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# Breaking the Rules

*Artistic Expressions of  
Transgression*

The *Journal of the LUCAS Graduate Conference* was founded in 2013 to publish a selection of the best papers presented at the biennial LUCAS Graduate Conference, an international and interdisciplinary humanities conference organized by the Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society (LUCAS). The peer reviewed journal aims to publish papers that combine an innovative approach with fresh ideas and solid research, and engage with the key theme of LUCAS, the relationship and dynamics between the arts and society.

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# FOREWORD

## Breaking the Rules!

The wide range of subjects explored in this second issue of the *Journal of the LUCAS Graduate Conference* dedicated to the theme of ‘Breaking the Rules!’ reflects the inspiring breadth of topics addressed in the 2015 conference on the same theme. The biannual conference series at Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society (LUCAS), organized entirely by a committee of our graduate students, aims to capture the spirit of our own interdisciplinary studies. The questions probed by international graduate scholars at this conference, and in this issue, eloquently express the vibrancy of our own community. Indeed, as young scholars break new ground in their fields of study, more often than not a rule-breaking of sorts takes place, with fresh, daring connections being made and established patterns and given truths provokingly challenged.

As old paths are remapped and new scholarly routes are forged, one might think of the “surreptitious creativities” of which Michel de Certeau speaks, when conceiving the city space and the everyday practices that operate within it.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the symbolic potentiality of the act of taking to the streets on foot, of re-practicing this elementary mode of spatial appropriation that is the human step, is crystallized in de Certeau’s conceptualizations through

1 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 96.

the destabilizing figure of the city walker as one who (re)negotiates the order established by city planners. Against the totalizing ‘panoptic administration’ that attempts to regulate city spaces and lives, the walker visualized by de Certeau encapsulates the reclaiming of individual experiences and the challenging of spoken and unspoken rules.

Alongside this visualization of mobility in city spaces which dovetails both order and transgression, it is productive to think about the temporal thresholds that regulate our daily lives and their impact on our experiences. Of these, the boundaries between day and night prompt a consideration of these different thresholds – perhaps legal or cultural, among others – that control who is allowed where, what can and cannot be done, or where daytime prohibitions might ‘give way to profitable pseudo-transgressions’.<sup>2</sup> This connection between experiences of mobility across different landscapes and questions of nighttime transitions and spatial-cultural (re)negotiations has informed one of my own areas of research, particularly in relation to Brazil and the Portuguese-speaking world. Hence, my keen appreciation for the papers presented at the LUCAS Graduate Conference, where the fine line between regulation and defiance was explored.

Indeed, one cannot forget that a key moment in Brazil’s cultural history coincided with the radical attempts at cultural decolonization that took place in the early twentieth century, when breaking the rules became the order of the day. Accordingly, in 1922, which marked the centenary of Brazil’s independence from Portugal, a group of artists and intellectuals, also inspired by the European avant-garde movements, gathered in São Paulo to showcase modern art that might better reflect Brazil as a complex nation with a gradually emerging, albeit uneven, modernity — thereby daring to bring about a seismic break with the established norms of literary and artistic good taste. Thus, the Week of Modern Art held in February of that year was to become an important watershed in Brazil’s cultural production. Moreover, one of its masterminds,

<sup>2</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Basic Blackwell, 1991), 319-20.

the now iconic São Paulo writer José Oswald de Souza Andrade, would embody its iconoclastic spirit when he soon after outlined his new cultural theory in his *Cannibalist Manifesto* of 1928, famously turning the traditionally demonized practice of cannibalism, found amongst Brazilian indigenous tribes, into a metaphor for cultural decolonization. In a bold subversion of Eurocentric cultural perspectives, Andrade would epitomize his vision of Brazilian culture through the maxim “Tupy, or not Tupy[;] that is the question”,<sup>3</sup> directing a post-colonial nod to the indigenous Tupy people of Brazil that, in its debunking of literary hierarchies and of the boundaries between the notions of centre and periphery, simultaneously involved an audacious literary cannibalization of Shakespeare.

Academia’s fascination with how the arts engage with questions such as these, in which issues of order, control, and hierarchy, and how to subvert them are at stake, is reflected in the articles emerging from the 2015 LUCAS Graduate Conference presented here. These discussions are, more than ever, topical and urgent, as we seem to be entering times of increasing uncertainty, in a globalized yet fractured world. The arts are arguably all the more important now in helping us understand how to negotiate the rules, break them if necessary, and see where we are, and where we ought to be heading.

3 José Oswald de Souza Andrade, “Manifesto Antropófago”, *Revista de Antropofagia* 1 (1928), 3.

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Freedom Flowers Project  
Manuel Salvisberg and Ai Weiwei  
2014/15  
*Bomb and urn*  
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