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The Cannibal-Animal Complex in Melville, Marx, and Beyond

It has become axiomatic for a number of philosophic, political, and technoscientific research agendas that the categories “human” and “animal” do not mark a rigorous division. It is equally axiomatic that they continue to function strategically in the distribution of power. This essay aims to thicken the genealogy of the post-human (or post-animal) moment by looking at two concepts caught between liquidation and enforcement of the human-animal border: cannibalism and Marxist economic critique. Cannibalism, because if we are all in some sense “animals” we find ourselves wary of eating our kin, yet anxious about the way that “cannibalism” has been historically entwined with Euro-American imperialism. Marxism, because it often leverages itself implicitly or explicitly against an animal incapable of labor, class struggle, and history, and yet it suggest that capital erases the ontological privilege of the human.

Two of Melville’s novels and selections from Marx’s works illustrate the development of cannibalism and animality as a complex for policing the borders of modern capitalist consciousness. *Typee*, Melville’s first and most successful novel in his lifetime, hinges on an arousal of fear that the narrator is living among cannibals in the Marquesas Islands. Seeing through the cannibal’s eyes, the narrator encounters the functional lack of distinction between human “flesh” and animal “meat.” In like manner, Marx’s representations of animals and his rhetorical uses of cannibalism show a fraught relationship between the inhuman and political economic critique. In contrast to *Typee* and *Capital*, I argue that *Moby-Dick* establishes a hospitable relation to cannibalism, enabling a more nuanced conception of animals and ethics. Cross-textual comparison can thus show how cannibalism and “the animal” are bound together through economic categories of production and consumption. Before looking at how these texts organize this conjuncture, “the cannibal” and “the animal” should be placed in historical and theoretical context.

The Cannibal-Animal Complex. The “cannibal” proper belongs to the imagination of Europe entering the age of modern exploration. Actual “cannibals” have never existed. William Arens makes the most extreme case against the objective existence of cannibalism, arguing that anthropology is fundamentally cannibalistic of non-Western cultures and discoveries of cannibalism have been projections. “[F]or layman and scholar alike the idea of cannibalism exists prior to and thus independent of evidence”

(22). In anthropology, a “discipline which feeds on its own inadequacies,” the structure of cannibalism creates an echo chamber of projection and discovery (6). Arens’ critique is well taken, particularly considering the projects that the “discovery” of cannibalism has authorized, but it is unclear whether anthropophagy is merely unsubstantiated, as he argues in reviewing the material record, or impossible, as his portrayal of anthropological epistemology implies. Assuming that the anthropologist can never see past her reflection transforms a particular moment in anthropology into an ahistorical constant, and so recreates the epistemic impermeability Arens means to critique. For this reason we must be attentive to the difference between “anthropophagy” and “cannibalism” and the conditions of possibility attached to each.

Peter Hulme negotiates between these meanings, arguing that there is creditable evidence of anthropophagy but that “cannibalism” is a discursive product of the Western gaze: “the primal scene of ‘cannibalism’ as ‘witnessed’ by Westerners is of its aftermath rather than its performance” (2). Even these indirect depictions are underwhelming: “Here is one of the earliest descriptions of the ‘cannibal scene’: a few bones lying around, and then removed by one of the ship’s officers, as mementos perhaps” (Obeyesekere 9). Dr. Chanca, the physician on Columbus’ expedition and author of the description, “was not even present at the scene, yet he writes with authority, a feature of much of the writing on cannibalism and savagism in general” (9). As the trope settles into the imaginary of colonial modernity, Dr. Chanca’s unconvincing report becomes a full-blown “cannibal feast” (10).

If cannibalism existed as part of the modern project of differentiation—in which the cannibal would be an absolute other, the one who destroys the boundary between self and other—the weakening of that project has shifted the function and location of cannibalism (Walton 4-6). Instead of reinforcing divisions between civilized and savage, normative and deviant, here and there, cannibalism today is typically invoked as a counter-hegemonic trope. One version presents capitalism and colonialism as the real cannibals (King 112-21). Another version calls attention to the tiny rifts within the modern body politic by concentrating on individual anthropophages, like the fictional Hannibal Lecter or real Jeffrey Dahmer and Armin Meiwes (Walton 125-6). Today “we” are the cannibals, both macro- and micro-cosmically, rather than “they”; but this “we” is understood to bear within it the division that formerly constituted the other.

A similar shift occurs concerning the location of animality with respect to humanity. Giorgio Agamben gives an exemplary account of how the human is located at the split between “human” and “animal” (much as the postmodern citizen is constituted atop

potential cannibalism): “Anthropogenesis is what results from the caesura and articulation between human and animal. This caesura passes first of all within man” (79). It is this rupture, then, that defines the human’s specific character and, ironically, re-separates humans from animals: we are animals but also uniquely aware that we are other-than animals. The conditions for the emergence of this recuperative humanism, argues Akira Mizuta Lippit, lie in the disappearance of animals from daily life over the past (approximately) two centuries.

As animals vanished and new technologies changed the human world, “animals symbolized not only new structures of thought but also the process by which those new thoughts were transported” (Lippit, *Electric* 2). Technology and animal converged in figures like Bergson’s cinematograph: “As a hybrid analogue for knowledge, the cinematograph renders the mind as a technological apparatus, the machine as a form of animal” (91). Although quite different from Bergson’s method, Freud’s theorization of the unconscious similarly broke new ground by neither “exiling animality to the domain of alterity (a realm of unreachable absence) nor domesticating it into a subdivision of the human order” (94). The post-metaphysical understanding of “the animal” within “the human,” despite appearing across a range of otherwise heterogeneous discourses, is tied to changes in the presence and function of concrete animals in the social life of the Western world, especially their obsolescence as labor-power.

The paradox of modern animality, then, is that as animals disappear, “the animal” appears. This animal, now frequently preceded by the definite article, is not an empirical entity so much as a technology for cultivating and defining modern sensibility. I use “technology” here in the expansive sense Dominic Pettman develops to describe any exteriorization of the self that extends one’s range of action. In this sense, animals have long been “technologies” for extending the reach of humans, but part of the importance of “the animal” proper is its ability to distinguish a properly (modern) human form of life defined by its mediatory status (as per Agamben). The motivation Lippit identifies behind “the animal” is precisely the need for a figural tool to extend understanding. The animal is both a technology and the other of technology.

Pettman helps us circumvent this apparent contradiction by denying any “human” pre-existing the act of technical extension: “there was no ‘inside’ before the moment of exteriorization which created an ‘outside’” (18). Following this logic into the various

forms of exteriorization, Pettman therefore argues that “love, technology, and community are in fact terms which designate the same phenomenon or process,” inasmuch as they are all coincident with the moment of exteriorization (17). We can add to this list the historical phenomenon called “the animal.” While we might be inclined to debunk and discard this figure—since it is of recent vintage and intended for questionable ideological work—I am inclined to think with it for the time being as an historically available, though heretofore excluded, mode of community. As long as it does not exclude animals, or reintroduce the exceptionality of *homo sapiens*, “the animal” might be useful.

One way in which the site of the animal has been thought as a mode of community has been through the Marxist concept of class. Animals and humans are exploited in many of the same ways, suggesting these groups are part of a single class (Perlo 306-7). But as Ted Benton argues, being exploited in like manner does not necessarily constitute those beings as having the same capacity for political action (77-8). Certain forms of political activity enabled by the concept of class would be foreclosed if nonhumans were included in the class definition, because they are not able to participate in such activity, and this foreclosure would ultimately be detrimental to the struggle against exploitation of humans and nonhumans. For this reason, Benton argues we should retain the concept of “class” in its classical Marxist formulation as specific to humans while adding other forms of collectivity to the critical lexicon (74, 79).

Cary Wolfe’s mapping of the humanist grid, organized by the “(impossible) purity” of the poles “humanized human” and “animalized animal,” explains how class-like isomorphisms can appear in human-animal relations without limiting critique to “class.” Living beings tend to wind up in the middle, some mixture of humanized animal and animalized human, aligning with Pettman’s thesis on the simultaneity of interior- and exterior-ization. Wolfe observes that “humanism’s investment here is more in the ongoing viability of this grid structure than in any specific designation per se,” much as capitalism’s investment is in exploitation of labor rather than any specific group as beneficiary of that exploitation (102). To see the animal only as the lowest rung on the social ladder, however, is to occlude the potential for such a substrate figure—even and especially because it is imaginary—to suggest openings for change in the structure of the grid itself (Massumi 2-3). Holding together Wolfe’s ideological critique with Pettman’s insistence that the subject is constituted as movement, and building on the historical connection between “the animal” and trans-subjective motion in Lippit’s reading, an historicized version of Freud’s unconscious can help us navigate a kind of

“grid in motion” in which oscillation between cannibal and animal creates a critical interference on the frequency of political economy.

Lippit shows that the animal is the cultural unconscious of “the unconscious”; where Freud sees the animal as a givenness through which to explicate the inexplicable, Lippit finds a general tendency of modern thought with a material history. Attention to the production of “the animal” then becomes a way to historicize modern claims about human nature. But while Lippit is correct to link the appearance of “the animal” to a decrease in visible working animals, it should also be noted that animals did not literally vanish from existence. Nor is the subjective frame that produces the image of animals as perpetually disappearing into “the animal” ideologically neutral. This perceptive habit is fundamentally part of the idealism Marx identifies with the bourgeois ideology of capitalism: from concrete to abstract, sensuous to sensuous-supersensuous, animals to animal. In this spirit we should take Lippit’s gesture as exemplary and discern, beneath the apparent finality of the disavowed animal, the ongoing struggle of animals to assert their being against the phenomenology of disappearing. There is again something of class struggle: the struggle for workers to be visible as workers instead of the myriad other identities through which they have been made unrecognizable (Hribal, “Jesse”).

The forced disappearing of animals is attended by the energetic appearance of cannibals. Like the animal, the cannibal performs a labor of subjectification, cultivating the proper affects of the modern citizen. Crystal Bartolovich reads the fantasy of cannibalism as a figure of total consumption that, if indulged by capitalist subjects, would end the investment cycle (211-14). Though capitalism cultivates endless desire, it must check the realization of that impulse lest it destroy capitalism. At the same time, of course, the cannibal did material work as the savage face that launched a thousand imperial ships and, once “civilized,” as the work force of those colonies (indeed, doing the kind of menial labor otherwise reserved for animals). What is of relevance to this study is the way in which the always-appearing threat of cannibalism is increasingly important for policing excess desire with the development of capitalism (on into our own time) parallel to the always-disappearing animal that continually extends the horizon for producing the human into Freud’s unconscious and Agamben’s anthropogenesis.

An anticipation of this connection between animal and cannibal can be found in an image from 1525 in which New World cannibals are identified as other-than-human by distinctly canine snouts (Klarer 391). Here cannibalism transforms the transgressor's body to reflect its exclusion from humanity. At the same time, the cannibal must be human to be a cannibal rather than merely an animal. The troubled ontological status of the cannibal and the epistemological difficulty of finding a decisive difference are resolved by importing the difference between human and animal. This supplementary discourse, however, is itself polyvocal. The unification of human and animal is a classical figure for the positive resolution of earthly strife and confusion, as Agamben notes, as much as a marker of the savage within human time (1-3). Mario Klarer shows that discourse on the New World, like Agamben's image, borrows frequently from the classical lexicon. Indeed, Klarer demonstrates that the New World was conceived as simultaneously utopian and barbarous (390-1). The double movement by which cannibalism and animal figuration combine in this image support Bartolovich's argument: New World plenitude threatens to liberate capitalism's consumptive desire, and so is both utopian and apocalyptic. The projected mixtures of human and animal, human and consumer/consumable, are those that modern consciousness lives to clarify, and in which it fears to drown like Narcissus.

We tend to find that by the nineteenth century cannibals need not be as fantastically animalized as the canine New Worlders. For Melville the play between these tropes can be subtle and effective. Wolfe's ideological critique and Pettman's repurposing of eros describe the two values of this condensation: on one hand, the slippage between cannibal and animal creates a flexible, mobile ideology for authorizing violence against whatever is animalized (notably non-Europeans), and the cannibal as object of imperialism incarnates that animalized human; on the other hand, the movement between figures is a possibility for new communities, realizing the utopian fantasy of early American discourse and its precursors in classical myth and Christian communion. By taking note of the cannibal-animal complex that develops with capitalism, Lippit's demonstration of "the animal" as the unconscious of Freud's unconscious can be turned back on itself. The repression of "the animal" is itself a ruse to perpetuate a concept, this imaginary "the animal," that has a specific purpose in the capitalist imaginary. What remains unspoken in "the animal" is the economic system for which this eminently contradictory concept makes sense; and as we have seen, these contradictions are smoothed over by reference to a parallel discourse on cannibalism, itself internally divided, and which also has its sense in relation to the demands of modern capitalism. These two discourses are mutually disrupting—if we are all animals then there are no cannibals, and if there are cannibals then we might as well be

animals—and so are bound together in such a way as to reinforce imperialist capitalism and blackmail any skeptics of one discourse through the other. We will try to accept both later in this essay so that we may be skeptical of what we please.

To understand this peculiar double-bind, the concept of the unconscious, slightly reconfigured, proves valuable. We can turn Freud on his head as Marx once did with Hegel, keeping in mind that, as Althusser adds, Marx also says he extracts the kernel of Hegel's truth from its chaff—a gesture of repetition, but one which fundamentally changes the borrowed structure (Althusser 89-92). Claiming an unconscious relation between the cannibal-animal and capitalism does not amount to saying that one is the secret of the other, but that the relation called “unconscious” is more general and nonhuman than an anthropological psychoanalysis could claim, as Avery Gordon suggests in reading the nascent moments of Freud's thought (45-9). The extension of the unconscious to nonhumans is not so far-fetched today. Expanding on Thomas Sebeok's work on zoosemiotics, Michael Ziser reads Lacanian psychoanalysis as deeply rooted in primatology and the exchange of signs between humans and nonhumans (14-20). But one need not go farther than what Freud always maintained—that the unconscious is irreducible to consciousness, that the conscious mind is not sovereign over the unconscious—to see that Freud's Copernican Revolution must eventually revolutionize itself.

The unconscious, after so many self-reflexive reversals, emerges not so much as a thing or a place but as the in-between of transmission. Slavoj Žižek provides insight into the mechanism of this disappearing:

...if we seek the “secret of the dream” in the latent content hidden by the manifest text, we are doomed to disappointment: all we find is some entirely “normal”—albeit usually unpleasant—thought, the nature of which is mostly non-sexual and definitely not “unconscious.” (12)

While Žižek's own conception of the unconscious differs from that advanced above, his observation that the unconscious is not revealed in latent content bears repeating. Across the multiple frames of “manifest” and “latent” content, the movement between two layers of consciousness, or two layers of a text, is what we call “unconscious,” not what is latent. The unconscious' sign is its constant self-concealment, conjuring forth a plenitude of images (like the cinematograph) to hide the operation of the Thing itself. We thus return to a description of the unconscious that resembles nothing so much as

the uncategorizable labor of a pack animal. Positioning animals at a site of transition, in contrast to the ontological animal of Freud's unconscious, prevents the mistake of discovering "the secret of the animal" as the latent content of capitalism or cannibalism. Rather, by adopting a modified theory of the unconscious we can better describe the role of animals and "the animal" in constructing capitalist ideological closure.

We can take this one step further: such a revised unconscious prevents us from reducing animals to pure transition. Deleuze's reading of Spinoza on affect is a useful counterweight to the modern tendency to collapse animals entirely into the disappearing structure of the unconscious. Deleuze reiterates Spinoza's distinction between affect and affection. An affection is a feeling wrought by extensive interaction with another body; affect is the dimension of intensive change. The difference allows for both eternity (a dimension without temporal change) and duration in Spinoza's system: "The affection envelops an affect....It envelops a passage or a transition" (Deleuze 3). The affection is "eternal" in its singularity but these eternities "envelop" the affect that persists. We can almost say: animals are to "the animal" as affection is to affect. But this idealizing gesture subtracts bodyliness from "the animal," giving us hardly an animal at all. Like humans, animals are always in transition across affect and affection, a transition between the fixity of space and the passing of time. We are right to think animals in transition but not to reduce them to pure movement. Deleuze's Spinoza enriches our understanding of the unconscious and its fundamental anti-anthropocentrism, counseling against the reification of the animal/animals divide that subtends capitalist anthropology.

***Typee* as Cannibal-Animal Discourse.** Melville's *Typee* provides a curious example of a text that deploys conventional imperialist-capitalist anxieties about cannibalism and animalization while also avoiding any final declarations that would solidly establish the boundary of the self. In one sense this indeterminacy is the endless frontier of Manifest Destiny, the "imperial self" that Wai-chee Dimock criticizes, but it also leaves that self perpetually vulnerable (7-8). Recalling Hulme and Obeyesekere on the absences in the cannibal scene, consider Melville's observation that:

It is a singular fact, that in all our accounts of cannibal tribes we have seldom received the testimony or an eye-witness to the revolting practice. The horrible conclusion has almost always been derived from the second-hand testimony of Europeans, or else from the admissions of the savages themselves, after they have in some degree become civilized. (234)

The epistemological critique is partly conventional, part of a long-running counter discourse on cannibalism. Melville also shrewdly indicates the role of “cannibalism” in establishing oneself as “civilized”: learning to use this accusation is the passport for Marquesans to move from one category to the other.

The natives’ strategic mastery of “cannibalism” presents Melville’s narrator with a conundrum. Prior to arriving in the Marquesas Islands, he learns that “the natives of all this group are irreclaimable cannibals”; but on arriving, the Western-friendly Happar, “disclaimed all cannibal propensities on their own part, while they denounced their enemies—the Typees—as inveterate gormandizers of human flesh” (24-5). It is difficult not to suspect that the Happar have cracked the code of “cannibalism” and put it to their own political use; hence it also becomes questionable whether they might be cannibals in disguise. The implication is that anyone who uses the label “cannibal”—perhaps even Europeans, at the limit of this paranoid logic—should be suspected of hiding his or her own cannibalism. To treat “cannibal” as a natural signifier risks becoming victim to the “real” cannibals, wherever they may be.

Melville’s narrator deserts his ship and flees into the jungle. There he injures himself and falls in amongst the Typees who, apparently fluent in the meta-language of cannibalism, claim that the Happar are the real cannibals. The Typees buttress Samuel Otter’s claim that “Cannibalism is not the ultimate sign of difference in Melville’s narrative ... [but a] stage prop with which to frighten his audience and build narrative suspense” (16). Conversely, cannibalism makes “ultimate difference” into a stage prop and identity into a stage. Whether out of paranoia or performance, signs of cannibalism begin to manifest. First the narrator catches a “slight glimpse” of three shrunken human heads as they are being “hurriedly envelop[ed] in the coverings from which they had been taken” (231). “Two of the three were heads of the islanders; but the third, to my horror, was that of a white man,” the narrator notes, continuing, “Although it had been quickly removed from my sight, still the glimpse I had of it was enough to convince me that I could not be mistaken” (233). The will to knowledge over-reaches its grasp in the certainty of the “could not.” The narrator does not claim merely that he was not mistaken, but that he “could not be mistaken,” a level of certitude which, given that he caught only a glimpse (as he says several times), seems patently untrue. Or, to read this

through Arens, it is true that he “could not be mistaken” because his anthropological epistemology ensures that he finds evidence of savagery.

The heads are “evidence” of cannibalism by way of a general discourse on savagism. Ironically, the heads “in a state of perfect perfection” (231) are quite the opposite of the incorporative annihilation or total consumption of cannibalism. Instead, they are frightfully close to capital: the congealed product of a human body made ageless. As fetishes, the heads both evoke the repressed labor of capital—the source of fetish value—and challenge the historical superiority of capitalist societies. Melville’s description of the heads as “a fearful memento of the event” is close to Obeyesekere’s account of Dr. Chanca discovering “a few bones lying around, and then removed by one of the ship’s officers, as mementos perhaps” (9). Fetishism, like cannibalism, is an unreliable signifier of the civilized-savage divide.

Soon the narrator catches another “slight glimpse” of seemingly incontrovertible evidence. After a festival he finds a previously unnoticed canoe-like vessel and, prying up its covering, sees within “the disordered members of a human skeleton, the bones still fresh with moisture, and with particles of flesh clinging to them here and there!” (238). “Taboo! taboo!” yell the chiefs. “Puarkee! puarkee! (Pig, pig),” exclaims Kory-Kory, the narrator’s attendant. The narrator takes both cries to be dissimulations. Clearly, as the written description states, he has found “a human skeleton.”

Setting aside the question of what is really in the canoe—a question that, intentionally or not, becomes hyperreal in *Typee*—Kory-Kory’s alternative “reading” of the carcass melds the epistemological problem of cannibalism with the ontological problem of the animal. As in the image of canine cannibals, the category “animal” clarifies an epistemological problem—we know an animal when we see it—but prompts the ontological question of what is an animal. Conversely, we know what a cannibal is—a human man-eater—but not who is a cannibal. The remains of the feast, regardless of provenance, speak to both questions simultaneously. This double address short-circuits the alternation that allows the cannibal-animal complex to function. A jumble of bloody bones glimpsed momentarily could just as well be a human as a similarly sized mammal; one could as well be stranded with cannibals who transgress the borders of the self, as fêted by hosts who enforce a healthily modern distinction between human and animal.

With this “last horrid revelation...the full sense of [the narrator’s] condition rushed upon [his] mind with a force [he] had never before experienced” (238). The narrator resolves to escape at any cost. But, as he acknowledges in a following soliloquy, his hosts’ intentions remain inscrutable. “A thousand times I endeavored to account for the mysterious conduct of the natives.... What could be their object in treating me with such apparent kindness, and did it not cover some treacherous scheme?” (239). The Typees’ inexplicable kindness only further confirms them as cannibals, but such an incongruous conclusion (that nice people must want to eat you) also places a special emphasis on the “puarkee” scene as the moment the narrator decisively turns from epistemological aporia to active escape attempt. Between the manifest content of a carcass and shrunken heads, and the (now confirmed) latent content of anthropophagy, the unconscious connection of cannibal discourse is activated by a scene of reversibility between human and animal. Perhaps most frightening for the Westerner, it is the victim, not the perpetrator, who becomes indistinguishable from an animal. Otter’s observation that “the most penetrating assault envisions the body not as meat to be sliced and devoured but as a text to be engraved and read” can be deepened by recognizing that “meat” is not a natural category but a function of the inscription of animals as Wolfe’s animalized animal (Otter 10). The phenomenology of “meat” requires a total inscription of defacement, the ultimate horror in Otter’s reading (Adams 74-5).

The cannibal scenery of *Typee* momentarily produces different possibilities for the shape of cannibalism and animality in the world. If one looks through the cannibal paradigm, the bones appear as an animalized human; through the animal paradigm, as humanized animal. The narrator and reader are temporarily positioned in the intermediate parallax view where both paradigms obtain: all fleshly beings are potentially human and animal. What can be “glimpsed” from this position is the contingency of the self as a production and that production as an economic function. The narrator considers one such case in which

an old chief, who, actuated by a morbid desire for notoriety, gave himself out among the foreign residents of the place as the living tomb of Captain Cook’s big toe! ... This result was the making of his fortune; ever afterwards he was in the habit of giving very profitable audiences to all curious travellers [sic]. (234)

Consumption and production are doubled. There is the physical consumption of the toe and the figurative consumption of the cannibal spectacle by travelers, out of which the chief produces his commercial living and the spectators produce him as *bona fide* cannibal. The theoretical or metaphorical production of the self, like Agamben's human situated astride the ontological caesura, is made tangible and lucrative in the cannibal economy.

This quotation, as well as that in which the narrator reflects on the unreliability of second-hand reports of cannibalism, fall in the short space between the discovery of the heads and the carcass. The motivation for the excursions is apparently psychological: the narrator is being skeptically objective, or he is trying to convince himself that he is not among cannibals. The additional effect of this excursus is to connect the cannibal-animal complex—the dehumanized heads, the bloody bones—through a set-piece that refers to and unsettles economic categories. The loosening of production and consumption by the notorious chief is then part of the process running from preserved head (*caput*, the root of capital) to taboo puarkee. The sequencing can also be theoretically inverted: the contradictions in production and consumption of the notorious chief, indicative of a broader theoretical problem for specular capitalism, are held together by the cannibal-animal complex.

The limitation of *Typee* is that it recoils on glimpsing the cannibal-animal. *Typee* limns the faces of its unconscious via the negative, so that when they coincide the effect is stark horror. And yet, from a perspective marked within the text and its tradition, nothing seems more idyllic than for the narrator to remain among the Typees and reconcile himself to a cannibalism without “cannibalism.” This possibility of a non-modern and non-capitalist ethics will be the question put to *Moby-Dick*. Before turning to *Moby-Dick*, however, a detour into Marx's texts provides a complementary construction of the relation between the cannibal-animal and the economic. If this reading of *Typee* is valid and generalizable, the effects of the cannibal-animal complex will not be limited to literary treatments of cannibals and animals, but will be detectable in the connective tissue of economic analysis itself.

Marx and the Economic Problem of the Cannibal-Animal. In the 1844 *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* Marx uses an Enlightenment caricature of animals to highlight the freedom of humans. “They [animals] produce only under the compulsion of direct physical need, while man produces when he is free from physical need and only truly produces in freedom from such need” (Fromm 102). In *The German Ideology*, written a few years later, Marx again uses animal lack to highlight the capabilities of humans:

“Where there exists a relationship, it exists for me: the animal does not enter into ‘relations’ with anything, it does not enter into any relations at all. For the animal, its relation to others does not exist as a relation” (37). Though conventional in its subordination of animals to humans and in its lack of substantiating evidence, Marx foreshadows the post-metaphysical conception of humans and animals found in Heidegger and Agamben. The animal whose “relation to others does not exist as a relation” is the reciprocal figure of the human constituted around ontological rupture whose non-relation to others exists as a relation.

Even in *Capital*, after the supposed break between the “early” and “mature” Marx, we find uncritical Cartesian dogma concerning animals.

We presuppose labour in a form that stamps it as exclusively human. A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst of architects from the best of bees is this: that the architect raises a structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labour process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the laborer at its commencement. (283-4)

In a move that would surprise many Marxists, the idea “in imagination” displaces “reality” as foundation. Elsewhere Marx is keen to criticize those who offer pleasing ideals as recompense for real inequities, or who explain material processes as effects of dialectics of ideas (“Theses on Feuerbach”). When it comes to animals, however, Marx re-creates an economic division allowing one group to benefit from the labor of the other while denying historical significance to the laboring group.

Despite the tendentious choice of examples—bees and spiders rather than, say, dogs or horses—the animals Marx cites are functionally productive, apparently intentional and, unlike machines, do not require a supplementary human hand or mind to accomplish their tasks. One might also question whether activities in which human workers realize a pre-given plan are the definitive form of free human labor. An artist wrestling with a protean idea during the process of creation might just as well be considered distinctively human. On the other hand, an architect who draws up a plan and abandons it to others to implement, or the masons and carpenters realizing the architect’s blueprint, have a less dialectical relationship with the world and each other than the self-actualizing spider. The comparison between bee and architect serves to

efface the laborers that have historically realized such imagined structures from the pyramids to the present.

The problem with animal labor in *Capital* is not an isolated instance in Marx's oeuvre. Rather, as Derrida argues in *Specters of Marx*, it is part of the general ontological problem of the commodity. Because the commodity does not acquire its exchange value in relation to fixities (labor time and usefulness of a commodity vary by social conditions) but through the way that human society relates to itself through commodities, the commodity comes alive. The social current of labor metaphorically passes through the Frankenstein's monster of the commodity, causing it to sit up and speak. This new problematic, "at the same time, Life, Thing, Beast, Object, Commodity, Automaton—in a word, specter," conjures the paradox of "automatic autonomy, mechanical freedom, technical life" (152-3). The vivification of the object dislocates the uniquely human character of predicates like "freedom" and so, as in Pettman's moment of interior-/exterior-ization, transforms the human. In classical Marxism this transformative process pertains primarily between humans and commodities, but logically it seems to affect animals no less in their roles as laborers and raw material.

Perhaps Marx's speciesism is recuperable as political strategy (Perlo 304-5). A degraded animal provides a foil for human freedom and a point of leverage for criticizing inhumane working conditions. The mechanized animal contrasts with workers' ability to intentionally transform their circumstances. But Marx also represents workers' self-determination as a matter of historical necessity: workers must come to control the means of production because of the logic of capitalism, not simply because they wish it so. The mixture of freedom and necessity in the Marxist political project creates the "moral paradox" that "capitalism is regarded as an agent of 'progress' because it starkly reveals the necessity of the historical voyage toward utopia; but on the other hand, capitalism is also viewed as a bloody and barbarous system" (Phillips 185). The idealized animal—idealized in terms of dehumanization, that is—provides a means of tipping the scales toward revolutionary consciousness, assuring us that humans really do have the capacity for intentional action even if it is also historically determined. To neutralize the way in which the animal exposes certain problems for Marxist materialism, cannibalism appears: "Marx imagined capitalism as cannibalism with two ends in mind: to emphasize the sheer brutality of the profit-motive as a measure of human affairs, and to emphasize the profound irrationality of a system that must perforce devour itself" (Phillips 185). Cannibal and animal supplement each other in moving the Marxist paradox of necessity and freedom from aporia to activism, suggesting their broader role in the unconscious of political economy.

***Moby-Dick* and Ethics After Cannibalism.** Whereas Marx subtracts animals from the labor process proper, *Moby-Dick* tells a story of production with an excess of animals. *Moby-Dick* can be read with some success as an allegory of the way in which capital emerges from the exclusion of one commodity to serve as universal equivalent (money, in a word) of all the rest (*Capital* 159-62). Whales play the part of commodities, *Moby-Dick* the part of capital. Thus whale products or byproducts fulfill the functions normally served by different commodities: whale bones have repaired the Pequod (70); whale ivory replaces the leg of Ahab (109); men fry their biscuits in whale oil (241), or eat it as a steak (235); whale oil provides light (236); and the whale provides protective clothing for the mincer (325).

If whales furnish different use-values, whale oil takes on the position of money, a commodity differentiated by its unique standing as general equivalent. Whale oil is potential energy: it can be burned to produce energy and so do work, be liquidated at market for profit, or be reinvested as capital in the process of rendering more oil. The economy of whaling that Melville presents thus naturally moves from relative exchange values between different use-values to a universal equivalent that collapses use- and exchange-value (money is useful in that it can buy something useful) and posits a singular whale-form: Moby-Dick. That oil is derived from actual whales is consistent with the lingering connection between the money form and its genesis among commodities. Capital differs from money by taking this process one step further, excepting itself even from materiality.

So too *Moby-Dick* has the “metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties” of capital (*Capital* 163). He is everywhere and nowhere, organizing the hunt and preventing its completion. Moby-Dick is a legendary whale; the book itself; a chapter entitled “Moby-Dick”; the subject of a multiply-framed anecdote in “The Town-Ho’s Story”; a mirage in “The Spirit Spout”; and the virtual image evoked by its *doppelgänger*/foil, the giant white squid (225-6). Ironically, the squid, the natural enemy of the sperm whale, is that which best represents *Moby-Dick*, condensing in its seething coils the heterology of Moby-Dick’s own body. That Moby-Dick is most visible in all its/his multiplicitous glory as the squid testifies to the extent to which Moby-Dick is defined by exclusion from his genetic context, in the same way that capital arises from and is excluded from the world of commodities.

Moby-Dick can thus be read as an allegory of capital (or of *Capital*) in the same way that Lippit finds “the story of capital discovered in the narrative of human-animal relations” in the massacre/slaughter of Eisenstein’s *Strike* (“Death” 14). On this reading, whales would be sacrifices in the movement of metaphor: *Moby-Dick* is really about capital. Or, capitalism is really about violence against animals. Such an allegorical reading is useful as a starting point to mark how the novel successfully evokes the incorporation of animals into capitalism. It is also useful for showing the failure of such an allegorical or sacrificial reading.

First, *Moby-Dick* works quite hard to upset the possibility of univocal signifier-signified relations, most aggressively in “The Whiteness of the Whale,” but unmistakably throughout. Second, Melville pays considerable attention to whales as things in themselves, first through the expansive “Etymology,” and then in chapters on the history of whaling and whale physiology and taxonomy. Whales themselves, not just the “truth” one can produce from them, are valued in *Moby-Dick*. Third, Melville tropes on cannibalism in such a way as not just to question the sacrificial structure of human-animal relations, but to make it into a veritable Möbius strip. Human and animal or economy and nature become as manifest and latent content: contingent descriptions that are necessarily reversible. *Moby-Dick* departs from other texts similarly bound to such modern divisions in that it tries to imagine a hospitable relation to the animals and cannibals that it cannot yet engage without violence or fumbling. Thus *Moby-Dick* celebrates whaling as a bloody contest and, at the same time and without falling into “false consciousness,” evokes tenderness toward sick and nursing whales (Armstrong 102-3; Schultz 104-6). Turning to the novel’s cannibal discourse can explicate the co-existence of these conflicted valences.

In the “Spouter-Inn” where Ishmael lodges before going to sea the walls are decorated with “cannibal” weapons mixed with broken harpoons (27). He soon learns that his bedmate is out late peddling “his head” about town, though it turns out that he is not selling his own head but several preserved ones. At last Ishmael grows weary and takes to bed. When his bedmate enters in the dark, his face alarms Ishmael with its “dark purplish, yellow color, here and there stuck with large, blackish looking squares” (33). But when he realizes “they could not be sticking-plasters at all” (34) another hypothesis comes to mind: “I remembered the story of a white man—a whaleman too—who, falling among the cannibals, had been tattooed by them. I concluded that this harpooneer, in the course of his distant voyages, must have met with a similar

adventure" (34). The cannibal enters in the indeterminacy between savage and savaged. Defacement does not automatically mark one as other, but, as in this moment of suspense, prevents the placement of the defaced in a humanist grid.

Ishmael is prepared to accept his strange appearance—"It's only his outside; a man can be honest in any sort of skin"—but as the evidence mounts he is forced to recognize that Queequeg matches the profile of a cannibal (34). After a brief altercation the innkeeper placates Ishmael to his great amusement: "didn't I tell ye, he was a peddlin' heads around town?" (36). Deflated, Ishmael's only complaint is that Queequeg is smoking in bed, which Queequeg politely desists. "I turned in, and never slept better in my life" (36). But Melville does not let the matter end with a picaresque bracketing of the cannibal encounter. Ishmael awakes to find "Queequeg's arm thrown over me in the most loving and affectionate manner. You had almost thought I had been his wife" (36). This time Ishmael does not repeat his hysterical performance but welcomes the arm, reflecting on the curious sensations it conjures for him. Very early in the novel, then, the taboo value of "cannibalism" is separated from the actually existing person called "cannibal," creating an affective-cognitive space in which to dwell on, and with, what is not understood. Reflecting on a childhood experience of "a supernatural hand seemed placed in mine," Ishmael says that

...whether it was a reality or a dream, I never could entirely settle.... Now, take away the awful fear, and my sensations at feeling the supernatural hand in mine were very similar, in their strangeness, to those which I experienced on waking up and seeing Queequeg's pagan arm thrown round me. (37)

The subtraction of "the awful fear" could equally well define the change in the affective meaning of epistemological uncertainty from *Typee* to *Moby-Dick*.

After suspending the ideological value of cannibalism found in *Typee*, Ishmael becomes a carnivalesque version of Arens' anthropologist playfully discovering cannibalism everywhere. The Pequod is "A cannibal of a craft, tricking herself forth in the chased bones of her enemies" (70). The crew is "chiefly made up of mongrel renegades, and castaways, and cannibals" (158), in which "cannibal" presumably denotes Islanders like Queequeg but could as well attach to any crew member. Ishmael dilates on this possibility to declare, "Your true whale-hunter is as much a savage as an Iroquois. I myself am a savage, owning no allegiance but to the King of Cannibals; and ready at

any moment to rebel against him" (222). The primal scene of patricide is turned inside-out; the father whom one kills and consumes to inaugurate the regime of civilization is himself already a cannibal. Cannibalism becomes a universal condition, "the universal cannibalism of the sea," binding humans and nonhumans at the site of consumption (225). The ecstatic peak of this discourse resembles Norman O. Brown's vision of apocalypse: "To restore to trees and flowers their original animality; their original spirituality; their original humanity" (16). Humans, sea creatures, and even the timbers of the ship are imbued with cannibalism.

A positive affective relation to cannibalism enables this transcendent vision but does not remove the capacity for differentiation. Having passed through the apocalypse of universal cannibalism, the differentiation of self and other will appear as an ongoing ethical project rather than ideological given. As Stubb eats a whale steak by the light of whale oil, Ishmael opines,

Go to the meat-market of a Saturday night and see the crowds of live bipeds staring up at the long rows of dead quadrupeds. Does not that sight take a tooth out of the cannibal's jaw? Cannibals? Who isn't a cannibal? I tell you it will be more tolerable for the Fejee that salted down a lean missionary in his cellar against a coming famine ... than for thee, civilized and enlightened gourmand, who nailest geese to the ground and featest on their bloated livers in thy patè-de-foie-gras. (242)

If the "gormandizers of human flesh" were feared in *Typee* (25), here it is the "enlightened gourmand" whose gluttony goes too far. Speaking from within the position of universal cannibalism—who isn't a cannibal?—Ishmael revives the capacity for value judgment as a relative and contingent position. To say that it will be more tolerable for the Fejee does not require claims of pure innocence or guilt. Such a construction of moral judgment does require the continued re-evaluation of one's current and possible relations to fellow cannibals, much as Matthew Calarco argues for the ongoing deconstruction of vegetarian or vegan practices from within those practices (197-8).

Ishmael earlier asks "who ain't a slave" (21), using the same grammatical construction as "Who isn't a cannibal?" to interrogate slavery. Stubb asks Fleece, the ship's cook and a slave, to prepare a whale steak for him. Stubb then berates Fleece for his ineptitude, prompting Fleece to say that Stubb is "more of a shark dan Massa Shark Hissel" (240). The shared construction is not coincidental. In both cases the point of comparison

(cannibal, shark) is one that is excluded from civilized humanity as its Archimedean point. But Ishmael does not say that Stubb is a cannibal or a shark, and thereby ground his critique in the presupposition that those are naturally abhorrent. Ishmael's moral joust—*are you better than a cannibal or a shark?*—functions without presupposing any figure of absolute (human) immorality or (animal) amorality.

Rather, such a construction of judgment requires one to state in what way the action of a shark or cannibal is functionally better or worse than an alternate “civilized” action. In the case of the sharks, “[eating] till those entrails seemed swallowed over and over again by the same mouth, to be oppositely voided by the gaping wound” (243), insatiable appetite suggests a comparison between Stubb and the sharks. On one hand this is merely the logic of universal cannibalism crystallized; but on the other, as Fleece seems to intend, the thoughtlessness and speed of the sharks’ self-consumption should be avoided by humans and sharks alike. “Your voraciousness, fellow-critters, I don’t blame ye so much for; dat is nature, and can’t be helped; but to govern dat wicked natur, dat is de pint,” Fleece preaches to the sharks (238). The judgment “more of a shark” here has less to do with unique qualities of sharks—they seem to be in exactly the same post-lapsarian moral situation as ourselves—than with their embodiment of consumption run rampant. Fredric Jameson’s description of capitalist stasis through constant change, “A steady stream of momentum and variation that at some outer limit seems stable and motionless,” could equally describe the sharks as they become one mouth and one wound (17). Indeed, the sharks’ jaws continue to open and close even after “the individual life had departed,” suggesting an automatization of consumption dangerous to one’s degree of autonomy and even more so for those who live among them: “one of these sharks almost took poor Queequeg’s hand off” (243). If we cannot avoid cannibalism, we can at least try to attenuate our consumption for the sake of our fellow cannibals and orchestrate the distribution of violence more equitably than in a slave-based economy or the production of *patè-de-foie-gras*. As Deleuze says of Spinoza, the ethics of trans-species cannibalism “is a functionalism, but a very beautiful functionalism.”

Conclusion. One more example will bridge the historical gap between Melville and Marx and ourselves, hopefully suggesting the continued importance of cannibal-animal discourse for our own situation. In *When Species Meet* Haraway recounts coming to Santa Cruz and being invited to partake of the placenta from a friend’s recent birth (293-4). As might be expected, this event sparks considerable conversation. The ambiance of

passionate discussion around the placenta leads into a parallel scene of a pig roast (296-8). The pig roast is probably more normatively palatable, but, as Haraway makes clear, this is a matter for close argumentation: “Reasons were well developed on all sides; commitments to very different ways of living and dying were what needed to be examined together, without any god tricks and with consequences” (298). The juxtaposition of the feasts of the pig and the placenta—which is not cannibalism, but is close enough to evoke its problematic—necessitates a clarification of how, precisely, these types of bodily consumption are different (or not).

However one feels about these scenes of eating, their ability to elicit strong reactions speaks to the continuation of the cannibal-animal complex as source of anxiety and potential for awakening the “beautiful functionalism” of *Moby-Dick’s* cannibal ethics. The rupture between animals and “the animal” continues to provide a site for thinking about ethics as it passes, in a relation I have argued is continuous with but modifies Freud’s unconscious, through the fantasy of cannibalism. If the parable of the pig and the placenta is not enough to show the survival of this structure, the epilogue to Armin Meiwes’ story seizes on the cannibal-animal complex with startling clarity: Meiwes, the “German cannibal” who consensually killed and ate a man, has since become a vegetarian—although he does not recommend others follow his example (Hall, “Cannibal”). Demystifying “cannibalism” is not enough to put it to rest, any more than rendering animals as “the animal” solved the challenge of the nonhuman. A more extensive conception of the unconscious, one that traverses the materiality of beings in the world and so relates to economic systems as well as individual psyches, can contribute to a better practical engagement with our theoretical inheritance.

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