



INTRODUCTION TO EDUARDO VIVEIROS DE CASTRO'S "THE EQUAL AND THE DIFFERENT"

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Around 1975, the young Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro wrote a short essay, “O igual e o diferente” (The Equal and the Different) at the request of the Brazilian artist Carlos Vergara. Vergara had recently completed a photographic series devoted to the Rio de Janeiro–based *carnaval bloco* Cacique de Ramos, and the text appears to have been intended to accompany an exhibition of those works. When the exhibition failed to materialize, the essay was all but forgotten, and it was only recovered as a typewritten copy in the archives of fellow Brazilian artist Hélio Oiticica some thirty years later.¹ Published and translated here for the first time, it is a kernel of the intellectual and aesthetic affiliations that characterized experimental, cross-disciplinary practices in Rio in the mid-1970s and a

1 Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, “O igual e o diferente” (unpublished manuscript, ca. 1975, authorship confirmed by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro in email correspondence with the author, January 7, 2008). Transcript located in document no. 0337.sd, Arquivo Hélio Oiticica/Projeto Hélio Oiticica, Rio de Janeiro. Flávia Letícia Biff Cera independently encountered the transcript as part of her Ph.D. thesis, *Arte-vida-corpo-mundo, segundo Hélio Oiticica* (Centro de Comunicação e Expressão, Programa de Pós-graduação em Literatura, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, 2012); see her excellent discussion of the dialogue between Oiticica and Vergara in her chapter 4, “Parangolé-icorporação.” Although Cera dated the document to the 1972 EX-POSIÇÃO following conversations with Viveiros de Castro, Vergara did not in fact begin the Cacique de Ramos series until after the exhibition closed, and he recalls soliciting the text after the series concluded. Interviews with the author, Rio de Janeiro, April 19, 2006, and August 19, 2014.

case study of the fundamental dynamic of the individual and the group.

Vergara was introduced to Viveiros de Castro through the *cinema marginal* director Ivan Cardoso, a childhood friend with whom the anthropologist had collaborated on several films.² In 1972, when Vergara staged the exhibition EX-POSIÇÃO at the Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro, he invited Viveiros de Castro to participate; the latter contributed a small collage that juxtaposed a scene from a North American horror film with an Amerindian myth of gestation and consumption.³ Two years later, Viveiros de Castro entered the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, headquartered at the Museu Nacional, with the intention of pursuing a masters degree directed by the urban anthropologist Gilberto Velho and focused on the use of drugs among his generation (a generation often termed *marginal* or *desbunde*, dropout).⁴ Soon, however, he switched course to focus instead on an ethnographic topic directed by Roberto da Matta, ultimately writing his master's thesis on concepts of the individual and society among the Yawalapíti.⁵ It was around the time of his switch in focus—circa 1975—that Vergara invited him to write about Cacique de Ramos.

In the early 1970s, Vergara circulated among several young anthropologists who, like Viveiros de Castro, were based at the Museu Nacional. Velho introduced Vergara to the British anthropologist Victor Turner's influential concepts of liminality and *communitas* in ritual and performative action.⁶ The artist cited extracts from Turner's work in a photo essay on Cacique de Ramos published in the journal *Malasartes* in 1976, and when da Matta hosted Turner for an extended visit to Brazil in 1979, Vergara gave a slide show presentation of his Cacique de Ramos photographs to the British anthropologist and several others at

2 Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, interview with the author, Rio de Janeiro, January 27, 2016. While still in high school, Cardoso had invited both Vergara and Hélio Oiticica to talk about their work to his fellow students.

3 Viveiros de Castro, interview with the author, 2016.

4 Viveiros de Castro, interview with the author, 2016. Significant anthropological work by Velho at the time included "Para que sociologia da arte no Brasil?," *Cadernos Brasileiros* 40 (1967); *A utopia urbana: Um estudo de antropologia social* (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar Editores, 1973); and *Arte e sociedade: Ensaios de sociologia da arte* (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar Editores, 1977).

5 Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Indivíduo e sociedade no alto Xingu: Os Yawalapiti*, master's dissertation (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 1977).

6 Carlos Vergara, interview with the author, Rio de Janeiro, 2014. See Victor Turner, *Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969).

Carlos Vergara, “Lê Lê ô: Cacique é o Bom” *Malasartes* no. 2 (Dec./Jan./Feb. 1976): 27-31. Image courtesy of Carlos Vergara.



a gathering at Velho's house.⁷ In 1973, meanwhile, da Matta published a structuralist study of *carnaval* in Rio focusing on the symbolic character of the *fantasia*, or costume, in relation to the construction of Brazilian identity (this was the seed of his influential 1979 book *Carnavais, malandros e heróis: Para uma sociologia do dilema brasileiro*, translated as *Carnival, Rogues, and Heroes: An Interpretation of the Brazilian Dilemma*).⁸

Viveiros de Castro's essay "The Equal and the Different" bears clear traces of his mentors at the Museu Nacional at the time.⁹ From Velho, he adopts the central problematic of the individual and society, as well as the influence of the French anthropologist Louis Dumont, whose 1966 study of the caste system in India complicated the "universal"

7 See Carlos Vergara, "Lê lê ô: Cacique é o Bom . . .," *Malasartes*, no. 2 (Dec./Jan./Feb. 1976): 27–31. Turner visited Brazil from February to March of 1979. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro likewise recalls Vergara's slideshow of Cacique de Ramos photographs at Velho's home. After his visit, Turner published on the topic of *Carnaval* in Rio in his "Carnival in Rio: Dionysian Drama in an Industrializing Society," in *The Celebration of Society: Perspectives on Contemporary Cultural Performance*, ed. Frank E. Manning (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1983), 103–24. See also Maria Laura V. C. Cavalcanti, Valter Sinder, E. Giselle, and C. Lage, "Victor Turner e antropologia no Brasil, duas visões: Entrevistas com Roberto Da Matta e Yvonne Maggie," *Sociologia e Antropologia* 3, no. 6 (November 2013): 339–78 (especially p. 345).

8 Roberto da Matta, *Carnivals, Rogues, and Heroes: An Interpretation of the Brazilian Dilemma* [1979], trans. John Drury (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991).

9 Viveiros de Castro, interview with the author, 2016. An echo of the structure and general framing of Viveiros de Castro's early essay returns in his own text "O Conceito de sociedade em antropologia," collected in *A inconstância da Alma Selvagem e outros ensaios de antropologia* (São Paulo: Cosac & Naify, 2002). The continuing relevance of such concerns is evidenced in subsequent multi-authored articles and edited volumes, including, importantly, Roberto da Matta, Anthony Seeger, and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, "A construção da pessoa nas sociedades indígenas brasileiras," *Boletim do Museu Nacional Nova Série*, no. 32 (1979).

Western concept of the individual.¹⁰ Da Matta's impact, meanwhile, can be felt in the overarching topic of *carnaval*. But whereas da Matta analyzed *carnaval* in terms of its inversions of normative social codes and quotidian behavior (and how it thus formed the logical counterpart to the social regulation of military parades), Viveiros de Castro finds in Cacique de Ramos a model of mimesis and ecstatic deindividuation that departed from both hierarchical inversion and disciplinary conformity.¹¹



Carlos Vergara, *Untitled (Cacique de Ramos)*, 1972–1975. Photograph.
Image courtesy of Carlos Vergara.

- 10 Velho was greatly influenced by Dumont and gave a seminar titled “O indivíduo e o sociedade” at the Museu Nacional around this time. See *Gilberto Velho: Um antropólogo na cidade: Ensaios de antropologia urbana*, ed. Hermano Vianna, Karina Kuschnir, and Celso Castro (Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editora, 2013). Velho in turn benefited from a dialogue with Viveiros de Castro on these issues. See, in particular, his essay “Projeto, emoção e orientação em sociedades complexas,” collected in the above anthology. Here Velho discusses Dumont and distinctions between so-called modern and tribal societies, and likewise acknowledges Viveiros de Castro’s feedback. See Louis Dumont, *Homo hierarchicus: Essai sur le système des castes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966).
- 11 Viveiros de Castro noted da Matta’s 1973 work “O carnaval como um rito de passagem,” on the double function of the *fantasia* in both “the concealing and revelation of individuality,” in his “The Equal and the Different” essay. Da Matta’s ideas about the structural

It is here that the essay reveals the incipient philosophical influence of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's 1972 *Capitalisme et schizophrénie: L'anti-Oedipe* and Pierre Clastres's *La société contre l'état*, both of which Viveiros de Castro read at the time in their original French publications.¹² While Clastres argued that the political dimension of traditional societies inhered in their resistance to the development of the state, Deleuze and Guattari transposed the question of desire from the individual psyche onto the social, and thus political-economic, field. Although these radical and anarchic strains are embryonic in "The Equal and the Different," it is evident that they allowed Viveiros de Castro to begin to transform the structuralist frameworks of dichotomy and inversion that informed his disciplinary training into more complex and mobile models of difference. As I argue in the accompanying article, "'Passion of the Same': Cacique de Ramos and the *Multidão*," it was in Vergara's incisive diagramming of "the equal and the different" in his Cacique de Ramos photographs that such models found visual form.¹³

function of inversion were likewise influenced by Victor Turner and Max Gluckman, particularly the latter's *Rituals of Rebellion in South-East Africa* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1954).

- 12 Viveiros de Castro, interview with the author, 2016. Viveiros de Castro recalls that he first read Deleuze's *Proust et les signes* (1964), followed by *Nietzsche et la philosophie* (1962). He likewise noted that these thinkers were neither known nor welcomed in the relatively conservative atmosphere of the Museu Nacional at that time.
- 13 *ARTMargins* 7, no. 3 (October 2018), 6–33.