

They Are Going to Eat Me: An Exploration of Cannibalism Real, Fabricated, and Imagined

by

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**AMUSE BOUCHE**  
Origins of a Trope in Classic Literature

In the early days of writing, illiterate societies faced the scrutiny of being mislabelled by their literate neighbors or worse, erased. When Herodotus scribed a catalog of the Scythian people in his *Histories*, this Eurasian Steppe tribe was incapable of defending its own identity against written recordance and became known historically as barbaric. The Scythes and the various tribes pushing into their territory now akin to modern day Ukraine were described as fierce horsemongers, who drank from the skulls of their enemies, and enjoyed intoxicating substances such as wine and smokable herbs. Likewise, there were some other written accounts from the Assyrians and Persians, who like the Greeks targeted the Scythes to exploit their land and enslave their people. It seems possible that those who wrote about the Scythians purposely chose to taint their image, in order to avoid public resistance when choosing to take their people as servants. In this regard, marking this tribe as cannibalistic was a ploy to deepen the divide between the citified and the barbaric.

Territories that laid across the Black Sea from Greece became defined by their Otherness, partitioning Eastern Europe, Asia, the Arab World, from Western Europe. The Scythes were the predominant nomadic tribe of the Pontic-Caspian Steppe when *The Histories* were written; an Iranic tribe that conquered the region between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea with migrational patterns through Assyrian lands and into Egypt. In recent years archaeologists have gained access to Scythian kurgans or burial grounds along the Russian/ Ukrainian border that were previously inaccessible due to former Soviet Union legislation. As more archaeologists were permitted access to study these kurgans in the Altai Mountains, they found much of Herodotus' descriptions of the Scythian burial practices to be correct. What becomes

exceedingly significant is the lack of discussion about the cultural prominence of this nomadic tribe, despite the wealth of insight that he was able to obtain.

The first archaeologists to come into contact with the cultural reality of the Scythians must have been shocked by what was found in contrast to the defamatory accounts of Herodotus. Once excavated, the Scythian kurgans were discovered to hold an abundance of gold crafts, Greek amphoras signifying tradesmanship, along with leather horse saddles and harnesses. You would be skeptical that these graves were built by the cannibals that Herodotus described; in fact there appears to be no concrete evidence that cannibalism existed among the Scythes at all. The UNESCO World Heritage Centre catalogs the findings of an International range of archaeologists who participated in kurgan excavations in their booklet entitled *Preservation of the Frozen Tombs of the Altai Mountains*. Much of the facts detailed above come from the wealth of knowledge exacted in this booklet, whose overall mission is on how humanity might conserve the histories within these permafrost kurgans from the warming temperatures resulting from climate change. With this mission in mind I think of the multitude of ways that the word “consumption” ties into the history of the Scythian people. On the one hand we have a nomadic tribe that is scribed in our history books as a group of uncultured cannibals. As we gain knowledge through the help of modern day science we learn that this may in fact not be the truth at all, but ironically as a result of Herodotus’s defamatory writing Greece transforms and consumes Scythian culture and identity for their own political gain. As they disappear from the Pontic Steppe they are embedded in our memory as cannibals, and until this day we have not been able to overwrite that history despite the wealth of new information cultivated from modern archeology and technology. With global warming on the rise they face the possibility of being

eradicated once again as Scythian kurgans and histories alike, once guarded in ice face the scrutiny of melting away.

The term cannibal continued to be used as a means of stereotyping foreignness throughout history, as the barbaric typecasting of the Scythians in Herodotus' *Histories* were devoured and regurgitated in the classical literary canon. As we see in "Inventing Cannibals" different writers twist and turn Herodotus' words on Scythia, to create a hodgepodge of cannibalistic tropes. There is Pliny, who writes *Natural History*, where he speaks about "monstrous humans" and places these creatures away from Mediterranean society, specifically around Scythia in the central Asian steppes. Watson writes, "Monstrous humans, then, are those whose bodies are well outside the normal range for humanity or whose cultures fail to meet the minimum standard for rationality and civility as Pliny describes them" (*Inventing Cannibals* Ch. 1). This dialogue befuddles the concept of the humanities. Rather than creating grounds for understanding others, he creates a spectrum that eradicates cultures that don't fit into the Westernized notion of civility. Her article moves into conversation between Marco Polo, John Mandeville, Columbus, and other explorers, and how Herodotus' texts on the cannibal Scythian created a context that would shape the mind of the conquistador. Watson writes, "Polo's writings helped Columbus to determine what he believed to be the circumference of the Earth (he turned out to be quite wrong). More important, however, it was Polo's writings that kept Columbus searching for Cathay (China), Cipangu (Japan), and the Great Khan. Just as Columbus's quest was shaped by Polo's own journey, so too did Polo impact discourses on cannibalism (*Inventing Cannibals* Ch.1)." With the help of Watson I hope to demonstrate how a white man was capable of creating a lineage of white writers that would read his works and acknowledge the power of the word cannibal and utilize it to tarnish the image of cultures that didn't fit in with the agenda

of the Western world. I also hope to depict the way that writers reclaimed this trope of divisiveness, and reverse engineered it to mend the wounds inflicted on humanity through slavery, war, and colonization.

### FIRST COURSE

The Boy Who Cried Cannibal: Power Dynamics in *The Twilight Zone*, Columbus' *Letters* and Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*, and *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*

I woke up one morning to my niece twiddling her thumbs in our living room, quarantine was getting the best of her. So I suggested we take a walk to the park. As we began dragging our feet along the pavement, she glanced up at me inquisitively.

“Aunty Mel, do you believe in aliens?” she asked.

I replied in the affirmative.

“Do you think that there are aliens that look exactly like us?” she added.

I answered by saying that it would be possible if the planet in which they reside had similar natural resources to earth. She nodded, seeming to be satisfied by my answer.

“What if they are evil?” she asked.

“It’s silly to assume that just because a creature is from another place, it must be evil,” I replied.

To which she blurted out, “I hope so, because I really don’t want them to eat my toes.”

The average listener would observe this conversation and determine that this is just a kid being a kid. In fact, my niece often sits with me in the living room inquiring about Krakens, ghosts, and other creatures from the vast unknown. She is drawn to the blank slate that mystery creates. Yet, the alien story struck me, not so much because it was unique or unusual, but rather because it was familiar. Through my own devouring of cannibal content one thing became clear; when one sapient group ponders another; the fear of being eaten alive is imminent.

Often in nautical literature, we are asked to accept a suspension of disbelief, pushed to presume that the narrator is reliable through the procedural lens of a log. In the case of Columbus' "Letters" information is being recorded by the crewmates or Columbus himself in order to give accurate information about new landscapes so that they may aid in the acquisition of new commodities for the nation of Spain. A problem occurs when the log moves away from the study of flora and fauna, and into a speculative study of anthropology. In a famous letter entitled "Las Casas on the Third Voyage," one of Columbus' shipmates describes their third journey to the Caribbean. They reach a location in Trinidad that they name "Point of Arenal". It is here that the crew comes into contact with twenty-five native men on a canoe. The date is August 2nd, 1498. The men on the canoe are said to be fearful of the Spaniards, and as a response Columbus' men show them shiny brass objects in boxes; taunting them with the lore of a new culture. The log says,

"They approached somewhat, and afterwards became terrified of the ship; and they would not approach. The Admiral ordered a tambourine player to come up to the poop deck of the ship and that the young boys of the ship should dance, thinking to please them. But they did not understand it thus, but rather, as they saw dancing and playing, taking it for a signal of war, they distrusted them" (*Voyages of Columbus*, p. 335).

In this scenario the first two sentences are presented factually, whereas the latter is completely based on inference. There is a degree of separation between the canoe and the conquistadors' ship as well as the obstacle of language guarding us from the complete truth of this interaction. In another translation in the Penguin Classic edition the last sentence uses observation rather than inference. In this translation it says, "On observing the music and dancing, however, they dropped their oars, and picked up their bows and strung them" (*Narrative of the Third Voyage of*



*Christopher Columbus, p.210*). The reader is given evidence that the natives prepared themselves to act out in violence as a result of the music and dancing. In this case the observations allow the reader to deduce that the native's drew their bows as a direct response to the festivities taking place on the invading ship, but the logic leading up to the determination that they viewed this as a signal of war is unclear. Like the Scythians, the people of the Carribean were at the time incapable of writing their own perspective into history, making it difficult to argue against the accounts documented in Columbus and his crewmates' letters. Interestingly enough, herein lies a second layer of obfuscation. Compounded with a lack of written defense by the natives of Trinidad, the language and culture is disrupted once again through the task of translating these letters from Spanish into English. Post-colonization indigenous Carribeans are forced to move away from a dialect of Taíno in order to adapt to the metropole, and in doing so another so a symbolic form of cannibalism takes place over time through the slow consumption of language itself.

The letters written on Columbus' first and second voyages to the Carribean vary drastically in their portrayal of the native Taíno and Carib people. When first arriving in the Carribean, Columbus speaks of the natives as charitable and submissive people, portraying the idea of easy conquest to Ferdinand and Isabella. In fact he grants a God complex to himself and his crew, stating that "Then others (island natives) have gone running from house to house and to the neighboring villages shouting: 'Come, come and see the people from the sky'" (*Letter of Columbus to Various Persons p.115*). Of course with the obstruction of language at play, Columbus would have been creating this dialogue purely out of context clues. In the eyes of the colonizer he was not feared but looked to as a god whom they would willingly give their possessions. Things take a turn in a document from the second voyage entitled "The Letter

Written by Dr. Chanca ". The landscape is removed of "harbours finer than any I (Columbus) know in Christian lands" (*Letter of Columbus to Various Persons* p.116) and replaced with wild fruit that when tasted left the crewmates with swollen faces (*Dr. Chanca* p.132) and home fronts with scattered human arm and leg bones (*Dr. Chanca* p. 135). In an article entitled "Carib 'Cannibalism': A Study in Anthropological Stereotyping", Richard B. Moore explores the word "carib". He suggests that when Columbus heard the Carribean natives refer to people that they feared as Caribs, he was confusing the language with stereotypes written in Marco Polo and John Mandeville's exploratory texts. Namely, "caritaba, cariba and caribal with canima, caniba, and cannibal" (p.121). Moore notes:

"Columbus connected Carib, the name of the people, to cannibal, meaning inhuman man-eater, which would serve as a pretext for enslavement and severe ill treatment. To overcome the religious qualms and moral scruples, especially of Queen Isabella of Spain, Columbus portrayed Caribs as repulsive cannibals, hardly human and therefore deserving of slavery and rigorous treatment. Again and again, Columbus used this pretext of cannibalism while urging the Spanish rulers to sanction Carib slavery" (*Voyages of Columbus* p. 122).

In this regard his first letter did not persuade Ferdinand and Isabella to enslave the people of the Carribean, so he utilizes the language learned from Mandeville and Polo in hopes that by labelling them as cannibal he will be permitted to colonize these "new" lands, and exploit their people. This goes along with Kelly Watson's *Inventing Cannibals*, as it demonstrates the regurgitation of the trope of cannibalism as a means of dehumanizing and othering indigenous peoples to aid in the sponsoring of colonial conquests. As the Dr. Chanca's letter continues, we see how this stereotype leads to such animosity towards these people that the Christian

colonizers feel compelled to commit heinous crimes. There is one point where he refers to the conduct of Italian Lt. Michelc de Cuneo in his Christian treatment of the "Indians". After capturing a beautiful Carib women, and trying to receive pleasure from her he writes,

“She was unwilling and so treated me with her nails that I wished I had never begun. But-to cut a long story short- I then took a piece of rope and whipped her soundly, and she let forth such incredible screams that you would not have believed your ears. Eventually we came to terms, I assure you, that you would have thought she had been brought up in a school for whores” (*Voyages of Columbus* p.135).

The word rape is omitted from the text, and the woman is portrayed as a vicious creature that must be subdued. She was presented to him naked, which they suggest was customary of the Carib people, suggesting that it was okay to violate this woman. There also seems to be a suggestion that whipping is a valid reaction to rejection and a gateway to obedience. We see here how the demoralization of these people through the label of cannibals immediately becomes a grounds for oppression and absolute hatred. As I continue this chapter I will demonstrate how this trope gets rewritten by the colonized, in an attempt to reclaim their agency.

When a human is taken as a slave a part of them is consumed by their captor, as they are forced to suppress their culture, identity, and language to become a source of labor. In his *Interesting Narrative*, Olaudah Equiano describes his painful journey where he was taken from Africa by force and enslaved by American colonizers. There are rumours that Equiano was born in the USA making this portion of the story fallible. If that is the case I would suggest that it may hold even more merit as it would then be a result of the collective memory of enslaved people in America. Respectfully, when speaking of Equiano's home country throughout this section of my paper it will be in reference to Africa and not America. He begins the novel speaking of a form

of slavery that exists throughout Africa. The enslaved people in his country were either kidnapped or prisoners of war, and in his culture slaves participate in the arts and are provided the same food and lodging as their masters. In fact, there is a hierarchy within the slave system where even certain servants would have their own servants. Equiano states that within Igbo culture there is the one Creator who “lives within the sun” and governs “events, particularly our deaths or captivity” (*Interesting Narrative*, Ch.1). They had magicians who also served as physicians who “restored wounds” and “expelled poisons.” As we see the Africa that Equiano describes to us is a civil society with a socioeconomic hierarchy that has much in common with the West. The savage that the colonists created disappears from the text when the African man is permitted to write up an image of himself, and consequently a new Africa emerges that dispels the white washed narrative that once prevailed.

Throughout his autobiography, Equiano faces the challenge of finding a unique voice in emerging abolitionist society, while being pressured to write in the language, and often the environment and customs of his captors. In his case he reutilizes the re-emerging trope of cannibalism in an attempt to hold up a mirror to his oppressors and say ‘this is what a true savage looks like’. Equiano explains that the first time that he ever saw a white person he feared that he was about to be eaten alive. In attempt to explain why he thought he was about to be devoured, he writes, “Their complexions too differing a lot from ours, their long hair, and the language they spoke, (which turned into very extraordinary from any I have ever heard) united to affirm me in this belief” (*Interesting Narrative*, ch. 1). The image here clearly reunites us with Columbian texts, where there is no inherent reason to believe that he is in danger based on the information provided. It seems clear that he is deliberately reusing this trope, knowing that it will directly relate the white literate population back to themselves. A few sentences later, his fears become

reaffirmed: “When I seemed spherical to the deliver and saw a large furnace or copper boiling, and a large number of black people of every description chained together, everyone in their countenances expressing dejection and sorrow, I no longer doubted my fate” (*Interesting Narrative*, Ch. 1). In the narratives produced by Columbus, there was no imminent danger from the people of the Carribean. Even if they were the cannibals that they were described to be, no white men were harmed in the making of his letters. Equiano’s accusation of the savage nature of the white man instantly becomes true; and although he is not about to be eaten alive, he is about to face potentially the worst fate known to man.

As literary imagination develops the trope of cannibalism begins to take on symbolic meaning, and in the case I am about to discuss it becomes tapered onto our internalized fears. We now enter *The Twilight Zone*, an episode entitled “To Serve Man” that represents the notion that the alien is often represented as human, evil, and most importantly to my oncoming thesis, cannibal. The episode begins with our “human” narrator welcoming us into his room in a spaceship. It is feeding time, and I say feeding as opposed to breakfast or supper, because the alien race who owns the spaceship made a point to suggest that time does not exist for their species. The narrator lies in bed smoking his cigarette and is told that it is 12 o’clock, noon on Earth. It is from this moment on that he begins to recollect about the day that the alien encounter began. We are taken into his memories with him. “It was an April day, and it was noon then, too. And people walked and drove and bought and sold and fretted and laughed. The world went on much as it had been going on, with a tentative tiptoeing alongside a precipice of crisis.” The camera pans across a series of desks in a United Nations courtroom. “There was Berlin to worry about, and Indochina, and Algeria, and all the other myriad problems, major and minor, that somehow lost their incisive edge of horror because we were so familiar with them.” Here we

have the depiction of a society on the brink of terror, but unaware of what is to come. The United Nations serves the purpose of unity, proposing that although there is conflict amongst the various nations, there is an innate understanding of how each culture acts. We no longer have a false sense of fear for other nations, because the fog of war so to speak, has cleared.

The political climate when this episode aired was far from an idealized postcolonial society; emerging after the launch of Sputnik, and as tensions arose in a Vietnam under French control. It seems to me that the Cold War lies at the center of this episode, with the Red fear lingering in the shadows of America. A new scene quickly leads us out of the UN headquarters, and shows us an image of an Unidentified Flying Object, as the narrator propels us into his account of the arrival of creatures from outer space: The Kanamits. There is a stark contrast here between the declaration of unity through familiarity, and the image of the UFO shooting across the sky as an antithesis of familiarity. Although the true fear of the episode lingers almost subconsciously, off screen a very real United States is in the midst of a space race with the USSR as the whole world looks towards space as a new frontier. In this case, the depiction of a superior alien race can resonate with our ideologies on what could happen if Russian emerged as a dominant power.

In the next scene we are implored to watch as the director elongates the mystery of an alien species known as the Kanamit in order to leave us to our preconceived notions and fears of a misunderstood other. We arrive back at the UN headquarters where the normally peaceful negotiations have now turned to frenzy. The Kanamits have landed, and our ambassador is about to arrive. Our first glimpse of this alien is a lengthy shadow featuring a human-esque creature with an enlarged head. It is dressed in a fashion not dissimilar to our image of Dracula's robe, with the long collar of the neck pushed upward to conceal the neck and cast a light shadow upon

the face. The camera casts itself along the wall, and walks the shadow through the room passing the desks of many nations, allowing us to note the terror and interest expressed on their faces as they watch the Kanamit pass them by. Gradually we pan away from the shadow and are taken to an image of the aliens back. The robe that we saw once ominously shrouded in shadow is revealed to be white. The audience seated at their couch, watching the *Twilight Zone*, are further removed from this alien image than those seated in the UN office. They have surpassed the first level of the encounter, facial recognition. The white robe appears, an undertone of relief crawls to the surface; as whiteness alludes to divinity, washing away a darkness which is so commonly placed hand in hand with the ideology of fear. The enlarged head also draws reference to the divine, as it demonstrates an all-encompassing mind, and also promotes their ability to usurp the population of Earth.

In the depiction that I am about to describe a switch in colonial power dynamics will emerge, where neo-colonist will be transformed into colonized. The identity of the United States will become synonymous with the identity of the Caribs, the Native Americans, the Other about to be “saved” by promises of a better life. The narrator appears in the room with us, a simple reminder that he is our tour guide through the *Twilight Zone*:

“Respectfully submitted for your perusal, a Kanamit. Height, a little over 9-feet. Weight, in the neighborhood of 350 pounds. Origin unknown. Motives? Therein hangs the tale, for in just a moment we are going to ask you to shake hands, figuratively, with a Christopher Columbus from another galaxy and another time.”

Here we are the analyzers of the situation in our lab coats, and the narrator just handed us a specimen to observe. We are also the victims of colonization and as for the aliens, they are our

Columbus. Commonly throughout history, conquerors wrote themselves as divine, they were the heroes of other nations coming in with their Christian sense, and new age technology.

The Kanimuts leave behind a book entitled *To Serve Man* that disguises their true intentions of invasion by leading the people of Earth to believe that they are being catered to, when in reality they are about to be eaten. The text is written in Kanimut language which leaves scientists baffled as they try to uncover the true meaning of the text. We see similar struggles often in colonialism, where forced to live under the language and culture of an emerging imperial power, colonists are unable to grasp the true intentions of the centre. A scene comes where our narrator finally gives up trying to determine the true nature of the Kanamits, and concedes by getting in line for a voyage on their spaceship. As our narrator steps up to the ship his secretary comes in crying, “Mr. Chambers, Mr. Chambers! Don’t get on that ship. The rest of the book, *To Serve Man*, it’s...” she stutters. “It’s a cookbook!” Alarmed, the narrator tries to run away but the aliens grab him and determine his fate to live his life on the spaceship until they are ready to eat him. It is this realization that breaks the facade.

Throughout history the trope of cannibalism has been used typically by the oppressor to make their target appear vile. In doing so the population would be on board with, say, the conquering or enslaving of other humans. If said other was barbaric, monstrous or cannibal, there is no reason that they should live out their life with free will, unless they can adapt to cultural norms, or convert to a specific religion. In the case of this episode of the *Twilight Zone*, our oppressor is imagined as a cannibal, and in relation to the political climate of the episode the aliens likely express the deep seeded American fear the space race can produce or entice something so technologically advanced that we would be at risk of being consumed.



Of course, this is fiction, and perhaps that is why it is so intriguing, as the episode now becomes a cautionary tale. Earth must remember this tale of trickery and deception, and maintain our suspicions of barbarism when encountering a foreign species. If we do not we too may fall into this trap of cannibalism. It mimics the conversation between my niece and I, where I tried to persuade her to see the good in others, and she maintained that she would try, but in her mind aliens were creatures that looked like us, and would not think twice about eating our toes.

As I explore the correlation of the cannibal, and otherness, we will explore many tales of colonialism, to show that this trope is so deeply ingrained into our minds that we tend to misdiagnose other cultures, and slap labels on them that may or may not exist.

## SECOND COURSE

### The Fall of Man: Renegotiating Cultural Taboos in *Moby Dick* and *Typee*

In the canon of colonial literature there is a direct correlation between the taboo nature of consuming human flesh and Yahweh's sanctions on the fruit that hangs from the tree of knowledge. An abundance of culture is born with the creation of Eden, with the men at the center having been granted dominion over "every creeping thing that creepeth upon the Earth" (KJV 1:26), a privilege taken away as punishment when Adam and Eve feast upon the forbidden fruit. This fruit, said to contain the knowledge of good and evil is the first taboo to arise in the Bible which very similarly to the Western notion of cannibalism is one is a famous religious example which proposes a limit on what we can and cannot eat. This sanction is put in place when Yahweh says, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (KJV 2:17), setting in standard that in going against the will of God humanity falls from divinity. In the age of imperialism, Christian explorers believed that they had a divine right to exploit other nations. It was almost as if they were attempting to take back this lost liberty, and even Eden itself via the celestial bounties of the Orient; by accumulating indigenous resources, and enslaving native peoples to aid in the agricultural arm of a new abundance culture formed catering to a Eurocentric world. Rather than journeying through God, they attempted to become gods and surrendered to many desires of the flesh, the taboo of which perhaps personified best by the gruesome face of cannibalism. By accusing natives of consuming human flesh, missionaries and the countries from which they hailed could absolve themselves of sin by casting it onto indigenous peoples, insinuating that THEY had in fact "fallen" from Western ideologies that they'd never known, and effectively banished them from their very own Edens.

The incorporation of Christianity in the cannibal narrative illuminates cultural difference as the blemishes of Western identity penetrate into a foreign skin. Hermann Melville's novel *Typee* utilizes phantasmal serpents as a narrative device to demonstrate a deep seeded desire of white men to be voyeurs into the world of cannibals. The novel is set in the Marquesas or the Cook Islands where two American whalers named Tommo and Tobi jump ship for the sake of adventure and exploration. Their journey on the island is met with many obstacles, including bountiful rain storms that lead them to stop and seek safe haven:

“During the hour or two spent under the shelter of these bushes I began to feel symptoms which I at once contributed to the exposure of the proceeding night. Cold shiverings and a burning fever exceeded one and other in intervals, while one of my legs was swelled to such a degree, and pained me so acutely, that I half suspected I had been bitten by some venomous reptile, the congenial inhabitant of the chasm from which we had emerged. I may here remark by the way-- what I subsequently gleamed -- that all the islands of Polynesia enjoy the reputation, in common with the Hiberian isle, of being free from presence of any vipers; though whether Saint Patrick ever visited them, is a question I shall not attempt to decide (p. 76).”

This passage ties up factual detail about the fauna of Polynesia with a Catholic Saint. As the story goes, Saint Patrick was disrupted from his forty day fast by the hindrance of snakes which resulted in him expelling all snakes from Ireland. The narrative further enforces the representation of the Biblical “fall narrative” in *Typee* as it pushes the notion that Saint Patrick was pressured to break his fast by a series of snakes, just as Eve was pressured by a serpent to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Immediately after this passage Tommo glances out from a precipice and peers upon a version of Eden lying in the valleys below. Prior to

meeting the natives on the island the narrator questions whether they will come across the kind native called the Hapaar or the savage Typee. In this regard, the phantasmal snake bite on Tommo's leg foreshadows that the landscape that he is peering on belongs to a tribe of cannibals. It suggests Tommo's desire to peer into forbidden landscape while simultaneously suggesting that the Typee have yet to commit a sin that would banish them from their Eden. This notion quickly diminishes when they reach the landscape below and discover a fruit bearing tree. Having hardly eaten in days they rush to take a bite only for the fruit to crumble away like the apples of Sodom dissipating into dust and ash. This notion suggests that despite that hidden beneath the beauty of the landscape is a village of fallen men.

The fact that Tommo's snake bite is an aspect of his imagination pushes forward the idea that white voyeurism is forcing this narrative of the landscape. In her article "The Forbidden Fruit of *Typee*", Rita K. Gollin alludes to Tommo's imagined snake bite along with a separate passage where he and Tobi are crawling on their bellies "like serpents". She states that "Tommo seems both a serpent and a serpent's victim" (p.). In an attempt to bring home an enticing new perspective to the Western world, the white man detracts the livelihood of the tribe that he seeks to discover. This becomes omnipresent when an infantilized Tommo adopted into the world of the Typee begins to break down their own unique systems of taboo. Lying in the background of this story is a Dutch Mission Ship, illuminating the notion that despite the appearance of an innocent anthropological study the horrors of colonialism are paving the road that allows this immersive experience.

The danger of tourism lies in the travellers disregard of unfamiliar cultural laws and expectations. Taboo is a Polynesian word meant to establish a boundary between ourselves and the thing that we desire. Many times throughout the novel locals must shout 'taboo' at Tommo in

an attempt to prohibit him from obstructing their system. As the tourism industry was born out of colonial expansion the nature of cultural exploitation often supplants the attempt at cultural immersion. There is a passage in *Typee* where Tommo wishes to take his love interest Fayaway on a canoe with him, but there are rules in place that prohibit women from boarding ships. Tommo admits that, “Although the ‘taboo’ was a ticklish thing to meddle with, I determined to risk its capabilities of risking an attack” (p.). He breaks down their rules in an effort of intimacy, demonstrating a blatant disregard for the boundaries set up by the Typee. The tribe allows Tommo to permeate these boundaries which is in part due to their childlike perception of him, but it also seems to be a bargaining tool that suggests that he can chip away at their laws and customs, but he should prepare for the day that this notion backfires. Eventually they attempt to label him as a member of their tribe by tattooing him, but he refuses to break against the rules set in place by western society at the time. The people of the Marquesas use teeth and bone acquired from their hunts in order to engrave the skin with ink. The tools themselves being a type of war trophy then symbolize tattooing as an expression of power and strength. By this notion the tattooing of Tommo would break down the initial taboo set in place by his Western ideologies. By breaking these preconceived rules he would begin to resemble a fallen man and as a result may begin to fall further by breaking down more boundaries as he transforms into a Typee warrior, which may lead him to the ultimate betrayal of Western humanity - the consumption of human flesh. The penning of this adventure novel allows the Western world to break into Polynesian culture, but by forbidding the Typee to ink Tommo (which would allow them to write back) we are forced to once again acknowledge that cultural exchange is often a one sided affair.

Although Melville’s work in *Typee* is inconclusive in its attempt at gaining cultural understanding of Polynesian culture (in part due to his inability to disengage with Western

philosophy), his work in *Moby Dick* he finds success at breaking down the cultural divide. Within the chapter “A Squeeze of the Hand” we are presented with an eroticization of the whaling industry. Our narrator Ishmael and other unknown members of the Pequod are given the task of squeezing hardened lumps of freshly accrued sperm oil in order to liquify the batch. He compares these nodules to ripened grapes being squeezed into wine, creating a fragrant bouquet of violets. A modern day sommelier could liken this to a glass of Cotes du Rhone, fragrant from the complex crafting of Grenache, Syrah, and Mourvedre; providing us with the strange sense of craftsmanship and history that simply emerges from a whale’s body. It is as if the grand lifespan of the whale and its mystical internal powers were able to age, ferment, and *bâtonnage* this delectable product without the aid of human hands. The effect of this “intoxicating” substance leads Ishmael to forget “all about our horrible oath,” referring of course to the crew’s binding pact to aid Ahab in his revengeful war against the white whale. What becomes interesting here is the likening of the effects of sperm oil to an inebriating product, that makes him feel “divinely free from all ill-will”. The phrase divinely free urges us to consider a Biblical dichotomy of sorts. In Genesis Book 9 Noah plants a vineyard and from the wine he gets drunk and strips bare in his tent. His son Ham sees this and clothes his father, much like Adam and Eve do after “the fall”. It is if Noah’s vineyards are intrinsically linked to the Garden of Eden, and the grapes are being delivered from the satanic serpent. Of course there is yet another biblical wine story in Matthew 26:27-28, “and he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament ’which is shed for the remission of sins’ ” (King James Version). The analogy between the eucharist and the divine whale is further united in both its cannibalistic and homoerotic tendencies when Ishmael admits to sneaking a taste of whale sperm.

Demonstrating that the effects of sperm oil are being simultaneously presented as a divine force of redemption, and a vehicle that drives the fall of mankind.

As the passage moves on and Ishmael's "serpentine" hands begin to accidentally interlock with the hands of his crewmates, we question whether this passage is about the moral limits of the whaling industry, or a commentary on America's opposition to homosexuality. Of course, alluding to hands as "serpentine" is again boldly suggestive of the fall of Adam and Eve, which seems to further drive home the argument that these biblical allusions were purposeful. On the one hand, the squeezing of another man's hand throughout the novel is about the intrinsic need for bonding (homosocial, or otherwise) in order to overcome the monomaniac self. This is obviously presented in this passage through the intoxicating elements of spermaceti that lead to both human affection and the destruction of Ahab's pact. This would be more akin to the idea that this acquisition of spermaceti allows for lost men to find themselves amongst comrades, leading to a bond so great that it removes man from sin. Yet, lingering at the surface this passage is chock full of innuendoes. It is after all a passage of men slithering their hands through a bucket of whale sperm as they gaze sentimentally into each other's eyes. In this case the intoxication of men induced by the scent of this illustrious substance can lead to homosexuality. These illusions of Noah's intoxicating sin, coupled with Jesus's offer of redemption implore the reader to consider reevaluating homosexuality as a taboo act.

Taboo, both social and in its original misapplied context is omnipresent throughout the novel through the presence of cannibals on the ship, and even more so through the metaphorical marriage of Ishmael to one cannibal, Queequeg. Through this passage in "The Squeezing of the Hand" we are transported back to the beginning of the novel when we learn of a phantom hand that haunts and comforts our narrator. In this particular passage Ishmael weaves perhaps the tale

of his childhood in the novel, wherein his step-mother sends him to his room in the middle of the day leaving him restless as he attempts to sleep. At some point he drifts off and awakens surrounded by pitch blackness with a phantom hand gripping his own. I believe the presence of step-mother as opposed to a mother creates the possibility that Ishmeal had to face the loss of his biological mother at some point. Although it is not an unusually cruel punishment, it seems to confront the nature of reprimanding a child's behaviour by isolating him rather than assuming that his actions are a cry for attention and embracing him. This phantom hand becomes a reminder of Ishmael's need for camaraderie throughout his periods of isolation. Interestingly enough he tells us that this phantom hand weighed upon his mind the night that he shared a bed with Ishmael, as a stranger (who was both male-bodied and a cannibal) and woke up to his arm wrapped around his body. Whereas the rhythm of the passages leading up to our encounter with Queequeg are riddled with the fear of sharing a bed with a man who peddles heads, we are left watching the metaphorical marriage of this unusual pair. With this homoerotic passage of squeezing out spermacetti so fittingly connected to Ishamel's embrace, we are left to question whether this relationship was less an allegory on acceptance of the other but rather a plead for American readers to normalize homosexuality.

These two passages push into the notion that the trope of cannibalism is not merely used as a means to deter us from faraway cultures, but is also a deterrent between our own systems of belief and the opinion of the general populace. In a chapter on early Christianity, Watson intelligently states, "The allegations against Christians however, remind us that one did not need to be geographically removed from the polis to be considered uncivilized or Other. Individuals whose cultural or religious practices differed from the masses, whose traditions remained mysterious, or who posed a threat to society as a whole could easily find themselves suspected of



anthropophagy”(Loc. 579). She states that Christians were first labeled as cannibals due to the Pagan majority's misunderstanding of the Eucharist. I believe that Melville pushes forward the connection between Christianity and cannibalism to represent the divisive state of the world born out of colonial pursuit, and further extends the notion of love for all mankind to include the LGBTQ+ community.

### THIRD COURSE

#### You Are What You Eat: The Sublimation of Cannibalism in *Star Trek's* Borg and *Moby Dick's* Captain Ahab

With the emergence of the Industrial Revolution a new group of cannibal depictions arose in contemporary literature, which began to utilize cyborgs and artificial intelligence as a way to cope with the fear of emerging technology. One of the first renditions of the AI is depicted in Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein" where a monster is created from human limbs and a mysterious Promethean spark. As these cadaver limbs gain new life I cannot help but draw a parallel between Dr. Frankenstein's creation and forms of cultural endo-cannibalism, in which the corpse is said to hold on to the lived life of the deceased allowing secret powers to be transmitted to the consumer. The novel also delves into the common theme professed throughout my senior project, that when humans come face to face with another sapient creature that they don't quite understand the instinctive fear that they are about to be devoured arises. At one point in the novel, Dr. Frankenstein's monster discovers a child alone in the field, and believes that perhaps he is too young to have developed a sense of prejudice, with this notion in mind he snatches the child in an attempt to engage with him. Once the child sees the mutilated form before his eyes the following text emerges. "He struggled violently. 'Let me go,' he cried; 'Monster! Ugly wretch! You wish to eat me and tear me to pieces. You are an ogre. Let me go, or I will tell my Papa' " (*Frankenstein*, Ch. 16). Although the immediate instinct of "struggling" is natural when one is being snatched, the next thought processes are less clear cut. It is the fundamental act of seeing a "monster" or an alien creature before his eyes that possesses him to assume that he is about to be eaten, the most fundamental manifestation of animal instinct, fight or flight. This notion further pushes Dr. Frankenstein's creation away from human identity despite its nature as

an assemblage of human parts, and forces the audience to acknowledge that we are hindering our experience with new technologies and cultures by living in fear of them.

Artificial Intelligence primarily comes about through a combination of algorithms and machine learning (a trial and error based approach), but more recently developers have been taking a rule based approach that involves programming rules and logic in hopes to build instinct driven AI. Journalist Matthew Hutson explores these new developments in artificial intelligence in an article for **Science Magazine** entitled “How Researchers are Teaching AI to Learn Like a Child”. One example of the need for instinct based AI, is presented in reference to self-driving cars where rather the machine will understand the rules of the road but is incapable of accounting for human drivers that chose not to follow the rules. On the other end of the spectrum we have Emmanuel Dupoux’s article entitled, “Cognitive Science in the Era of Artificial Intelligence: A roadmap for Reverse-Engineering the Infant Language-Learner” which uses the development of AI to help us better understand how infants learn to communicate. This article explores “The reverse engineering approach to the study of infant language acquisition consists in constructing *scalable* computational systems that can, when fed with *realistic* input data, *mimic* language acquisition as it is observed in infants” (p.2). This becomes quite an interesting feedback loop in which we are trying to program computers to learn the same way that infants do, while simultaneously utilizing these very same computers to understand the cognitive development of children. The very idea of a computer that can accurately simulate a human mind, eerily drives into the notion that we have created a form that is able to internalize our behaviors and consume our ways of thinking and processing. Overall, the function of the machine is to help better the lives of human beings by allowing us to learn and produce quicker and more efficiently, in a

sense they are the new “cannibal” consuming us as they quickly supplant the human labour force.

*Star Trek: The Next Generation* introduces us to a character named Data, an artificial intelligent creature that is enthralled by the humanity which created him. He was built in the image of his creator, Doctor Noonien Soong. Trailblazing artificial intelligence in fiction for the time, Data was also built with the intention of creating his own path in life, he is an AI set into the world with the power of free will and self-determination. . This is made clear in the episode in Season 4 entitled “Brothers” when Dr. Soong says: “I gave you the freedom to pursue whatever path you wanted in life, and you chose to emulate your emancipators”. As he is a computer we imagine that he would be capable of emulating any system in the known galaxy, he chooses to aid the USS enterprise, gluing himself to humanity rather than machine. The question that arises for me, is whether or not a programmed AI would be capable of freeing itself from serving man, even with the option of free will. The same question might apply towards a colonized state trying to go back to their cultural roots after their way of life was redirected by the metropole. The discussion goes on with Data questioning what his creator wished for him, and with the reply “I thought you may become a scientist like me”, Data began questioning if human father’s thought that their sons (in this case creations) were meant to be an extension of themselves that would eternalize the human form after death. In a sense Dr. Soong is professing the wish to be emulated or consumed by Data, which further suggests a societal desire to carbon copy themselves through childbirth.

Throughout the series Data seems to be fundamentally pivotal in unpacking the Asimovian tenet that robots are meant to be primarily of use in serving humanity. He works as

a medium between humanity and artifice, and his interpretations of the characters of StarFleet allow the viewers to take a step back and see an outsider's perspective on human behavior.

Seeing as much of the series is a catalog of various first encounters that come about as they traverse different planets, Data may function both figuratively and literally as a device and yet a character who parallels the logging of otherness throughout the series. There is one particular race that I believe is a direct contrast to Data, called the Borg. Whereas Data is a computer that chooses to emulate humanity, the Borg chooses to outright consume any sentient species along with their corresponding technology.

There is no doubt that the consumer craze of home computing in 1980's America led not only to their omnipresence today, but also to the development of the terrifying cyborgian hivemind villain that is , the Borg. It is clear throughout my project that colonizers pushed the notion of cannibal onto things that they do not fully understand, and this is possibly one of the most emblematic manifestations of this trend in modern day culture.. It is the year 1989 when the episode "Q Who?" airs, and the USS Enterprise is tricked into an unprepared meeting with a technologically advanced species through their Lokian arch-nemesis Q. The episode begins with a new engineer on the Enterprise, communicating cheerfully with a beverage replicator and it is emphasized that she attempts to affect human politeness to the appliance, saying both "Please" and "Thank you" to this computer which services her. This was a clear remark on the notion of robots being sentient, and the responsibility of humans to learn how to attempt to connect with the machine rather than treat one as their servant. As the Borg comes into play the Enterprise is no longer being fed by machines, but rather they are fed to machines, and it's Q who is doing the feeding.

Q is first introduced in the premiere of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, in an episode where he chooses to put humans on trial for their lives to determine whether or not they are a savage race that is hindering the growth of a multi-species solar system. The series is set 400-years in the future in a post-capitalist society, and is clearly designed to embody the imagined utopia of a unified Earth and a progressive new world. When it first aired in 1966, *Star Trek* was a pioneer for racial diversity. The star fleet crew included Uhara played by Nichelle Nichols (one of the first African American woman to play a non-servant role in American television), Hikaru Sulu played by George Takei (a Japanese man who is currently in the fight for LGBTQ+ rights), as well as the Russian character Pavel Chekov played by Walter Koenig (revolutionary during the Cold war). There is a meta aspect in questioning the progression of Earth, as the show itself attempts to create and navigate new horizons in American film. Q disguises himself as a sort of Columbus when he beams himself aboard the Enterprise dressed quite on the nose in the fashion of a colonizer or conquistador. This portrayal is further embellished by the god-like depiction of his species, alluding us once again to a divinized conqueror and his quest for dominion. He sets up a test for Picard and his crew involving a sentient shape shifting jellyfish that has been exploited by a species called the Bandi to transform into a spaceship. The normal human eye would be incapable of perceiving that the Bandi's "ship" was actually a sentient life form without the aid of Troi who comes from an empath species known as the Betazoid, allowing her to effectively communicate, albeit psychically. The crew demonstrates that they have evolved, with the aid of becoming a multi-planet species and are vetted to survive and communicate in a galaxy filled with unknown species. In proceeding with kindness, saving the sentient jellyfish species, and refusing to punish the Bandi for their exploitation they prove the progress of humanity and Q allows them to live for the time being.

In introducing Captain Picard and his crew to the Borg, Q is pushing them towards a technology that they are not prepared to take on alone. In doing so he deconstructs the narrative of the colonizer and the trope of cannibalism in a modern form by repositioning a purportedly technologically advanced society into the role of an archetypically savage one in an attempt to consume their culture, and potentially for their own amusement. The Borg itself consists of a large metal cube named the Hive that floats through space. Within the Hive there is a network of cyborgs in stasis plugged into the machinery which branches through and encompasses the entire structure of their space vessel. If you were to research exactly how the system worked you would be answered with a bunch of Star Trek technobabble. What immediately resonates with me however is that these humans, each individually linked to machines, are also stuck inside the Hive feeding it, and yet being fed by it. As the Borg takes in newcomers, it is said to also take in their entire life experience, which in return allows for the propagation of a collective consciousness. Although I believe that parallels between Q and Imperialism were intentional, the end game was not necessarily to watch humanity crumble, but to once again test humanity and see if they can resist the immersion into the Hive. Whether Q is a true agent of chaos, or simply a rogue pseudo-deity enamored by the nature of the human ego is unclear, but it is definitive that Q as a plot device does seek to demonstrate further nuance, or character in the way that humans deal with the metaphysical, and the unknown. Q, as a fundamentally divine figure considering their ability to genuinely modify causality, may be a strong representation of the way divinity and religion has misdirected humanity and mutated its desire for exploration and new worlds into one of conquest and consumption. This connection between industrialization, and self consumption as we labor away our human form in pursuit of the technology meant to aid us, and it seems

suitable that the imperialist mentality endemic in the Common Era would lead us once again to *Moby Dick* to unpack this concept.

In Hermann Melville's *Moby Dick*, Captain Ahab attempts to harness the energy of death and the underworld, as he transforms himself into a cyborgian representation of the horrors of the whaling industry. The entire novel tiptoes around death as we sail through the text on the backbone of Ishmael, a suicidal narrator who is ironically the only one left to tell the tale of the Pequod and the monomaniac captain of the ship. To begin my discourse on the reutilization of the body of deceased whales to harness the secret wisdom of the sea, I bring up a passage that resonates with the whaling industry as a pursuit for commodity:

“In his treatise on “Queen-Gold,” or Queen-Pinmoney, an old King’s Bench author, one William Prynne, thus discourseth: “Ye tail is ye Queen’s, that ye Queen’s wardrobe may be supplied with ye whalebone.” Now this was written at a time when the black limber bone of the Greenland or Right whale was largely used in ladies’ bodices. But this same bone is not in the tail; it is in the head, which is a sad mistake for a sagacious lawyer like Prynne. But is the Queen a mermaid, to be presented with a tail? An allegorical meaning may lurk here” (*Moby Dick*, Ch. 90).

Previously in my senior project I referenced the use of bones acquired from hunting trips repurposed by the “cannibal” Typee in order to create tribal tattoos. Yet in this passage we see an idea previously used to represent savageness placed upon a Queen. The proposal here seems to be that the royal families sent men off to sea so they may obtain spermaceti for their lamps, ambergris for their parfum and whale bones for their corsets. The Queen here becomes a mermaid, evoking the sirens in Homer’s *The Odyssey* whose enticing songs lure men to their death, urging us to reconsider the dangerous requests of the wealthy in pursuit of capital gain.



This idea reinforces itself throughout the novel as we are forced to reconcile with the fact that the men aboard the Pequod waste away their lives in pursuit of an industry that will soon be replaced by coal and fossil fuels.

The symbolism demonstrated by Queen-Gold's whalebone bone bodice is elongated in Captain Ahab's pursuit of a technologically advanced (warrior) self built through wearable commodities. The pre-robotic yet definitively cyborg transformation of Captain Ahab is best portrayed in later chapters when pushing closer to the battle with Moby Dick he conjures a crew to aid him in forging a new leg and spear that contain forbidden wisdom. The sound of children chanting, "Sugar, spice, and everything nice.", rings in my head as the captain's new 'savage' parts are forged. "Nail stubbs of the steel shoes of racing horses", "razors -- the best of steel", the bones of captured whales, and cannibal blood; that is what monomaniacs are made of. The items being prepared to aid Captain Ahab in his vengeful pursuit of the white whale are a new leg, and a spear. It is clear that the items being used are meant to depict strength and sturdiness, which is only vivified by the craftsmanship of the carpenter and blacksmith, whose lived lives materialize in the articles that they produce. Of the carpenter, our narrator says, "if his superiors wanted to use the carpenter for a screw-driver, all they had to do was to open that part of him, and the screw was fast: or if for tweezers, take him up by the legs, and there they were" (p.446). In this regard, the human body is retranslated into a craftsman's tool to depict a life cannibalized by its career. At one point, as the sanding of bones leads the carpenter to sneeze from the excess dust Ahab asks if he prefers to work with clay- labelling him as a "man-maker". This discourse extends us into the blacksmith whom Ahab refers to as Prometheus in relation to his crafts reliance on fire to produce. In the Prometheus narrative the titular character steals the fire of the gods to spark divine power into men. In the final forge of Ahab's spear, the captain dissuades the

use of water to temper the iron and instead baptizes it in the blood of the harpooners: Tashtego, Daggoo, and Queequeg. In reverse baptismal pursuit he says, “Ego non baptizo te in nomine patris, sed in nomine diaboli!”(Ch.113). We see here an opposition to Christianity in preference to cannibals as he baptizes the spear in the name of the devil, a notion earlier expressed by Ishmeal saying, “Better to sleep with a sober cannibal than a drunken Christian”.

Whereas Ahab’s resistance towards Western ideology occurs in the pursuit of taking claim over the other, in taking a Polynesian savage as his bedfellow Ishmael unites with Otherness through embrace. In this article entitled “Melville's Portrait of Same-Sex Marriage in *Moby-Dick*”, Hermann is suggesting that we view *Moby Dick*, as Melville’s attempt to kill the one sidedness of religion in attempt to create a world that accepts the Other (with the inclusion of homosexuality). He defines Ahab as the war hero who is so filled with hubris that he is unable to “truly love his fellow man in the spirit of universal brotherhood.” Hermann cleverly partners Fedallah (“god’s assassin” who persuades the vendetta against Moby Dick) with Ahab; and serves us the dichotomy of a relationship of anger and hubris in contrast to Ishmael and Queequeg’s story of love and sacrifice. He remarks, “What the story suggests is that humanity has a choice: to experience death willingly through a sacrifice of our inflated heroism or to be destroyed, in a literal way, by God, the Self, or the forces of Nature.” I argue that Captain Ahab’s hubris dissuade him from his love of fellowman, and as a result his role as captain of this industry he creates a version of himself that rides on the backbones of men worked to death in pursuit of industrialization, and the blood of black, indiginous, and people of color.

In “Star Trek: The Next Generation” we saw a society progressed by the intermingling of species as exemplified in the introduction of the half-betazoid / half-human Commander Troi. Resulting from this dual sense of self, she is able translate her superhuman abilities of empathy

into language that humans can understand. It once again drives home the point that in a world healed from colonization, humans must break past the allusion of difference and come together in embrace. In a chapter of *Moby Dick* entitled "Ahab's Leg" the narrator puts Ahab's virility into question, linking us to Melville's other shorter works such as "Paradise of Bachelors/ Tartarus of Maids" where industrialization moves us away from (Melville's) vision of an idealized society, which includes procreation. When Moby Dick consumes Ahab's leg he also consumes, "half a lung" and "half a heart", indicative of Melville's thoughts that ableism affects more than just our bodies but also pierces into our soul. In this case it wasn't just a loss of a leg but as will infer from the "ivory limb having been so violently displaced, that it had stake-wise smitten, and all but pierced his groin" it also took away his ability to have sex with the half along engaging with his stamina, and the half of a heart referring to his inability to please his wife and give her another son. When Ahab takes the bone from the sperm whale to utilize as a leg it is suggesting that he isn't merely mutating himself into a human with 'cannibal' strength that would be a suitable enemy to the whale, but he is attempting to regain the power of fertility. With Moby Dick further signifying the industry that provides candle sticks to power the world, we must acknowledge that the crippling of Ahab is further suggesting that his career forced him away from his family-- driving home the point that the Western world remains the true savage as it tears men away from their families in pursuit of a citified world, while also hinting as Melville's own suppressed guilt in having lost not one, but two of his sons to neglect.

#### FOURTH COURSE

##### Empathy and Shipwrecks in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*

There are few survival stories that push the human body to the limit again, and again, and again like we see in *Arthur Gordon Pym*. The titular character almost drowns to death in the opening pages, when a whaling ship crashes into his small sailboat whilst out on a drunken adventure with his mate Augustus. Holding the body of his unconscious friend, to maintain his head above the water at the brink of a hypothermic death, Pym calls out to God and then takes his last breath. Moments after, “a loud long scream or yell, as if from the throats of a thousand demons, seemed to pervade the whole atmosphere above the boat” (Ch. 1). This image of total disillusionment moves from a prayer to God to the screams of demons, literally reversing heaven and hell. Ostensibly blind with pain, he feels his body tumble over Augustus, and opens them to see the smiling faces of his “rough looking personages” (Ch. 1), who have saved the life of him and his mate. The screams of demons are an embodiment of surreal horror, in opposition to the very real but almost more comforting horror of drowning. As the next chapter emerges, we see that these coping mechanisms were not of all too much interest to Pym and as a result Augustus filled his head with melancholy tales of the sea in hopes to feign interest. It was part of their homosocial bond it seems, they would drink together, after which Pym would often lie in bed with him and ask to hear whaling stories. “For the bright side of the painting I had limited sympathy,” says Pym asserting the notion that he did not care for the happy whaling stories that Augustus shared. Instead, his “visions were of shipwreck and famine; of death or captivity among barbarian hordes; of lifetime dragged out in sorrow and tears, upon some gray and desolate rock, in an ocean unknown” (Ch. 2). For these two young men, horror was their emerging factor, they held onto each other once before in the grips of death and they seemed to

want that moment again, and soon enough they would be shipmates destined for doom on the Krampus.

The first event of horror takes place in a dream, as Pym lies trapped and hungry under the floorboards of a ship, for he and Augustus decide to sneak him onboard. There are series of horror filled dreams, but one in particular maintains itself upon waking, which is a stark contrast to the first horror scene described where awaking from the grips of death he found himself aboard a whaling ship. In this dream, that was not a dream, “The paws of some huge and real monster were pressing heavily upon my bosom -- his hot breath was in my ear -- and his white ghastly fangs were gleaming upon me through the gloom” (Ch. 2). It soon actualized that the monster pushing down upon Pym is his starving dog, however the shrouds of darkness and Pym’s imagination cause us to decipher the meaning of this image with the only clear imagery being that of “white ghastly fangs” that he sees through the “gloom”. We imagine the whiteness illuminated by the contrast of the dark, and that perhaps this is the only true thing visible under the gloomy floorboard. A similar image arises chapters later, again at a moment of complete and utter hunger for Pym still aboard the same ship, The Grampus. Two gruesome ambushes, and a disastrous shipwreck left Pym, Augustus, and two others called Peters, and Parker aboard. They see a ship in the distance, and are leaping with joy, believing that they are about to be rescued, Pym’s description of a passenger of the ship at first glance follows, “He seemed by this manner to be encouraging us to have patience, nodding to us in a cheerful although rather odd way, and smiling constantly, so as to display a set of the most brilliantly white teeth” (Ch.10). Upon further glance the illusion of this man takes full shape, and these brilliant white teeth emerge in the most grotesque way. “The eyes were gone, and the whole flesh around the mouth, leaving the teeth utterly naked, then, was the smile which had cheered us onto hope! This the -- but I

forbear” (Ch. 10). The ship that arrives in the distance is also wrecked by a storm, and all of the passengers are dead, and a bird pecking away at this smiling man flies across the Grampus and drops a piece of human flesh that Pym considers eating just for a moment.

Théodore Géricault’s painting, *The Raft of Medusa* or *Scène de Naufrage* (which literally translates to Scene of a Shipwreck) depicts an image of a melange of bodies dead and living piled upon what is left of the ship Medusa. Images of death were not uncommon in the visual and literary arts of this period, as the French Revolution (along with the cultural response to its failures) seemed to bleed representationally into a pool of collective trauma. As this collective distress emerged and evolved, so did new ways of viewing mental illness and identity, which pushed both the limits of self but also the introspective force necessary to evolve a collective imagination. This painting's main color palette is gray, white, brown, and red, even the waves seem to be more tonally gray than they are blue, emphasizing a world flushed of color while illuminating the redness of death and the diversity of the crew. In the far right of the picture we see the silhouette of a ship in the distance, most of the living men appear to be calling out to this ship, and waving cloth to gain the attention of the captain. On the left there is a wave approaching that can easily consume the remaining bits of The Medusa. The bodies on the raft are both brown and white, and the dead bodies also seem to depict different ethnicities. Men of all races seem to be grasping onto each other ensuring that the bodies that do remain, remain alive until the ship reaches. We arrive at the conclusion that in the grips of death humanity evolves through the shared empathy of horror.

In an attempt to further demonstrate how horror in remote places can lead us to heal the bitter wounds created out of discrimination I bring us to Harvey M Weinstein’s article, “Rehumanizing the Other: Empathy and Reconciliation.” The text gives us three examples of

rehumanization, or reconciliation of the Other. One such example comes from the film “No Man’s Land” from a scene in the midst of a Bosnian war zone. “The film presents itself, on the surface, with a certain tragic realism. Tchiki, a Bosniak, and Nino, a Serb, wind up trapped together in a trench in the middle of a fighting zone, with a third man, Tsera, a Bosniak, literally lying on a land mine that will explode if he moves. Both sides are shooting at them, and the incompetent UN forces endanger rather than help them” (575). The two enemies argue for a moment but quickly get past their differences, knowing that if they don’t resolve the situation they are all going to die. Nino and Tchiki begin to see each other as human when they discover through introductory conversation that they both had relations with the same women. Familiarity then lifts the shadow that was cast over them through difference. Another possible reason that the author suggests this unlikely friendship to emerge comes from the fact that although they are in the war zone, they are isolated from any outliers who could see the situation occur, which asserts the notion that the individual's perception of the other is guided by the wish for cultural identity, or fear of averting from it. As we will see in the next passage, crew members who were initially a target of mutiny form a strange bond with the rebels out of the common need to survive,

In *Arthur Gordon Pym*, the novel eventually degrades its remaining characters into cannibals, built out of survival necessity, when Parker proposes that one of the four survivors should sacrifice their life for the survival of the other three. Pym describes the aspect of choosing the human sacrifice in saying, “Let me run over this portion of my narrative with as much haste as the nature of the events to be spoken of will permit. The only method we could devise for the terrific lottery, in which we were to take each a chance, was that of drawing straws” (Ch. 12). Due to the taboo nature of the subject, he lets us know in advance that he will not talk about the actual act of survival cannibalism. In fact when the moment of sacrifice arises, Pym, our witness

in this narrative, is unconscious. We only know how the events took place through the survivability of Dirk Peters. The idea of pulling straws is a common way amongst shipwreck victims to determine who will become the unfortunate victim<sup>1</sup>, and also surrendering to the forces of probability or causality. The admission of the fact adds a hint of reality to this extremely fabricated autobiography. Moreso, it sheds light on the humanity that somehow exists at points of extreme terror. In this case, despite two of the four remaining shipmates being former enemies, they develop a plan concerning the moral limits of the law, and determine that they themselves can not make the choice of who is to be sacrificed. It is only through empathy for the others' situation that they are capable of leaving this choice up to fate rather than brutality. All the straws are in Pym's hand, and the last straw is pulled by Parker (a character Pym battled with and held as prisoner chapters earlier, is now permitted to have his course of life chosen by destiny).

“At this moment all the fierceness of a tiger possessed my bosom, and I felt towards my poor fellow creature, Parker, the most intense, the most diabolical hatred. But the feeling did not last; and, at length, with a convulsive shudder and closed eyes, I held the two remaining splinters towards him. It was a full five minutes before he could summon resolution to draw, during which period of heart-rending suspense I never once opened my eyes” (Ch. 12).

We see here that at some point the hate for this man who can win this lottery of life, and thus take Pym's life fades away. Drawing straws takes the act of choosing out of the group who is about to commit the uncommittable act of survival cannibalism. Where in most cases of

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<sup>1</sup> The drawing of straws also known as “Custom of the Sea” was not done in a shipwreck where coincidentally a boy named Dirk Peters was eaten as means of survival by the other three remaining members of the crew. When arriving back in England the survivors were charged for crimes of cannibalism in part because they did not follow this custom. Ironically, this story occurred after the writing of *Pym* so any correlation is sheer coincidence.



survivability; such as war, and ambush leave every man for themselves (or groups of men with similar ideologies, cultures, looks, etc pitted against a common enemy) survival cannibalism puts agency back into destiny. In this case anthropophagy is evil and taboo, whereas murder is part of the nature of humanity. In war, ambush, colonization, etc lives are not held sacred-- you are brainwashed to believe that your enemy does not deserve his life. This has a lot to do with the fact that in war, a soldier's mind is trained to dehumanize the enemy, whereas in these cases of survival cannibalism the victim is still deemed as human and it is rather the survivor that becomes the savage. In survival cannibalism, prejudices melt away and the humans all fighting for survival choose not to fight and we begin to question: Where does survivability end, and humanity begin?

## DESSERT

### The Necessity Defense and the Trope's Stickiness

The trope of cannibalism, which is deeply ingrained in its colonial roots, still finds a way to suppress black, indigenous, people of color today. I spoke in the last chapter about survival cannibalism, which happens to be the only visual (and potentially the only legitimate/documented) act of anthropophagy depicted in my Senior Project. I believe that it illuminates a piece of humanity that is just and fair despite the horror and gore due to the fact that often enough shipwreck victims don't duke it out for their lives, but instead talk it out and come to the conclusion that somebody will have to die and turn it into a negotiation. Despite the moral propriety that occurs when deciding that one person must be eaten for the survival of a group, when these shipwreck victims return home they face a penalty from the law.

Historically, the necessity defense has been used in courthouses to protect victims of dire hunger claiming that the act of cannibalism only occurred because it was absolutely necessary for survival. In Micheal Cotton's article entitled "The Necessity Defense and the Moral Limits of Law" he creates an argument for the necessity defense, claiming that despite its similarities to self-defense, it is not recognized in American criminal law. He begins with a concept of two men trying to survive at sea with nothing but a plank of wood. If one man thrusts the other off the plank to save himself it would adhere to the necessity defense. However if the other man chooses to fight back, he would be able to argue in court that he was acting out of self defense. About these scenarios Cotton writes, "The first situation is one where pressing *circumstances* provoke the defendant to commit an otherwise unlawful act, while in the second situation an assailing *person* provokes the defendant to commit the otherwise unlawful act. (Indeed, it could even be said that self-defense is a particular species of necessity.) ( p.37)." The first case to involve the

necessity defense was *United States v. Holmes* (1842), where a captain threw some men overboard a life boat in order to preserve the lives of the rest of the lot. The second case *Regina v. Dudley and Stephens* (1884) is a survival cannibalism account where there were four shipwrecked men, two of which killed the weakest so three of the men could eat and survive. Neither case held up in court. Cotton writes, “The Dudley and Stephens court did not even allow for a lawful struggle between sailor and sailor, but defined the moral duty more sweepingly, suggesting some general concept of self-sacrifice, perhaps Christian in nature, which greatly limited if not eliminated any necessity defense available to defendants.” Here he is stating that courts were under the impression that it was the captain’s duty to help others survive, even if that meant self sacrifice.

The necessity defense has moved its way into and made its home in the twentieth-century, almost always applying to situations involving theft of some sort as a resolution to hunger, yet in all of these cases the perpetrator was found guilty. Due to its deep seeded roots in cannibalism, this is incapable of being a viable defense. As a result the necessity defence doesn’t hold up against petty crimes such as stealing a banana from a fruit stand, and more often than not directly affects the incarceration rate of BIPOC. It’s in this way that this long running trope continues to repress non-white society today in the way that it was built. This particular example is only one of many such cultural phenomena in which the criminal-justice system reinforces institutionalized racism and acts to maintain social control.

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