

Manifesto of Urban Cannibalism (Berlin declaration)

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1. Stanza of the exodus from without

We should never abandon the city
in favour of a virgin territory.

There is no innocent state of nature to defend:
cities are flourishing ecosystems in themselves,
a true 'human participation in nature'.¹

In fact, *nature builds no idea of nature*.

The image of nature has always been
an artefact of human civilisation,
the iron mask of its stage of evolution.

Yet we remain unaware:
the image of nature is still the projection
of our animal instincts and fears
on the surrounding environment.

Any utopia of nature will always be
— the territorial gesture of a form of life.

From the most ancient of times,
from Neolithic and even Paleolithic times,
it is the town that invents agriculture.²

If in the colonial age,
'Europe was beginning to devour, to digest the world',³
urban cannibalism is the nemesis
of late capitalism.

¹ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, 1858.

² Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Mille Plateaux*, 1980.

³ Fernand Braudel, *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme*, 1967.

2. *Stanza of the inorganic life*

Urban cannibalism emerges
from the biomorphic unconscious of the metropolis.

Innervated by flows of energy and matter,
the urban landscape is alive.

Hydraulic forces ebb and surge
through a tangled skein of canals and sewers,
flowing water the main metabolism of the city.

But also buildings are liquid strata of minerals
— just very slow.

It was eight thousand years ago:
the city was born as the exoskeleton of the human,
as the external concretion of our inner bones
to protect the commerce of bodies
in and out its walls.⁴

As our bones absorb calcium from rocks,
the inorganic shell of the city is but part
of a deeper *geological metabolism*.

Fossils crushed and concealed
within building's bricks,
organic memories of prediluvian beings
petrified in the modern maze of concrete.

⁴ Manuel Delanda, *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History*, 1997.

3. Stanza of the organic bunkers

Weed, beasts, insects, birds,
and legions of organisms unseen:
the most promiscuous republic ever declared
was here in the urbanic air.

Even plague and pox were never passive folks:
invisible architects, they redesigned streets and houses,
shaping also our institutions, the form of hospitals and prisons.⁵

Any wall is populated and consumed
by the invisible food chains of microbes and mould,
where the border between organic and inorganic life blurs.

Buildings breathe and ferment
— architecture is the bunker of life.

⁵ Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir*, 1975.

4. *Stanza of the telluric insurgency*

Urban cannibalism is the *art of overgrowth*.

There are no interstices and no in-betweens,
everything grows — against everything else.

Like at the time of the French revolution,
we are a Third Estate in revolt against the old regime,
— a *third landscape* in revolt against the Great Landscape.⁶

We express neither power
nor naked submission to power,
but the common *potentia* of the soil
— a telluric insurgency.

Remember the siege of the Paris Commune,
when communards ate the animals of the zoo
and so engaged in a rebellious and joyful
expansion of the edible.

‘It was because we never had grammars,
nor collections of old plants.
And we never knew what urban,
suburban, frontier and continental were’.⁷

The reversal of frontiers into life
— the city devouring itself.

⁶ Gilles Clement, *Manifeste pour le Tier-paysage*, 2004.

⁷ Oswald De Andrade, ‘Manifesto Antropófago’, 1928.

5. *Stanza of the ternary dance*

Urban cannibals,
do not recognise the Parliament of Things
nor the functionaries of binary ecologies
that cut the city into piecemeal abstractions!⁸

Life is a ternary movement far from equilibrium.

‘We parasite each other and live among parasites’.⁹

We inhabit the perennial genesis:
— *natura naturans*,
the never-ending chain of organisms devouring one other
right down to the invisible ones:

‘The fruit spoils, the milk sours,
the wine turns into vinegar, the vegetables rot...
Everything ferments,
everything rots,
everything changes’.¹⁰

Microorganisms take our dead body back to the soil
— putrefaction is still life.

⁸ As in: Bruno Latour, *Nous n'avons jamais été moderne: Essai d'anthropologie symétrique*, 1991.

⁹ Michel Serres, *Le Parasite*, 1980.

¹⁰ Michel Serres, *Le Parasite*, 1980.

6. Stanza of the alliance with the parasite

We renew the alliance with the kingdom of parasites
that made humanity win the first wars
against invisible enemies.

Yeast was the divine agent
that made the miracle of turning water into wine
— and gave us the New Life.

‘Beer, wine, and bread,
foods of fermentation, of bubbling, foods of decay,
appeared as safeguards against death...
These were our first great victories over parasites,
our rivals...

From the Olympians to the Last Supper,
we have celebrated the victory to which we owe our life,
the eternity of phylogenesis,
and we celebrated it in its natural spot,
— the table’.¹¹

¹¹ Michel Serres, *Le Parasite*, 1980.

7. Stanza of life as incorporation

‘To feed is the most basic verb,
the most fundamental, the most rooted.
It expresses the primordial activity,
the primary, basic function,
the act ‘I’ engage in even before I am born
and begin breathing.

Because of it I belong to the earth forever.
Like the smallest animal crawling in the dirt,
like the smallest plant,
I began
— by feeding myself.¹²

It was not by a game of genetic roulette,
but with an act of pure cannibalism
that evolution commenced:
smaller cells engulfed by bigger cells,
old species in the warm belly of new ones.¹³

Life was born to this world out of friendly ingestion.

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All the life of the spirit, from poetry to philosophy,
brings trace of this remote incident,
of this ancestral endo-symbiosis.

Inspiration is always incorporation.

‘All enjoyment, all taking in and assimilation,
is eating...
All spiritual pleasure can be expressed through eating.
In friendship, one really eats of the friend,
or feeds on him...
— and, at a commemorative dinner for a friend,
enjoying, with bold, supersensual imagination,
his flesh in every bite,
and his blood in every gulp’.¹⁴

¹² François Jullien, *Nourrir sa vie: A l'écart du bonheur*, 2005.

¹³ Lynn Margulis, *Origin of Eukaryotic Cells*, 1970.

¹⁴ Novalis, ‘Teplitz Fragments’, 1798.

8. *Stanza of the mouth eating the eye*

Eating the 'I' — Eating the eye.

Incorporation and not sensation
is the vehicle of our experience of the world.

For ancient people,
the spirit was just the breath
blowing through the mouth.
And *Homo sapiens* was the human with savour,
the human with sophisticated palate.¹⁵
And all science was secretly so
a branch of *gastronomia*
— the art of governing the stomach.

From the roof of the mouth,
western civilisation grew even further
and extended from the eye and the gaze alone,
and the eye became the archetype of all arts,
and imposed its empire for centuries...

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Psychoanalysis still today
professes the voyeurism of the mind
with all its family dramas, *natures mortes*,
and political spectres...

No, the unconscious is not a theatre...
— but the big mouth!

Happy is the one who knows
that all taboos and traumas can be cannibalised!

Desire is a devouring, digesting, defecating, digesting, devouring machine.

'Cannibalism alone unites us.
Socially. Economically. Philosophically...
The spirit refuses to conceive a language without a body.
Need for the cannibalistic vaccine... against meridian religions.
And against outside inquisitions... Cannibalism.
The permanent transformation of the Taboo into a totem...

Down with the vegetable elites.
— in communication with the soil!¹⁶

¹⁵ The Latin word *sapiens* derives from *sapor*, that means 'taste', and this from *sapa* that means 'juice'.

¹⁶ Oswald De Andrade, 'Manifesto Antropófago', 1928.

9. *Stanza of cosmophagy*

The matter of the world is endlessly cooked and devoured
— the stomach is the big
outside us.

The fire of stars has been eternally forging atoms:
the inner cosmography of the human rotating
around the fire of the eternal digestion.¹⁷

‘If I have any taste, it is hardly
For anything but earth and stones
Let’s eat air,
Rock, coal, iron
The stones a beggar breaks,
The old stones of churches...’¹⁸

Ivre de terre!
Drunk of earth!

¹⁷ Gaston Bachlard, *La psychanalyse du feu*, 1938.

¹⁸ Arthur Rimbaud, ‘Fetes de la Faim’, 1872.

10. Stanza of the smell of centuries

Breathing again the 'smell of the centuries',
in the stench of battlefield trenches
and along the countrysides of starvation,
and under the camouflages of Carnival.

Any cook still wears the mask of death.

The history of gastronomy is in fact
the forgotten past of deadly dearth.¹⁹

Recipes recorded the overlooked cartographies
of empires at war, the trails of migratory encounters
and the stratifications of barbarian invasions.

Culinary art
arose from the inventiveness of the 'poor'
against the matricidal nature
— and never from pauperism.

¹⁹ Piero Camporesi, *Il paese della fame*, 1978.

11. *Stanza of the self-imposed siege*

In the Middle Ages it was fear
to allot allotments inside fortified walls
for growing food during assaults.

Today new forces attempted
to siege the city — but from within.

Today it is the time of sustainable gardens
to reincarnate the new spectres of siege
— and the ‘moral equivalent’ of war.

The pacified horizon of sustainability
manifests like a wartime without war,
the hostility of a silent Ghost Army.

The patriotic war *for* surplus has indeed moved
its home front to the inner front.

The patriotic war is now the war *on* surplus:
on the individual calculation of energy, water, proteins,
and any social appetite.

As there is no longer an outside,
within the ideology of degrowth
we have established the borders
of our own siege.

Urban cannibals
— eat the rich!