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ONE · Anthropology and the Man-Eating Myth

Aegisthus: He [Atreus] seated each man apart and served up
to my father a feast of his own children's flesh.
Their heads and hands and feet were hacked into
pieces and thrown into a boiling stew, from which
he, in ignorance, ate his fill.

AESCHYLUS, *Oresteia*

As the title of this book, *Cannibal Talk,* implies, I deal with the discourses of cannibalism and the behaviors and practices associated with such talk ("discursive practices") in the interaction between natives and Europeans following the "discovery" of Polynesia by Captain James Cook in the voyage of the *Endeavour,* 1768–72. The "South Seas" of my title is also the product of the European romantic imagination rather than an ethnographic or oceanographic category. In exploring the theme of cannibal talk I am deeply indebted to William Arens's pioneering work, *The Man-Eating Myth: Anthropology and Anthropophagy.* Writing many years later and with more data and theory under my belt, it is natural that I should sometimes move away from his work.

Arens's thesis is well known. To put it briefly, he argues that the idea of savage cannibalism has little basis in empirical reality. It is for the most part an imputation to the Other, the Savage, or the Alien that he is engaged in a tabooed practice of man-eating. This in turn is a colonial projection providing a justification for colonialism, proselytism, conquest, and sometimes for the very extermination of native peoples. The discourse that Arens highlights is familiar to us now as "Orientalism," though in the course of this work I will make a case for using "savagism" instead. Arens nowhere denies that anthropophagy might occur under conditions of starvation and he does not entirely discount forms of "ritual anthropophagy," but the overwhelming evidence suggests that the attribution of man-eating to non-Western peoples in general and to "primitives" and "savages"

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in particular is a Western obsession. This attitude toward native peoples has had a long run in Western thought particularly after the opening up of the New World as the etymology of the word "cannibalism" itself suggests, namely, Carib, the first land of "cannibals" discovered by Columbus. Perhaps the part of the argument that raised the ire of anthropologists is Arens's conviction that cannibalism, insofar as it is derived from Western discourse, is also part of the anthropological identity; hence the provocative subtitle of his book. Although I share Arens's view that cannibalism must be seen as a European projection of the Other, I also believe that anthropophagy existed in several human societies, for the most part as kind of sacrament associated with human sacrifice.

Arens's work brought a storm of protest, largely by anthropologists. The reviews of Arens's work have been re-reviewed by both Arens and Peter Hulme.[1] The more extreme reactions seem to vindicate Arens's idea of the relationship between the affirmation of savage cannibalism and the anthropological identity. The strongest "accusation" is that the denial of cannibalism amounts to a denial of the Holocaust, a point made by one of our distinguished anthropologists, Marshall Sahlins, and followed by others.[2] Neither Arens nor I would dispute that the overwhelming evidence clearly indicates that the Holocaust did occur and its denial is therefore irrational. Yet, like Arens, I find this accusation astonishing: the kind of evidence available for the Holocaust is surely lacking in cannibalism. Further, the analogy contains hidden implications: the Holocaust entailed the killing of millions of Jews and Gypsies and others precisely because they had been designated as the Other or the Alien and thus as objects fit for extermination. For Arens, as well as for me, cannibalism is also a discourse on the Other. And although the imputation of cannibalism did not lead to the level of genocide of the Holocaust or the later killing fields in different parts of the world, it belongs to the general class of terms that isolate the Other as an alien, an object for "Indian hating" and even for extermination. In both cases a great deal of "justification" and many "reasons for" were formulated for practicing violence. One might even say that the doctrines of the Holocaust *and* that of cannibalism exhibit in their differing ways not only the shadow side of Western civilization but also the shadow side of the modern, postmodern, and global world in which we live today.

INTERROGATING LESTRINGANT: THE HISTORICAL REALITY OF CANNIBALISM

Among Arens's strongest critics is the French historian Frank Lestringant, who, in my view, has written one of the finest books on the subject, entitled *Cannibals: The*

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Discovery and Representation of the Cannibal from Columbus to Jules Verne. Unfortunately, Lestringant not only resurrects the solecism of the Holocaust but also attacks Arens as more "a sensation-hungry journalist than an *exact historian*," whatever that last phrase might mean.[3] He adds that even "responsible" scholars like Anthony Padgen have apparently fallen into the same trap, "spreading the denial of the cannibal through five continents" (*C*, 6). This statement I assume is not to be taken literally, given the fact that Padgen's important work deals with the manner in which Europe brought to bear its philosophical and popular values, including its preoccupation with cannibalism, to define the human status of the Indians of Mexico and South America.[4] Cannibal denial, says Lestringant, "under cover of idealism and intellectual high-mindedness, actually leads back to the misrepresentation of the Other" (*C*, 7). Proof that the cannibals really did exist is found in the well-known work of prehistoric archaeologists and also in "several learned refutations" of Arens's work (*C*, 191, n. 18). Hence the question posed by him: "What has the cannibal to say to us now? Did such a person ever really exist?" (*C*, 6).

Lestringant's laudable goal is to resurrect the later cannibals who "with their proud and cruel eloquence" continue to speak to us, and these voices are best heard in the "historical period between Columbus's discoveries and the death of Montaigne a century later." Because their voices "have sunk, sometimes to the point of inaudibility," it is the task of the historian to retrieve them "from beneath the stratagems, excuses, and prim attenuations of the learned, on the one hand, and, on the other, the sensational exaggerations beloved of the public at large" (*C*, 7). But Lestringant has another equally important theme exemplified in the subtitle of his work—the historical (mis)representation of the cannibal in European thought. Therefore interrogating Lestringant permits us to unravel a major dilemma of serious scholars who would affirm the ethnographic and historical reality of anthropophagy alongside its admittedly undeniable unreality.

Lestringant has an excellent discussion of how Columbus "translated the insulting names which the Arawaks had bestowed on their cannibalistic neighbors [the Caribs] in terms of the existing 'scientific' worldview" (*C*, 16). This pertains to one-eyed and dog-faced peoples eating human flesh and drinking blood, found in the writings of Pliny and taken up by Columbus and Vespucci (*C*, 22). The earliest woodcut of the cannibal scene has Brazilians with dog-faces chopping human quarters on a butcher's block, a "phantasmagorical conflation" made through the connection *canis-caniba*, a movement from Arawak to Latin. Accounts of cannibals in the Lesser Antilles (the home of the Island Caribs) depict them fattening

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young boys bred from prisoners of childbearing age to eat them later (*C*, 19). It seems that with Columbus's first epistle narrating the voyage of 1492 there is a important change in the nature of the cannibal, who "take[s] them [the hapless Taino Indians] as small children and castrate[s] them, as we do to capons or pigs which we want to fatten and make tender for food," thus focusing on the "horror of anthropophagy" that is "stripped of its ritual aspect and reduced to a mere matter of nutrition" (*C*, 23).

The domestication mytheme takes another turn among the Caribs according to the famous humanist scholar Peter Martyr (Pietro Martire d'Anghiera). Here women were not slaughtered because they were needed for breeding stock, reminding us, however vaguely, of their role in Plato's utopia. They are cared for by their conquerors to "bear young as we do hens, sheep, cows and other such beasts, and keep the older women as slaves for their use" (*C*, 24). Wonderful illustrations from around 1554 from Basel depict a whole human being roasted on a spit and another in which a person is being butchered (*C*, 25). Though Jean de Léry, an early observer of the Brazilian scene, protested against the representation of Brazilian cooking on open spits, he was ignored by virtually everyone. This in itself should make us pause to ponder the reasonableness of other representations of Brazilian anthropophagy. Thus the Austrian missionary Benedictine Philoponus rehashed the earlier fantasy as reality using the material collected, collated, and published in several volumes by Theodore de Bry and his family as the *Great Voyages* (1590–1634): "Hurdles laden with roasting children, women being quartered on butcher's slabs or pickled, men roasting on spits" (*C*, 26). As Léry neatly puts it, "the license to lie" is endemic among travelers to distant lands because "they cannot be contradicted" even though, he adds, some of the things people witness in other lands may be truly fantastic.[5] Similarly, Hans Staden's editor and family friend, Professor Dryander, wrote in 1557 that "land travelers with their boundless falsehoods and reports of vain and imagined things have so wrought that honest and worthy people returning from foreign countries are now hardly believed."[6] Our own problems of interpretation are compounded when we attempt to disentangle the indigenously fantastic with the invented fantastic of those given a license to lie; this is especially evident in the subject matter of this book. (See figures 1, 2, and 3.)

It seems to me that Lestringant falls into a popular trap: he brilliantly discusses the appropriation of the cannibal in terms of Europe's own preexisting values and prejudgments stemming from its past, as far back as the ancient Greeks. Yet a troubling question remains: How does one distinguish the *real* cannibal from these

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FIGURE 1
Tupinamba quartering captive and boiling intestines and head. From Theodor de Bry, *America* (Frankfurt, 1590). Courtesy of the Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

confused fusions of multiple horizons? Or to put it in his own words, how can Lestringant separate the "degrading of the image of the Other" found in the historical record from the *real* image he hopes to recover from this very same record? Lestringant tentatively attempts to do so from the Tupinamba, those cannibals made famous by Montaigne.[7] Although these fascinating cannibals are outside the scope of this work, it is worth briefly considering Lestringant's discussion of their cannibalism as represented by the French Jesuit André Thevet.

Thevet collected a mass of material, but he lived in the vicinity of the Tupinamba only for about ten weeks in 1556.[8] Like Jean de Léry and Montaigne after him, he stressed the nobility of the captive, his incorporation into the life of the enemy community and his being provided with a wife, often the daughter of the captor, who might even bear him children. He was given freedom of movement up to the eve of his slaughter, when he was put in irons, "a custom probably borrowed

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FIGURE 2
Distribution of head and intestines among Tupinamba women and children. From Theodor de Bry, *America* (Frankfurt, 1590). Courtesy of the Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

from the Europeans." He might live in the enemy village for years but would not escape because the idea of ransom is humiliating (though the connection between escape and ransom is not clear). Unlike Hans Staden, both Thevet and Léry emphasize the ritualistic and sacrificial nature of the killing of the victim, sometimes translating this as a kind of baptism. Thevet and other French writers agree on the noble defiance of the victim before an assembly of ten or twelve thousand "who will soon be feasting on his flesh, divided into infinitesimal portions"—though how this apportionment is translated into practice seems a mystery (*C,* 60). As with Léry, women receive the entrails of the victim, whose head is stuck on a pole. Thevet's later work, *Cosmographie Universelle* of 1575, adds a piece of priestly misogynist projection: in addition to eating the viscera, the women also eat the victim's "shameful parts" (*C,* 61). These vulgar acts are committed by old

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FIGURE 3
Tupinamba grilling of quarters for women with sagging breasts, menfolk, and children. From Theodor de Bry, *America* (Frankfurt, 1590). Courtesy of the Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

women with "hanging breasts" based on the model of the witches of European origin, as Lestringant rightfully recognizes. It is a theme handled with acumen by Bernadette Bucher.[9]

According to Lestringant, Thevet leaves all avenues of explanation open, whether as vengeance, Eucharist, or baptism. But is this a virtue? Or is Thevet's text a mélange of conflicting data that permits others—Lestringant and Brazilian ethnographers—to pick and chose and furnish whatever explanation of Tupinamba cannibalism seems feasible? Thevet's highly elaborated narrative with its particularity of detail "give[s] the ethnographic tableau a vivid impression of truth" (*C*, 66). Whether a virtue or a fault, Lestringant's final comments on Thevet leave me somewhat uneasy. He calls Thevet a mythmaker; instead of providing "a linear narrative, [there is] a collection of loosely collected data. The

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result is that the cannibal sacrifice is hugely inflated, into a liturgy lasting three or even five days. Is this the 'cannibal tragedy' of the Indians, as it really took place—over nicely graded five acts? Or is it the fortuitous outcome of a sum total of unsorted evidence? To that question, Thevet's method, which rejects nothing and leaves no stone unturned, provides no answer" (*C*, 67). But one must ask: What was the reality of Tupinamba and Brazilian cannibalism that Thevet, and following him the modern scholar Lestringant, strives to understand?

Ironically, Lestringant seems skeptical of Thevet where for me he seems strongest, that is, when he comes close to recognizing Tupinamba anthropophagy as a sacrifice, liturgical in character. Thevet's Jesuit background perhaps helped in this regard, and Lestringant may be mistaken in assuming that the ceremonial associated with the sacrificial victim is basically Thevet's invention. Owing to the distortion that arises from Thevet's attempt to fuse the horizon of Tupinamba anthropophagy with the horizon of his European historical and cultural experience and prejudices, he simply cannot provide us with even a reasonable guess as to what Tupinamba sacrifice might have looked like. And neither can Lestringant extricate us from this dilemma. Although Lestringant is at his critical best when he unscrambles the genealogy of Thevet's thought, he does not even pose the question whether the disturbing and disruptive colonial presence of the French and the Portuguese might have affected Tupinamba anthropophagy and ethnography.

Thus Thevet's voluminous work presents serious problems of validation. He was essentially a "cosmographer," and though a talented one, he, like others of his class, "pandered to public taste" and grossly oversimplified the ethnographic reality.[10] He assiduously collected ethnographic material from old Norman residents in Brazil, particularly the *dragomen* or interpreters, some of whom had gone native (*C*, 46). Thevet further tells us that twenty years after he wrote his *Cosmographie Universelle* (1557) he returned to this material in a draft manuscript, *Histoire de deus voyages aux Indes Australes et Occidantales* (1587–88), in which, according to Lestringant, the "narrative becomes yet more entangled." Lestringant adds that in this later work he was at least freed from "the 'slaves' whose task consisted not just of endless copying, but also of selecting from a hyperabundance of documentation, embellishing it with borrowings from the best authors and putting the huge mass of material into some kind of order" (*C*, 65). Thus it appears that in addition to getting secondhand information from settlers, the task of collating this material was left to an army of assistants and at least one ghostwriter, who apparently was a competent Hellenist. In the last manuscript Thevet collated hearsay information about tribes like the Tapuia who disdained the flesh of prisoners but instead "ate

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their dead relatives to spare the indignity of rotting in the earth" (*C*, 66). This could either refer to a distorted view of mortuary anthropophagy or, more likely, the theme of necrophagia that emerges almost everywhere in Western discourses of cannibalism.

THE "CANNIBAL SCENE": THE EMERGENCE OF MODERN CANNIBALISM

Lestringant and other scholars have provided the history of the idea of the cannibal in Europe's imagination beginning with the Greeks of Homer. But the modern cannibal, Lestringant rightly says, emerged into the European consciousness with the voyages of Columbus and the opening up of the New World to Europeans. It is certainly the case that the new cannibal had some older features, such as that of the wild man of the medieval European imagination, the fantastic cannibals found in Prester John and Sir John Mandeville, and those wonderful cannibals with dog heads and tails (*homo cadautus*) that in turn were part of a larger medieval image of the fantastic.[11] But with Columbus and the voyages of discovery, it was possible to pin the cannibal to the wall, as it were, or to empirically demonstrate the existence of the wild man in the wild tribes of the Caribbean and the Americas.

The confrontation of the cannibal with Europe, says Peter Hulme, appears in the "earliest modern account of cannibalism," that of Dr. Diego Alvarez Chanca, who sailed with Columbus on his second voyage in November 1493. Columbus ordered a "light caravel" to explore the coast to look for a harbor. The captain of that expedition then entered a native house, and the occupants fled at their arrival, leaving the household items intact. "[The captain] took two parrots, very large and very different from all those seen before. He found much cotton, spun and ready for spinning, and articles of food; and he brought away a little of everything; especially he brought away four or five bones of the arms and legs of men. When we saw this, we suspected that the islands were those of Caribe, which are inhabited by people who eat human flesh."[12]

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. Chanca 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. Secondhand information is given an authoritative thrust through the employment of the "we" in the text. As Hulme points out, the cannibal evidence can "only refer to a collec-

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tive view promulgated principally by Columbus himself as source of authority and as main conduit of information and opinion between first voyage and second."[13] Chanca's description is, one might say, the "elementary form" of the cannibal scene in which the existence of a few bones is sufficient to indicate the existence of cannibalism. This scene then can be elaborated in various ways in its later development. Thus Peter Martyr, who did not even get to the Caribbean, "pluralised the location, gave the houses kitchens, added pieces of human flesh broached on a spit ready for roasting and, for good measure, threw in the head of a young boy hanging from the beam and still soaked in blood."[14] This description becomes further elaborated and magnified in later engravings and neatly described in an account of 1892 celebrating the Columbus quarter-centenary.

> In the kitchens were found skulls in use as bowls or vases. . . . The Spaniards entered apartments which were veritable human butcher-shops. Heads and limbs of men and women were hung up on the walls or suspended from the rafters, in some instances dripping with blood. . . . In a pot some pieces of a human limb were boiling, so that with these several evidences it was manifest that cannibalism was not an incidental fact, but a common usage, well established and approved in the life of the islanders.[15]

The "cannibal feast" that I will discuss in this book is the culminating appendage to the cannibal scene as it germinates in the European imagination and resurges in the descriptions of the Tupinamba and virtually in every place in which Europe maps the world with savagism. The societies depicted are not only those of the "primitive" world but also include villages and tribal groups in the "civilized" world outside Europe. The cannibal feast also has a hoary ancestry in European thought from the time of the Greeks. Marina Warner has depicted its genealogy; it is therefore not surprising to find that mytheme imposed on the multiple forms of anthropophagy associated with human sacrifices in other cultures.[16]

Although we have isolated cannibalism in this work, it cannot be divorced from what Roy Harvey Pearce in a pioneering study labels a discourse of "savagism and civilization."[17] Pearce, anticipating the work of Edward Said, deals with the ways in which the American Indian was defined by the settlers, especially the Puritans, as savages in opposition to the civilized values of rationality, progress, and the knowledge of the true religion they possessed. The discourse on savagism deals with those who do not have these values and live in a state of nature, close to the very animals they hunted. Pearce argues that savagism has a positive and a nega-

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tive component, as one might add was the case with Orientalism. The positive emphasizes the nobility of a creature living in a state of nature uncorrupted by the trappings of civilization. The negative states that in the Puritan consciousness Amerindians were children of Satan, and Satanism was "at the core of savage life."[18] Or they were those who, though belonging to a common humanity as the children of Adam, have somehow fallen from that high state during their passage from Northern Asia, or they had been removed from the knowledge of god for some other reason. Sometimes both negative and positive features define the projective image of the Amerindians; sometimes one or the other predominates, though for the most part they were defined in negative terms.

According to the prevailing biblical knowledge, seventeenth-century settlers "had to assume that the Indian's nature was absolutely one and the same with their [own] nature; the integrative orthodoxy of their society demanded such an absolute."[19] Therefore the settler's duty is to bring the savage within the orbit of civilized values. When that fails, extermination is justified, or, to use a nice phrase from a later writer, a "regeneration through violence."[20] It is not difficult to see that the term "savagism" has a wider application, and I shall use this term much in the manner of "Orientalism" to designate the ways in which people living in small-scale societies have been viewed by both the popular and the scholarly imagination.

The medieval travel literature that peopled the vaguely known world of Asia with strange monsters and wild men is now well known to us, if not fully understood.[21] But strange monsters are neither simplistic projections of the Other nor an exclusive preserve of the European mythopoeic imagination. Other peoples also had monsters that lived in mythic times and current places, and they flourish in our dream lives and fantasies. Rarely, however, did these monsters represent unknown *people* living in distant places. Rather, in those same small-scale societies it was more common to represent the Other as the sorcerer or the witch, not just the outsider or alien but the alienated part of one's own being.

Margaret Hodgen has demonstrated that after the voyages of discovery, the human monsters and wild men of the Middle Ages were being foisted on the savage, so that monstrosity became an integral component of savagism. "In the first book on America, published in English in 1511 (or even earlier in a Dutch edition), the Indians were described as 'lyke bestes without any resonablenes. . . . And they ete also on[e] a nother. The man etethe his wyf his chylderne . . . they hange also the bodyes or persons fleeshe in the smoke as men do with us swynes fleshe.'"[22] Hodgen also documents for other cultures, as Pearce does for the Amerindian, a strong strand of writing in the post-sixteenth century that identifies the savage as

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a being apart, not fully human. Ultimately, this strand must break or strain the medieval Christian notion of the great chain of being, wherein all humans were descended from Adam and Eve and every other being and thing was rigidly and hierarchically ordained.

In the newer spirit, John Wesley spoke of American Indians as possessing no religion, laws, or conceptions of civil society and as murderers of fathers, mothers, and children. Asians and even savage Europeans were not exempt. "What say you to thousands of Laplanders, Samoiedes, and Greenlanders, all who live in the high northern latitudes? Are they as civilized as sheep or oxen? Add to these the myriad of human savages that are freezing among the snows of Siberia. . . . To compare them with horses or any of our domestic animals would be doing them too much honour."[23] Wesley argued that according to the doctrines of original sin, Africans and other non-Western peoples were corrupt and degenerate. Wesleyans were of course important in the proselytizing work of the South Seas, and it is hard to believe that Wesley's crude views of Africans and others expressed below were not operative elsewhere:

> Your nicer Hottentots think meet,
> With guts and tripe to check their feet,
> With down-cast eyes on Totta's legs
> The love-sick youth most humbly begs,
> She would not from his sight remove,
> At once his breakfast and his love.[24]

The opening up of the world through the voyages of discovery forced Europeans into actual confrontation with strange beings, and to a realization that the world they had peopled with monsters did not match with reality. People in these strange lands, though they were physically the same, now took over the *persona* of the monsters of the mythopoeic imagination. They wore hideous "monstrous" masks, practiced face and bodily decorations and mutilations, and above all, possessed strange rituals and ceremonial practices like "war dances." The monster could easily take on the form of the Savage, and he is now opposed, in a manner rare in the medieval imagination, to the Civilized. Along with this comes the recognition, at least with Enlightenment thinkers, that the Civilized must also once have been a Savage, reflecting a persistent theme of the historical universality of anthropophagy.

The development of a sense of reality in respect to other cultures then becomes

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a somewhat complicated matter. In the first place, the older imagination, rooted in fantasy life, is not easily shaken. Such creatures existed in the Shakespearean imagination: in Ariel, in Caliban, and in the anthropophagi and beings whose heads grew beneath their shoulders. They existed also in the worldview of Columbus and others sketched above. When Columbus traveled into the New World of the Caribbean, he reported, "I have so far found no human monstrosities, as many expected."[25] Yet he went on to note exceptions: man eaters and men whose tails we have already noticed; Amazonian women, and the hairless. The Spaniards in 1560 saw giant men in Patagonia, the land of the *patagones* or "big feet," another recurrent fantasy.[26] Although subsequent travelers produced more reasonable accounts, the earlier perceptions continued to affect later travelers' visions of these people. Thus Byron, the English circumnavigator, wrote to Lord Egmont in 1765 of a people whose size made their own grenadiers appear like dwarfs. And he added that "[they] came the nearest to Giants of any People I believe in the World."[27] It was Wallis and Carteret who a few years later had to finally disabuse the British reading public regarding Patagonian giants.[28] Nevertheless, it is somewhat surprising to find the strange *homo cadautus* reappear in the "scientific" literature of the mid-nineteenth century: "For presently a Negro tribe with tails has become known in Abyssinia, whose cranial capacity has not yet been investigated. But owing to their animal-like voice, small size [etc.] they resemble apes so closely that only language, type of teeth and form of foot differentiate them from apes."[29] It is in this morass of delusion that scholars have, heroically as well as comically, searched for the true cannibal.

The incorporation of the savage into the model of the monster has more general implications and is not simply a matter of physical perceptions of travelers, navigators, and early explorers living under conditions of strain. Psychologically more salient is the identification of the fantasy of monsters with the nature of savages. This implied the fusion of the psychic reality of monstrosity with the physical reality of savagism. There were of course gradations in this identity. In Cook's time, as Bernard Smith has shown from the paintings made by the ships' artists, the Polynesians, especially the Tahitians, were "soft savages," those possessed of some nobility, whereas the Fuegans and Australians were "hard savages"—wild men, muscular, with stubbly beards.[30] The Maori were in between since they were defined primarily in terms of their anthropophagous propensities. Even soft savages not only possessed monstrous psychic and cultural features, such as tattooing and human sacrifices, but also worshiped monstrous gods and "fetishes."

My interest here is in the monsters of the imagination being projected onto the

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psychic or cultural life of the savage, even where the savage is recognized to be physically similar to the civilized. With the voyages of discovery the gradually developing reality-sense meant that monsters could only be given a metaphoric extension into savage psyche and culture; they did not exist in the real world. Nevertheless, monsters and wild men continue to exist in fantasy, and in our time as the idea of interplanetary travel becomes part of the new mythopoeic imagination, they get transformed and then transferred onto other planets in science-fiction and television adventures.

The impossibility of finding monsters in the actual world as it expanded before the European consciousness had one notable exception. The anthropophagi of the medieval world were converted into the cannibal. The term "cannibal" replaced the term "anthropophagi" and became a sign of savagism. As far as the original Island Caribs were concerned, they were wiped off the face of the earth by intruding diseases and intrusive killings.[31] The killing of monsters was after all a part of the fantasy and of the heroic myths of Western culture throughout its history.

If the monsters of the medieval imagination were symbolically or metaphorically represented in the new wild man, the savage of the voyages of discovery, so also was the cannibal, initially in the Americas and then much later in the South Seas. Hence the scientific curiosity about cannibalism in Cook's voyages, but behind that scientific curiosity lie a whole literature and public knowledge of both savagism and cannibalism, and a continuation of the earlier idea of wondrous and hybrid beings of exotic worlds. All this, combined with English fantasies and traditions of cannibalism, affected not only the representation of the Other, as I will demonstrate in this work, but also the style and quality of the writing. Medieval writings on monsters were often pure fabrications, even when the authors claimed to be eyewitnesses; one must surely expect the license to lie to occur in the new situation too but under the imprimatur of truth.

CANNIBALISM: AN ORIENTATION TO THE OBJECT OF INQUIRY

Let me start with Peter Hulme's suggestion that we make a distinction between cannibalism, which is essentially a fantasy that the Other is going to eat us, and anthropophagy, which is the actual consumption of human flesh.[32] I will adopt this distinction even though it often gets blurred for the good reason that reporters have confounded the two things. Further, in the history of Europe prior to Columbus, the term "anthropophagy" and its derivatives belonged to the same

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logical class as cannibalism. Anthropophagi were cannibals with the difference noted earlier: the latter were associated with actual living beings, savages. In my developing discussion in this book, the distinction gets further blurred because I show that in the context of colonial violence the two phenomena may occasionally fuse together to produce a label-defying hybridism. Nevertheless, I believe the distinction between cannibalism and anthropophagy is a useful heuristic one that I shall sometimes use and sometimes blur.

I unabashedly join those who deny "cannibalism," but I also have no problem with affirming "forms of anthropophagy." Although anthropologists might not want to make the distinction between cannibalism and anthropophagy, few would disagree that the myths and stories of cannibalism far outnumber the practice of anthropophagy. This poses a further problem: If the dread of the cannibal Other is omnipresent as *fantasy*, how is it that the ethnographers and historians have been ready to believe in humans eating other humans as an *actuality* of the empirical record? Are the fantasy and the reality independent of each other, or are they inextricably related in the complex ways I shall elucidate in this book? Cannibalism is like sorcery in this regard: the imputation of sorcery to others is common cross-culturally but the practice of sorcery is rare. And witchcraft is entirely based on accusations and on peoples' *belief* in its reality. There are no real witches in the world, even if people believe there are real witches in the world. But anthropophagy is more complicated: for example, people can be motivated to eat human flesh if they are starving, though if the taboo is strong, some may prefer to die. A good example of the latter comes from those notorious cannibals, the Aztecs, who, under conditions of dire food scarcity and physical emaciation during the siege of Mexico "did not eat that of their own people, for, if they had done so, they would not have died of starvation."[33] The best evidence for anthropophagy during starvation comes not from the so-called savage peoples but from the civilized: in shipwreck and frontier anthropophagy, as I demonstrate in chapter 2. I can also accept what is sometimes called "ritual anthropophagy" or "ritual cannibalism," though I retranslate this phenomenon as one associated with a widely dispersed and variable institution shared by both savagism and civilization, namely, human sacrifice. Here also the actual consumption of the sacrificial victim need not take place; symbolic substitution is common even in Polynesia, thereby showing a great deal of "symbolic remove" from actual anthropophagy. Archaeologists record for the American Southwest and elsewhere cases of mass consumption of enemies. From my perspective there is no need to "prove" or "disprove" the existence of anthropophagy in human culture; wanting to "prove" anthropophagy is not a problem *in*

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anthropology but a problem *for* anthropologists. What is difficult to prove from the archaeological record is the context or motivation for the consumption of humans, a theory or interpretation, if you will, that will help us explain or understand the data, outside of the obvious fact of the existence of anthropophagy.[34]

I do not have problems with the Dahmers of the world either. Anthropophagy can exist as pathology, as much as familial incest does. And although it is much rarer than the latter, both proliferate in fantasy. Finally, let me point out that, except for protein-deprivation fanatics, it is only in the rare case that a reporter would claim that eating human flesh is the normal or normative diet of human savages, though several observers have stated that it is the most desirable one. If eating human flesh were normal *and* desirable for those human communities such as the famed Tupinamba and their Margaia enemies, who consumed, it is said, large numbers of captives, then they will surely realize that this practice will eventually deplete their own communities. It is not indiscriminate anthropophagy but procreation that will ensure the continuity of a human community. And that ethnographic fantasy known as "endo-cannibalism" is a normative impossibility because, if carried to its logical conclusion, it would result in the depopulation of one's own group. I find it hard to believe that human beings cannot recognize this obvious fact.

It is one of the great insights of both Freud and Levi-Strauss that the incest taboo precipitates the creation of kinship networks and the beginnings of a distinctively human mode of living. So is the taboo on cannibalism, although to a lesser degree. The cannibalism taboo preserves the integrity and continuity of the human community; the exception is where there exists a "form of anthropophagy" that does not entail the actual killing of a member of one's group. In this form bones and dried organs and sometimes the flesh of dead relatives are ground and consumed as part of the mourning complex. As "mortuary anthropophagy," the consumption of human remains has been reported for several societies, especially in Melanesia and Brazil. In my view it is a mistake to label this "endo-cannibalism," and I do not deal with it in this book.[35]

Like incest, killing and eating of human beings is under the governance of taboo, and like incest, rape, and other kinds of prohibited actions (like sodomy and infanticide for some cultures), it is subject to violation. What then are the conditions in which the violation of the taboo takes place? Any violation is by definition an act of violence; therefore let me move from the past to the present where ethnic, communal, internecine, and genocidal violence have become an intrinsic feature of our global situation. It has happened in Rwanda, in Liberia, in the Congo

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and other parts of Africa, and in Asian killing fields, including Sri Lanka, where I was born, raised, and made aware. In the throes of violent passion people everywhere, mostly males, can commit the kinds of violence found in cannibal texts everywhere. Recently in Gujarat, in the context of Hindu-Muslim riots, crowds not only indulged in disemboweling and dismembering but also tore up pregnant women, killed infants, raped women, and practiced acts of gruesome violence that had their parallel in riots in other places, notably during the period of the partition of India. The passions unleashed during communal violence today are qualitatively not all that different from cannibal violence, imputed or real, of yesteryear. And therefore it is not surprising to find similar violence in Europe's past in the context of interreligious strife, as I describe in chapter 8. Violent verbal expressions about eating the Other, his liver or whatnot, is a way of expressing one's anger of a hated person, and it becomes a horrifying reality in situations of ethnic and religious riots. These situations also permit the proliferation of rumor and fantasy such that it is not always possible to figure out whether cannibalism actually occurred or was invented in situations conducive to the invention of such acts. As Georges Bataille says, human sacrifice itself is a rule-governed transgression of the taboo on killing, especially heinous, I would add, being the killing of a member of one's own group. Hence, "The transgression does not deny the taboo but transcends it and completes it."[36] What we have in violent ethnic conflict and religious rage is a double transgression: culturally prescribed or rule-governed acts of transgression are suspended, and ungovernable dread takes over with ungovernable transgressions.

What have the preceding comments to do with the claimed cannibalism or for that matter with anthropophagy by human beings as a normative custom? Although I can assume that eating the Other in an act of rage can occur, it is another thing to assume that such acts become customary or normative. One can make the opposite case: these acts provoke *out-rage* in us because they entail the very violation of a cherished value, the taboo against such acts. No one can say, on the basis of their occurrence in communal rage, that incest and cannibalism, dismembering and disembowelment, castration and decapitation, and rape are normative or culturally justifiable acts. Similarly, it would be foolish for us to make the inference that because a few Europeans ate human flesh in contexts of religious violence on St. Bartholomew's day and other religious festivals, Europeans were "cannibals." So with the Maori and others that I discuss: rage may produce a cannibal reaction but the cannibal reaction is not proof that such people were "cannibals."

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THE SAVAGE CANNIBAL AND THE DIVINIZED CIVILIZER: THE SUN MYTH IN MELVILLE'S *MARDI*

The *theme* of cannibalism as the dread of the man-eating Other is found in most, if not all, human cultures, although it constitutes an obsessive preoccupation in Europe to this very day, witness the proliferation of novels and films on cannibalism and its sibling, vampirism. It is therefore inevitable that cannibalism gets grafted onto savagism and stands in an oppositional dialectical relationship with civilization. In this book I deal with Polynesia, broadly defined, the *place* where the European projective field finds its home. This links with my previous book, *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook: European Mythmaking in the Pacific*, where I explore the well-known myth that when Captain Cook arrived in Hawai'i he was treated by the natives as their great god Lono arriving in person during their annual festival of the Makihiki. I point out that this myth was not constructed in Hawai'i but in London and represents a specific case of a larger theme of the long run of the European as a civilizer to natives, a kind of Prospero figure of the imagination. This should not surprise us because after all the "civilizer" is the projective image that Europe presented to the native, both in terms of its civilized secular values and its Christian religion. In opposition to the cannibal, the European civilizer is represented as a godlike figure or a "superior being." Neither figure is a product of the native imagination but rather attributed to the native by European colonialism.

I would like to deal with two themes pertaining to Civilization that I failed to interlink in my earlier work on Cook, not only of the white explorer as a god to savages but also that he appears from some stellar or solar constellation. In my second edition of *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook* I discussed the widespread dispersal of the planetary myth-model in the European literature of exploration and conquest but failed to trace its complex genealogy. In that book I referred to John Rickman, the first officer to write an account of the third voyage, conversing with a chief of Ni'ihau regarding their own cosmic travels. "Pointing to the sun, [the chief] seemed to suppose that we should visit that luminary in our course, and that the thunder and lightning of our guns, and that which came from the heavens were both derived from the same source."[37] I showed that there was good reason for refusing to accept this statement at face value. Rickman got the time, place, and context all wrong because his log clearly, and quite rightly, states he was in Kaua'i, one of the Hawaiian Islands, on March 1, and far from being treated as beings from the sun, the ships' crew was subject to "every mark of uncivility and buffoonery," a fact also confirmed by James King.[38] In thinking about this problem, I became

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convinced that the planetary myth too was a structure of the long run in European thought, and though a later and less prolific invention and intervention, it stood after the voyages of discovery, in opposition to the cannibal in European representations of the Other. Let me begin my argument with something that I had missed, namely, that Rickman's utterance was probably a continuation of a shipboard tradition of the European as a visitor from the sun.

The discourse on planetary travel seemed to have been fully established during Vancouver's voyage (1791–95) when he visited the tiny Chatham Island off the eastern coast of New Zealand: "On our first landing their surprize and exclamations can hardly be imagined; they pointed to the sun, and then to us, as if to ask, whether we had come from thence."[39] Because these were Moriori, who were really Maori living in Chatham Island for a long time, one must assume that this was also a circulating discourse that, in this case, had spread to the Moriori from New Zealand voyagers, native or European or both.[40] I now can supplement my earlier interpretation of Rickman's statement: Rickman's cosmic conversation with chiefs is simply a continuation of the prior discourse on the planetary descent of European navigators. We know that this type of "conversation" had been going on in Hawai'i for quite some time even during the third voyage because Ledyard makes a similar but much more plausible observation around January 25 regarding the Hawaiian perception of the astronomical obsessions of the officers.[41] One must also recognize that colonial discourse is a two-way process such that on occasion natives, who had their own planetary myths, might take over these European versions in the context of colonial domination and then incorporate them as part of their own, producing a back-and-forth movement of circulating mythemes. Nevertheless, the genealogy and main locus of such myths lay, as with the apotheosis myth, in the power plays of colonization and conquest. Its antecedent genealogy has been exhaustively discussed by William Hamlin in his essay "Attributions of Divinity in Renaissance Ethnography and Romance."[42] Suffice it here to say that, like many other circulating mythemes, this also had its creative genesis in the voyages of discovery and was originally attributed to the Aztec perception of Cortés as the "child of the sun" and indeed the sun itself, who can "make the circuit of the earth in the short space of a day and a night."[43] The evidence from Rickman, Ledyard, and Vancouver suggests that such myths were alive up to the late eighteenth century. They were available to Herman Melville to interlink with the apotheosis theme and spoof in his novel *Mardi*, showing us that, unlike naive ethnographers and historians, the creative writer was not fooled by what Hamlin calls myths of "imagined apotheoses."[44]

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Melville's *Mardi* is a huge, sprawling, and uneven (sometimes boring) book, but it contains priceless pieces of satire that spoof both Europeans and Polynesians, of which I can only give the reader a brief glimpse.[45] The protagonist is not named in the book; let me for convenience call him "M." It deals with the adventures of M and his two companions, a Scandinavian named Jarl and a Polynesian named Samoa. The setting is the South Seas, a vast archipelago extending forever and ever. Here our trio confronts the villainous priest Aleema and his sons, who are taking a dainty and beautiful white woman named Yillah to be sacrificed to one of their gods in Tedardee, a distant land. When M talks to her in English she seems to have a hazy recollection of a possible past as a white woman; in general he talks to her in "Polynesian." The three friends kill Aleema and rescue the maiden, but Aleema's spirit haunts them while his sons pursue them across the imagined Polynesian archipelago. M deceives Yillah by telling her fanciful stories of his being once her companion when she was living in her homeland as a small child and adds that he is a "demigod" and now wants to be her guardian. Through Yillah, Melville has a special take on European captivity narratives, which I will not deal with it here except to state that M falls in love with Yillah and feels bad about the romantic lies he had invented about him and her, but "love sometimes induced me to prop my failing divinity."[46] M is a figure present everywhere in the Pacific, inventing what I will later call "narratives of the self."

Ultimately, they sight land, "some new constellation in the sea." Many canoes come up, but people flee because they had "little or no intercourse with whites and most probably knew not how to account for our appearance among them" (*M,* 144). Therefore M sends Jarl and Samoa to "conciliate the natives." The strategy works and a "tumultuous crowd" bursts into view with Jarl "mounted upon the shoulders of two brawny natives" (*M,* 145). The natives also, expectably, "adore" Yillah and "stretched forth their arms in reverence . . . [and the] adoration of the maiden was extended to myself." Samoa, his interpreter, tells him that the king of the island is away attending a festival, but "the islanders regarded me as a superior being. They had inquired of him whether I was not a white Taji, a sort of half-and-half deity" (*M,* 146). Then, spurred by Samoa, M makes a public proclamation of his divinity: "It was [however] best to be wary. For although among some barbarians the first strangers landing upon their shores are frequently hailed as divine—and in more than one wild land have been actually styled gods, as a familiar designation—yet this has not exempted the celestial visitants from peril when too much presuming upon the reception extended to them. In sudden tumults they have been slain outright, and while full faith in their divinity had in no wise abated. The sad

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fate of an eminent navigator is a well known illustration of this unaccountable waywardness" (*M*, 147). It seems to me that much of this spoofery, including the tropes of "adoration" and "superior being," parody the language of Cook's journals.

We are now told that the island where M has landed is Mardi. Its ruler is Media, and Melville uses three other Mardian characters to laugh at American (and European) society and to a lesser extent at Polynesia. The characters are all introduced in a chapter called "A Gentlemen from the Sun," which is of course our demigod hero's new place of birth. When he first sees the resplendent array of native chiefs, M erroneously thinks that they must all be kings. Gradually, his sense of his own divinity is deflated. To prop it up, M addresses the assembled worthies, thus: "Men of Mardi, I am come from the sun. When this morning it rose and touched the wave, I pushed my shallop from its golden beach and hither sailed before its level rays. I am Taji." M steps back to see the effect of his speech while the chiefs converse among themselves. He then "returned to the charge" and, in order to impress them further, adds: "The gentle Yillah was a seraph from the sun; Samoa I had picked off a reef in my route from that orb; and as for the Skyeman [Jarl], why, as his name imported, he came from above. In a word we were all strolling divinities" (*M*, 148).

The spoofing continues when one of the "kings," an old man, addresses M: "Is this indeed Taji? He, who according to tradition, was to return to us after five thousand moons. But that period is yet unexpired. What brings't thou hither, then, Taji, before thy time" (*M*, 148)? He adds that Taji was a troublesome and petty demigod when he lived in Mardi prior to his apotheosis. This probably is a reference to the legends of the returning god attributed to both Cortés and Cook.

M meanwhile tries to figure out how he is held by Media, the king, "and his more intelligent subjects," only to find that the latter "was in no way overawed" by M's solar and divine credentials and treats him as a "mere mortal" and "one of the abject generation of mushrooms," and, anticipating some currently fashionable terminology, a mere "subaltern divinity" (*M*, 153–54). But why mushrooms? The reason is simple: the nation of Mardi is full of divinities of different sorts and types that mushroom everywhere and that include normal humans. Gradually M begins to realize that being a demigod is no great shakes because "the very multitude of them confounded distinction" (*M*, 156). Thus, "in several instances the people of the land addressed the supreme god, Oro, in the very same terms employed in the political adoration of their sublunary rulers" (*M*, 155). Not only did King Media treat M's divinity with indifference, but he also exhibited "an unaffected indifference to my amazing voyage from the sun, his indifference to the

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sun itself and all the wonderful circumstances that must have attended my departure" (*M,* 156). And Melville tells us with devastating irony that Captain Cook was adored in much the same way: "The celebrated navigator referred to in a preceding chapter was hailed as one of their demigods returned to earth after a wide tour of the universe. And they worshiped him as such, though incessantly he was interrogating them as to who under the sun his worshipers were, how their ancestors came on the island, and whether they would have the kindness to provide his followers with plenty of pork during his stay" (*M,* 154).

Even though M realizes that his pretensions of a solar divinity have been badly deflated in Mardi and he acknowledges a measure of self-awareness, he persists in affirming his invented prejudices in the other places he visits. For example, when M is on the island of Pimminee he wants to impress on the natives his solar ancestry and later descent into Mardi. But "they manifested not the slightest surprise, one of them incidentally observing however, that the eclipses there must be a sad bore to endure" (*M,* 337). Later, on this same island, he meets an old lady and her daughters named A, I, and O, who wear terribly large farthingales. Because he finds it difficult to talk to all three "polysyllables" as a collectivity, he discreetly centers his remarks on O. "Thinking she might be curious concerning the sun, he made some remote allusion to that luminary as the place of his nativity. Upon which O inquired where that country was of which mention was made." Taji responds, "Some distance from here, in the air above, the sun that gives light to Pimminee and Mardi at large." "She replied that if that were the case, she had never beheld it, for such was the construction of her farthingale that her head could not be thrown back without impairing its set. Wherefore she had always refrained from astronomical investigations" (*M,* 338).

Mardi was written in 1849. In much of Euro-American thinking the Cook mythology was still very powerful until about the 1830s, and Cook, ethnographers tell us, continued to be worshipped by Hawaiians in his relics, even though many of the latter were now traveling all over the world on American ships and momentous changes had taken place in their society. The "evidence" for this later development in the Cook mythology is partly based on an uncritical acceptance of shipboard narratives by captains who made brief visits to Hawai'i but, apparently, could nevertheless give expression to Hawaiian voices. This kind of evidence is spoofed in a marvelous chapter that I am sure some art historians might also, perhaps, enjoy because it deals with curatorial obsessions, such as collecting artifacts and old manuscripts; it also lampoons the conventional art appreciation of objects encased in museums. The old man in charge of this collection is called "Oh Oh"

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because every time he looks at an object in his collection he goes into ecstasies. Melville has a hilarious thumbnail description of Oh Oh, but I shall only refer to Oh Oh's collection of "ancient and curious manuscripts preserved in a vault," among which is a collection of "books of voyages." The latter contained titles such as "A Sojourn among the Anthropophagi, by One Whose Hand Was Eaten Off at Tiffin among the Savages." The one I like best is: "Three Hours in Viveza, Containing a Full and Impartial Account of That Whole Country, by a Subject of King Bello" (*M*, 320). Much of the evidence for native cannibalism and for imagined apotheoses is based on the kinds of visits lampooned by Melville.[47] This is not so, however, with the missionaries to the Pacific who were long-term visitors; but even more than transients they were profoundly influenced by their own European prejudgments regarding savagism and cannibalism, which I show in this work are linked in complicated ways to their Evangelical quest and the task of living in an alien culture among people hostile, at least initially, to that very mission.

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