of otherness, the dialectical logic of difference and “*humanisme oblige*” (132). His main idea is that the other does not conceive of her/himself in terms of an other:

[Other cultures] live on the basis of their own singularity, their own exceptionality, on the irreducibility of their own rites and values. They find no comfort in the lethal illusion that all differences can be reconciled – an illusion that for them spells only annihilation...The Indians of America, when the Spanish landed, are a case in point... When they found themselves obliged to become a part of an otherness no longer radical, but negotiable under the aegis of the universal concept, they preferred mass self-immolation – where the fervour with which they, for their part, allowed themselves to die: a counterpart to the Spaniards mad urge to kill. (132-133)

7. Note in this description how the ethnographer's imagery is taken from Christian discourse on Christ's passion. The Spaniards here become Pontius Pilatus or Roman soldiers and Montezuma becomes Christ, judged by the “Jewish” crowd (and not by the Colonizers!).

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