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CANNIBAL FICTIONS IN U.S. POPULAR CULTURE AND LITERATURE

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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1996

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the presence of cannibalism and the figure of the cannibal in U.S. popular literature and culture and argues that such cannibal fictions estrange familiar, homey national narratives, most particularly that of *e pluribus unum*, by highlighting divisive historical and contemporary representational practices which preclude the many from becoming one. The outcome of cannibalization is an estranging, de-familiarizing experience (*I become you*), but the discourse of cannibalism also highlights the strange uncanniness (*unheimlich*) of home (*heimlich*).

Chapter one surveys American cannibal types and the theoretical implications of this topic through a reading of Herman Melville's first novel, *Typee* (1846). In chapters two and three I examine P.T. Barnum's display of four humans purported to be Fiji cannibals during the early 1870s, the showman's conflicted position on race, his characterization of himself as an ur-American, tapped into the national psyche, as well as his museum-making practices. Imbricated in the intertwined projects of civilizing, capitalism and imperialism, this display, was one type of machine through
which an American Imaginary was constructed in Reconstruction-era America.

Chapter four analyzes the relationship between the scene of writing, the English book and an illiteracy signaled by the excessive orality of cannibalism in Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan of the Apes* (1912). The English book accounts for the split between textuality/civilization and orality/barbarity and this split gives rise to several crises of identity for the eponymous hero. Tarzan's difficulty in merging his written and oral identities inevitably allies him with the cannibal tribe and, furthermore, allows Burroughs to creatively express his own anxieties of authorship. The focus of chapter five, the film adaptation of Fannie Flagg's novel *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe* (1987), marks the incursion of the cannibal into the domestic arena when the accidentally killed body of an abusive, racist man is disposed in the cafe's barbecue. This secreting through cannibalization consolidates and condenses a number of secrets which disappear through the processes of production. Jon Avnet's film eliminates the romantic love which exists between the two central characters, Idgie and Ruth, and similarly jettisons to the periphery African American characters who are a viable presence in the original novel. The highly charged subject of cannibalism reveals these secretings and offers a hidden critique of reigning ideologies of normative whiteness and putative
heterosexuality. Thus, the presence of cannibalism in the domestic sphere operates to make the home an uncanny place, a frontier in its own right.
For, of course, Monica
and my parents
Men once oppressed our forefathers to the extent that they viewed other men as material out of which to build a nation; we in turn have oppressed others to such a degree that they, fumblingly as yet, try to construct meaningful lives out of us! Cannibalism still lives!

---Mr. Max in Native Son
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is with deep gratitude that I thank Debra Moddelmog for all that she has given me throughout these last five years. I credit her with getting me to think about the multiple ways race, gender and sexual difference are negotiated in our culture's fictions. She has allowed me to work in my own peculiar and private vein. Thanks for her precise, encouraging and sustaining advice. And thanks for her serious, yet caring approach, one that crucially sees the social roots of our academic work. I can only hope my writing gives evidence of her guiding intellect.

My thanks to Susan Williams for agreeing to work with such an unknown quantity. I thank her for her patience and trust that I would produce something substantive, and for her professional and astute, yet gently critical advice. She is an invaluable example to me of what a professor of literature can aspire to be.

My thanks also to George Hartley for sticking by my project and for raising critically insightful and provocative questions that probed my theoretical approach. I thank him, too, for understanding how intertwined the personal and professional are and for believing that I could finish.
Thanks to Professor Thomas Woodson who first exposed me to *Typee* and to Professor Lynda Zwinger who first got me thinking about the theoretical implications of transgression. A special thanks to members of various reading groups I've been a part of these last couple of years. I can only hope I have been or can be as helpful to them as they have been to me.

Thanks to friends, not mentioned above, who have been supportive of me professionally and personally over the last couple of years: Paul Hanstedt, Ellen Satrom, Rob Stacy, Melinda Turnley, Maureen Burgess, Jamie Lampidis, Nick Howe, Georgina Kleege, Connie Richards. Special thanks to Steve Abernethy for helping me get to P.T. Barnum's Fiji Cannibals at the Harvard University Library and to Tiffany Ana Lopez for giving me Lionel Dahmer's memoir.

Thanks to my students who have pushed the limits of my understanding of U.S. fiction, and who have given insight into American monstrosities. Thanks for their willingness to read, discuss and write about some of the texts discussed herein, and for reminding me of the inherent connection between teaching and scholarship.

I must also recognize the help I received from interlibrary loan and the tremendous technical support given to me by Lori Mathis and the Computers in Composition and Literature Program in the Department of English.
Finally, thanks to those who have been crucial to my emotional, physical and social life. Thanks to my brothers Jon and Paul and other family members who give me unconditional and loving support. I thank my grandparents for passing onto me—at least I hope—their wisdom and intelligence. I can only begin to express how deep my thanks run for my parents who instilled in me a love for reading and for learning about the world we live in. They taught me first that the world could be a good place, one where fictive cannibals were unnecessary. It is by their loving, nurturing, inquisitive, intellectual example that I try to live. And to Monica, about whom Cole Porter’s cannibal ballad never more aptly applied: “I've got you under my skin/ got you deep in the heart of me/ so deep in my heart/ you're really a part of me.” With me body and spirit, her generousness, intellect and personality breathed life into these pages and inspire me to move on each day.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ........................................................................................................ iii
Dedication ........................................................................................................ vi
Acknowledgments ............................................................................................ viii
Vita .................................................................................................................. xi
List of Figures .................................................................................................. xiii

Chapters:
1. Popular Cannibal Type(s): An Introduction ........................................ 1
2. P.T. Barnum, Race and the American Nation ........................................ 39
3. "A Wilderness of Wonderful, Instructive and Amusing Realities": Writing About Fijian Cannibalism, Exhibiting Fiji Cannibals ................................. 95
4. Race-ing, Sexing and Texting Heroes and Cannibals: Edgar Rice Burroughs’ Tarzan of the Apes .................................................. 210
5. The Cannibal at Home: The Secret of Fried Green Tomatoes .................. 276

Epilogue
The Way We Live Now: Dahmer, Lecter, Auntie Lee, Alive .................... 347

Appendix ........................................................................................................... 362
Bibliography ..................................................................................................... 366

xii
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>The History of P.T. Barnum's Fiji Cannibals</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>History of the Fiji Islands and Cannibalism</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Advertisement from Gardenhire's Pamphlet</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Cannibal Forks from Fiji and the Fijians</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Mathew Brady, One of Barnum's Cannibals</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Engraving from The History of P.T. Barnum's Cannibals</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Engraving from Williams, Lubbock, Rowe</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Mathew Brady, &quot;Barnum's Fiji Cannibals&quot;</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

POPULAR CANNIBAL TYPE(s)?: AN INTRODUCTION

Cannibals? who is not a cannibal?

---Moby-Dick'

"There's another rendering now; but still one text. All sorts of men in one kind of world, you see. Dodge again! here comes Queequeg—all tattooing—looks like the signs of the Zodiac himself. What Says the Cannibal? As I live he's comparing notes; looking at his thigh bone; thinks the sun is in the thigh, or in the calf, or in the bowels, I suppose, as the old women talk Surgeon's Astronomy in the back country."

---Flask's meditation, Moby-Dick'

My dear Sir, they begin to patronize. All Fame is patronage. Let me be infamous: there is no patronage in that. What 'reputation' H.M. has is horrible. Think of it! To go down to posterity is bad enough, any way; but to go down as a 'man who lived among the cannibals'! When I speak of posterity, in reference to myself, I only mean the babies who will probably be born in the moment immediately ensuing upon my giving up the ghost. I shall go down to some of them, in all likelihood. "Typee" will be given to them, perhaps, with their gingerbread. I have come to regard this matter of Fame as the most transparent of all vanities.

---Herman Melville to Nathaniel Hawthorne, 1? June 1851'

---

1 Herman Melville, Moby-Dick (New York: Norton, 1968) 255. All subsequent references to Moby-Dick (M-D) are drawn from this edition unless otherwise noted.

2 M-D 362.

Of Cannibals and the Ghost of Melville

The specter of Herman Melville gave rise to the frightful vision and original version of this entire project, and, despite his relative absence in the bulk of the remaining chapters, as the title of this chapter suggests, he continues to be a haunting presence. By invoking him at the outset of this study of the cannibal presence in American popular culture, I ensure that his worst fears have come true. His companions in the following pages make clear he still is the man who lives among cannibals. Although I focus on three pivotal and "popular" texts produced after the U.S. Civil War, Herman Melville's Typee (1846) and Moby-Dick (1851) are informing absent-presences. I came to realize this pronounced (announced) absence is conceptually in sync with the readings in the following chapters and, as I have come to understand, is part of the dynamic of textual representations of cannibalism.

Both Typee and Moby-Dick are preoccupied with the tension of absence-presence. Modeled after the author himself, Tommo, the protagonist of Melville's first novel, constantly wonders about the cannibalistic feasts of the Typees who hold him captive. The pronounced absence of such behavior--for the majority of the narrative--juxtaposed with the paranoid articulation of such worries generates this tension. In general, the behavior of the Typees is left open
to his imagination since so much, particularly the complex and mystifying taboos, are beyond his comprehension. Thus, much of *Typee* is a reflection on what is not seen, what is not heard, what is not understood; in sum, it is concerned with absences. Melville's later novel, *Moby-Dick*, is similarly concerned with absences, most noticeably the sought-after eponymous white whale. At one point, the narrator, Ishmael, meditates on the whale's coloring: "Or is it, that as in essence whiteness is not so much a color as the visible absence of color, and at the same time the concrete of all colors; is it for these reasons that there is such a dumb blankness, full of meaning, in a wide landscape of snows—a colorless, all-color of atheism from which we shrink?"⁴ Even Ishmael's cannibal cohort, Queequeg, the cannibal whose thoughts Flask queries in the "Doubloon" chapter—referred to in an epigraph above—is caught up in the epistemological tension of absence-presence:

Queequeg in his own proper person was a riddle to unfold; a wondrous work in one volume; but whose mysteries not even himself could read, though his own live heart beat against them; and these mysteries were therefore destined in the end to moulder away with the living parchment whereon they were inscribed, and so be unsolved to the last.

(399)

In fact, the tension of the presence-absence seems an indelible facet of many texts which feature cannibalism. This presence-absence is nowhere more literally and materially

pronounced than in my two chapters on P.T. Barnum's display of Fiji islanders as Fiji cannibals in the early 1870s. For obvious reasons the people on display never partook of cannibalism. Ostensibly, according to the showman's version of things, they had abstained from eating human flesh since converting to Christianity. Of course, such absences were only visually absent since the printed texts which were circulated to promote and explicate the exhibition took pains to bring such a spectacle to life. In fact, at one point, Barnum was so eager to drum up business that he managed to get a newspaper to publish a manufactured story about the cannibalization of one of the Fijians who had died on tour.

In my chapter on Edgar Rice Burroughs' Tarzan (1914), the appearance of the written word in the fictionalized world of Africa splinters the identity of the character Tarzan, and through the word—the corollary opposite of a devouring cannibalism in the terms of the novel—Tarzan becomes both absence and presence. As absence, with no connection to the written word, he is figured to be an adopted member of the fictive Black African Mbongan tribe. The tension of presence-absence becomes most pronounced in my reading of Jon Avnet's film Fried Green Tomatoes (1991) against Fannie Flagg's novel from which it is adapted, Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe (1987). The reiterated presence of cannibalism recovers the linked secret (absence) of
lesbianism and uncovers racial, economic and gender inequity, realities masked by the reigning ideologies of white middle-class, putative heterosexuality.

This absence-presence tension is simultaneously mapped out in terms of literary canonical status. For years, the type of texts I feature at the heart of my project have been pronouncedly absent from the field of literary studies. By discussing these popular literary-cultural texts, I reverse their previous neglect. In terms of my focus on "the popular," once again the spectral presence of Melville makes sense: despite his current canonical status within the field of U.S. literature, Melville, too, was at one time similarly neglected, a part of the literary underclass. Now understood as a popular classic, his first novel brokered him a public name he had a hard time living up to with each subsequent publication during his life-time. As his above-quoted letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne intimates, fame and popularity were uneasy, limiting forces, things he deeply yearned for but about which he felt deeply anxious (not all that dissimilar, as we will soon see, to Tommo's, anxious yearning for the idyllic life of Typee).

My limiting focus on "the popular" is not without reason or justification, although it is not my purpose to argue for such a focus; my argumentative analysis in the following chapters should itself more than illustrate the effectiveness, appropriateness and the necessity of this
brand of critical intervention. I focus on what I refer to in shorthand as "the popular" because it is a site where the cannibal presence is prominently reiterated. While one might presume that such a horrifying subject may receive little play within the field of literary artistry, this is anything but the case, particularly with regard to works not considered "canonical" (although there are significant, "canonical" authors who explore such issues). Indeed, if anything, the deeply significant and culturally freighted meaning of cannibalism has meant that the subject of anthropophagy is a much-visited site in "the popular" realm. This study offers a preliminary linkage between the topic of cannibalism and its deployment in the popular media; moreover, it suggests ways that we can begin to understand the socio-formal pressures of literariness, of canonical status, or aspirations to such, on the subject of cannibalism.

By denoting P.T. Barnum's display of Fiji Cannibals, Burroughs' Tarzan, and Fannie Flagg's and Jon Avnet's Fried Green Tomatoes as "non-canonical" or "popular," I run the risk of reinscribing these falsely essentializing categories.

---

' For example, such texts by canonical authors include: William Bradford's Of Plymouth Plantation, Mary Rowlandson's The Sovereignty and Goodness of God, Together with the Faithfulness of His Promise Displayed; Being a Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson, Edgar Allan Poe's Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, Herman Melville's works, Mark Twain's "Cannibalism in the Cars," William Faulkner's "Red Leaves," Tennessee Williams' Suddenly Last Summer, and John Hawkes' The Cannibal.
I use both terms suspiciously and use them simply as a shorthand to signify the historically and culturally different receptions and productions of the widely consumed fictional and cultural texts I analyze. I use them, in part, not to denigrate and elevate but to signal an awareness of the pressures that have adhered--and to an extent still adhere--within the academy with regard to canonicity. With these pressures in mind, I examine each text--"canonical" or "popular"--under the same scrutinizing lens, a lens which takes note of the operative formal, cultural, historical modalities which function to create meaning. If I were to explain my methodology without falling prey to binaristic definitions, I would say this dissertation enacts a dense cultural reading--that includes attention to social, historical and formal influences--of significant and widely consumed social, printed and visual texts which feature the presence of cannibals or cannibalism.

A survey of the terrain of American cannibal texts will help us understand the specific focus of this project. Among Americans the subject of cannibalism has been predominantly a preoccupation of white authorship/production which further reveals the forces that push such recognitions into print and public consciousness. A reading of these texts by white authors/agents, suggests renewed ways that we might as literary-cultural critics tease out the complex circuitry of
difference in this nation; in other words, by studying white authors, ever vigilant to avoid being Ahabs, struck blind by brilliant whiteness, we can understand the ways of whiteness and the way that black, yellow, red, brown are constructed through the technologies of print and the visual.¹

While certainly not the final word on the subject, Melville's Typee can function as a multi-leveled touchstone to flesh out, so to speak, the possible uses to which the topic of cannibalism might be put in a textual context. A brief review of the significant critical-literary work on such issues suggests important reasons for my own particular intervention. The cannibal figure helps to instantiate an alternative, if not corrective, American Imaginary. The figure of the cannibal dis-articulates the notion of a mythic national unity and highlights the divisiveness and disunity that coterminously emerged with the founding of this nation, and that is as much a part of the fabric of a U.S. national identity as any sense of collective harmony.⁷

¹ Thus, my work might be understood as an extension of the project Toni Morrison outlines in Playing in the Dark (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992).

⁷ In this regard my approach might fall under the interventionist strategy of critic-scholars who have embraced the term New Americanists in reaction to Frederick Crews' critique. Recognizing that the collective title does not necessarily homogenize approach or critical argumentation, the New Americanists' perspective has been roughly summed up by Donald Pease: "In denying the separation [the internal and the external realm] constitutive of the field, however, New Americanists have changed the field-Imaginary of American Studies. The political unconscious of the primal scene of their New Historicism readings embodies both the repressed relationship between the literary and the
American Cannibal Types

Since my study strives to make understandable the scene of fictional and cultural production and the pressures attendant upon it, let me lay bare the originary moment of this project's conception. In the winter of 1992, while enrolled in a graduate seminar on nineteenth-century American literature and race, I first read Herman Melville's Typee and followed that with my third helping of Moby-Dick. The writer's use of the concept of cannibalism as a method of both explicit and implicit cultural critique as well as the stereotypical, but balanced portrayal of Queequeg, Ishmael's cannibal companion, intrigued me, as did Melville's lament to Nathaniel Hawthorne that he might go down in literary history as the man who lived among cannibals. Indeed, Melville's own political and the disenfranchised groups previously unrepresentable in this relationship. And as conduits for the return of figures and materials repressed through the denial of the relationship of the field to the public world, New Americanists occupy a double relation. For as liaisons between cultural and public realms, they are at once within the field yet external to it. Moreover, as representatives of subjects excluded from the field-imaginary by the previous political unconscious, New Americanists have a responsibility to make these absent subjects representable in their field's past and present. . . . [New Americanists' interventions] restore in their primal scenes the relations between cultural and political materials denied by previous Americanists. These recovered relations enable New Americanists to link repressed sociopolitical contexts within literary works to the sociopolitical issues external to the academic field. When they achieve critical mass, these linkages can change the hegemonic self-representation of the United States' culture. "New Americanists: Revisionist Interventions into the Canon," ed. Donald E. Pease, Revisionary Interventions into the Americanist Canon (Durham: Duke UP, 1994) 31-32. Pease further extends the tenets of this passage in another introduction, "National Identities, Postmodern Artifacts, and Postnational Narratives," ed. Donald Pease, National Identities and Post-Americanist Narratives (Durham: Duke UP, 1994) 2+. 9
family affectionately referred to him as "Typee," a name, according to the terminology of the novel, which signifies lover of human flesh.

During this very same winter I watched, in amazement, as the seemingly genteel southern characters in the film Fried Green Tomatoes barbecued the body of a racist, abusive man. But this episode seemingly attracted little critical attention. What Americans were interested in that winter, a full year after its original release, was Jonathan Demme's Oscar-nominated film The Silence of the Lambs based on Thomas Harris' novel, a sequel to his earlier Red Dragon which also featured the notorious Hannibal "The Cannibal" Lecter. Clarice Starling, the protagonist of Silence learned from the abject knowledge of the cannibal what she needed to know to solve the riddle of the vicious serial killing spree of Buffalo Bill who harvested the skin from young women to make his own woman's suit. Likely, what further piqued Americans' interest were the uncanny parallels to the real-life heinous serial-murders and cannibalistic sex-crimes of Jeffrey Dahmer who was arrested in August of 1991. In the winter of 1992, while I was thinking about Melville's cannibals, watching Fried Green Tomatoes in the movie theater and re-watching at home The Silence of the Lambs on a just-released video, Dahmer's case came to trial and the grisly details were rehearsed ad nauseum on television and in the mass media.
Dahmer and these other cannibal fictions mark the most recent incarnation of American tales of captivity, a genre which most often explores estrangement from the familiar (and familial) and marks the concomitant terrors of destruction and incorporation into another alien body or group of people. Not surprisingly, cannibalism, or the threat of it, is often the discursive screen onto which such anxieties are displaced. Mary Rowlandson's seminal tale of almost twelve weeks' captivity in the winter of 1675 [1676 according to the present calendar], published as The Sovereignty and Goodness of God, Together with the Faithfulness of His Promise Displayed; Being a Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson (1682), is no exception. Recounting the moments preceding her imprisonment, she writes: "But out we must go, the fire increasing, and coming along behind us, roaring, and the Indians gaping before us with their guns, spears, and hatchets, to devour us." This fear of incorporation by the other--both figuratively and literally--is held in tension with an intermittent and burgeoning sense of fondness for an alien culture (71-72, 83-87) as well as a growing familiarity and satisfaction with Indian folk- and foodways (79-80, 83). Her narrative also demonstrates how the logic of cannibalism can be used to manipulate the fears and

* Qtd. in The Meridian Anthology of Early American Women Writers: From Anne Bradstreet to Louisa May Alcott, 1650-1865 (New York: Meridian, 1991) 55. All other references are from this edition.
anxieties of Imperial powers, those who connote the non-white Other as cannibal. When Rowlandson inquires about her son, for example, she recounts the Indian's response: "that such a time his master roasted him, and that himself did eat a piece of him, as big as his two fingers, and that he was very good meat. But the Lord upheld my spirit under this discouragement, and I considered their horrible addictedness to lying, and that there is not one of them that makes the least conscience of speaking the truth" (75-79).

Melville's Typee, to which we will shortly turn our attention, participates in this tradition as do, to some extent, each of the texts I analyze in depth in the following chapters. For example, Barnum comes to own the rights to the Fijian cannibals when he effects their release from an opposing tribe who has threatened to cannibalize them in retaliation for even more egregious wrongs. In this respect, I argue, he plays the part of treaty-maker, of agent for the American nation. The narrative I construct in my two-chapter reading of this episode (chapters two and three), though, is

"Tama Janowitz's A Cannibal in Manhattan (New York: Washington Square P, 1987) humorously and problematically makes use of the captivity genre. In the novel, a New York socialite brings to Manhattan Mgungu Yabbe Mgungu, "a purple-skinned, ex-people eater from the South Sea Island of New Burnt Norton" (from the dust-jacket). Told from the point of view of Mgungu, the narrative charts his attempted acculturation into New York social circles and his eventual flight from the law after he is unfairly framed for murder. The novel also plays with the nature of truth and representational authenticity by setting up the entire novel as a document found by Janowitz, composed by Mgungu and accompanied by an array of photographs and newspaper clippings which purport to substantiate its authenticity."
about the Fijians' capture by the premiere showman in the nation, the investor/businessman par excellance. In turn, the narrative of Tarzan recycles the mythical tale of a youth raised by animals (held captive, in a slightly less daunting manner, at least in fictive terms). He is comfortably acculturated by this foreign culture; but inevitably, the eponymous character struggles throughout much of the plot to find his rightful place in the culture into which he was originally born. Various subplots similarly make use of this captivity plot—notably, one character's capture by Black African cannibals—further suggesting that it and the trope of cannibalism are close allies. In Fried Green Tomatoes, the subject of chapter 5, the characters are not overtly captives but are held prisoners by the reigning ideologies of whiteness, heterosexuality, masculinity and capital. The characters resist their captivity and find freedom in the act of cannibalization rather than being threatened by it. The repeated appearance of cannibalism within captivity narratives suggests that the subject of cannibalism is a discursive means through which to explore the possibility of boundary transgressions and the collapse of previously maintained differences.

One significant way American culture has explored such transgression is through the narratives of survival cannibalism. Stephen King's absurd tale of extreme survival
in "Survivor Type," takes captivity to a new extreme.  To be sure, this story straddles the topics of survival cannibalism and captivity. The protagonist-narrator is held captive by his own egotism and hubris. After wresting his own life-raft from other cruise ship passengers, an international heroin-dealing surgeon (no less) is stranded on a small, arid, deserted island with only his drugs and a first-aid kit. Driven to extreme hunger, and making use of his dexterous skills as a surgeon, he begins to eat himself, recording his activities and delusional thoughts as he does so. Inevitably, he exceeds the boundaries of his own body and dies.

While this narrative may be extreme, episodes of survival cannibalism permeate our culture's consciousness and have left a significant paper trail. Foremost among literary incarnations of such situations are Edgar Allan Poe's The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket (1838) wherein cannibalism of a shipmate is resorted to in the face of starvation (only a few sentences are allotted to such horrifying matters) and Mark Twain's humorous tall-tale, "Cannibalism in the Cars," which features an inspired--and insane, as we find out--storyteller who instills fear in his listener by recollecting how men survived a train's blockade in a blizzard by resorting to a highly bureaucratic, cannibalistic lottery. If fictional accounts of survival

cannibalism are not as widespread, non-fiction accounts abound. The wreck of The Essex, detailed in Owen Chase's Narrative of the Most Extraordinary and Distressing Shipwreck of the Whale-Ship Essex, 1821, was inspiration for both Poe's Narrative and Herman Melville's Moby-Dick. Of all stories which have piqued national interest perhaps the one that has done so most is the story of the Donner expedition's resort to cannibalism in the High Sierras during the winter of 1846, the same year Typee was published. For years this episode was resurrected to champion the fortitude of the pioneer spirit, but more recently critics have suggested how the cannibalistic resort might more appropriately be read as the outcome of economic greed and the lust for land.\textsuperscript{11} Such texts

\textsuperscript{11} I am referring to a 1991 documentary by Ric Burns which offers such revisionist analysis. While survival through the cannibalism of already dead bodies is offered as the last resort in most traditional accounts of the case--itself a culturally abject notion--this documentary details the attempt by certain members of the party to kill living Indian guides, so as to cannibalize them rather than already deceased family members. A similar sense of turn-around is experienced in "Left by the Indians or Rape, Massacre and Cannibalism on the Overland Trail in 1860: The personal Narrative of Emeline L. Fuller of the Ill-Fated Utter-Meyers Party: Detailing the Trip across the Plains from Wisconsin to Oregon, the Ambush of the Company by Indians Near Ft. Boise, the Ensuing Butchery, &c.: an Account of Her Escape with a Small Remnant of the Party, their Horrible Experiences, Being Forced in Their Extremity to Eat Human Flesh: With a Sketch of Their Subsequent Hardships and Wanderings Until Their Final Rescue by the Relief Expedition from Ft. Walla Walla." Instead of focusing on the cannibalistic ways of a foreign culture, as is the case in Typee, this account highlights the "savage" resort to cannibalism after being tortured into extreme desolation in the flight from Indian atrocities. For a thorough catalog of instances of shipboard cannibalism that would have been known to Americans in the first third of the nineteenth century, see Caleb Crain, "Lovers of Human Flesh: Homosexuality and Cannibalism in Melville's Novels," American Literature 66 (1994) 27.
are crucial to a full understanding of discourse about cannibalism in American culture, and do offer—in highly discursive ways—in-sight into the negotiation of differences. I exclude these texts, though, from my sustained analysis because in exploring the limits of extreme human endurance and the limits of human power to tell, to give testimony to experienced trauma, I require a different sort of critical apparatus. Read with trauma and testimony theory in mind, these narratives might provide suggestive and fruitful ground for understanding what cannibalism comes to mean for those who come to practice it as well as suggesting what such episodes mean imaginatively for both authors of fiction and consumers of such narratives, fictional or factual.

A Peep at Cannibalism in Typee

If one were to pinpoint an American text which exemplifies the operation of the cannibal, it would be Melville's literary debut, Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life (1846). Of all the American cannibal texts—that is, texts written or produced by U.S. writers about cannibalism—it has received the most critical attention with regard to this particular aspect. But this is not surprising since the narrative's backbone, that which supports its various thematic limbs, is the issue of cannibalism (or the perceived threat of it)."
For this reason, I now turn our attention to *Typee* as a way of introducing my theoretical approach and as a means of outlining the varying discursive moves which bring cannibalism to life through the written word.

In brief, *Typee* is a much embellished account of the author's time among the Typee in the Marquesas after jumping ship with a friend. Tommo, a disguised and embellished portrait of Melville, finds himself an uneasy captive of the seemingly friendly Typee; his captors' purported cannibal ways become especially troubling the longer his companion Toby has been mysteriously absent. Despite his profound pleasure in the paradisical, fleshly world of *Typee*, Tommo's fear that he will become a cannibal victim grows each day stronger; the narrative closes, when, by the aid of an old

Whether or not *Typee* was/is a truthful documentary, embellished fictionalization or derivative and/or plagiaristic pastiche of other primary sources was much contested in Melville's era and continues to be a major site of critical scholarly interest. The slippage of fact and fiction is of note in terms of my reading of Barnum, in particular, but also suggests the means by which textual representation of subjects such as cannibalism might instantiate realities which do not have material bases.
sailor who has "gone native" in another region in the
Marquesas, Tommo escapes by violent means.

This novel illustrates the way that the written word--
type--gives life to cannibalism. Recently, critics have
turned attention to the name "Typee," Melville's own peculiar
spelling of the Polynesian word "Taipi." Elizabeth Renker,
for one, suggests that imbricated within this word, and thus
the novel, are the scene of writing and Melville's anxieties
of authorship. If Melville's peculiar spelling of "Typee"
materially encodes his concerns about accusations of
plagiarism, his own peculiar definition of "Typee" similarly
tells us much about the relationship between cannibalism and
the power of language. Before coming into any contact with
Typees, Tommo, shares with us this knowledge:

Their very name is a frightful one; for the word
'Typee' in the Marquesan dialect signifies a lover
of human flesh. It is rather singular that the
title should have been bestowed upon them
exclusively, inasmuch as the natives of all this
group are irreclaimable cannibals. The name may,
perhaps, have been given to denote the peculiar
ferocity of this clan, and to convey a special
stigma along with it.

This definition is as erroneous as Melville's spelling and is
thus suggestive of the imaginative dreamscape of

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14 "Melville's Spell in Typee," Arizona Quarterly 52.2 (1995) 12-
13. See also John Evelev, "'Made in the Marquesas': Typee, Tattooing
and Melville's Critique of the Literary Marketplace," Arizona Quarterly
48 (1992), for more on the scene of literary production in Melville.

15 Herman Melville, Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life (Evanston and
Chicago: Northwestern UP and The Newberry Library, 1968) 24-5. Unless
otherwise noted. I refer to this edition in any further references.
cannibalistic discourse. This example from Melville reiterates the idea that words can instantiate realities. The origin of the word "cannibal" is, not surprisingly, fraught with an equally erroneous origin and is indelibly linked to notions of Americanness since its entry into the western lexicon coincides with the founding moment of the Americas. The Carib Indians' name, bastardized to canibale by Columbus, came to signify in the English and Spanish lexicons, *anthropophagy*, literally, "man-eating." Before Columbus physically observed any such acts, his slurred name for the Indians—in the printed words of his journals—came to signify this horrifying practice. One conclusion to draw from this imaginative naming is that cannibalism is often a verbally constructed reality predicated on false evidence, fanciful imagining or ideologically inflected logic.

The birth of such terminology arises from the logic of binaries, and this is explored in repetitive detail in Melville's novel when Tommo and his companion Toby meditate, beginning in chapter eight, on "The important question, Typee or Hapar?" This question arises because they have been warned about falling prey to the cannibalistic Typee. Before

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1 see Philip P. Boucher, Cannibal Encounters: Europeans and Island Caribs, 1492-1763 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1992) 15. See also Eric Cheyfitz, The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from The Tempest to Tarzan (New York: Oxford UP, 1991). Cheyfitz says, "beginning with Columbus, the idea of cannibalism developed not as an anthropological fact but as a political fiction that the west employed to justify its exploitation of Native Americans" (143).
leaving the port based in Nukuheva for either the Typee or the Happar valley, Tommo notes the native Nukuhevan's response to their departure: "with what earnestness they disclaimed all cannibal propensities on their own part, while they denounced their enemies--the Typees--as inveterate gormandizers of human flesh" (25). This moment is a classic example of Othering. Defining the Other as a barbaric cannibal, one who may extinguish your life, clearly distinguishes the boundaries between good and evil, between me and you. But such binaries can easily be flip-flopped. Tommo eventually finds that the Typees likewise
dwelt upon the cannibal propensities of the Happars, a subject which they were perfectly aware could not fail to alarm us; while at the same time they earnestly disclaimed all participation in so horrid a custom... 'Terrible fellows those Happars!--devour an amazing quantity of men!--ah, shocking bad!' (102)

Melville's narrative makes clear, as Paul Lyons has recently suggested, "if a cannibal cannot be distinguished from a non-cannibal, the whole chain by which 'civilized' people distinguish themselves from the 'non-civilized' comes apart. In other words, the network of discourses that make up an ideology are really holding the viewer when phenomena that apparently contradict an interpretation wind up arguing in its favor."1

1" Lyons 41.
Such rhetorical maneuverings, in addition to the pronounced absence of hard evidence, have led William Arens and other anthropologists following in his tradition to believe that cannibalism as a widespread practice is likely nonexistent. This is not to deny that the idea of cannibalism contributes to a culture's conception of itself. Arens explains that the idea of cannibalism is an "aspect of cultural-boundary construction and maintenance. This intellectual process is part of the attempt by every society to create a conceptual order based on differences in a universe of often-competing communities."18 Peggy Reeves Sanday, in Divine Hunger: Cannibalism as a Cultural System, suggests that even when the outward practice of cannibalism is abolished or ceases to exist, "the key symbols of cannibalism are often retained," particularly so "in response to particular economic, social, or ecological exigencies[;] the practice of cannibalism predicated by these symbols may be projected, substituted, or synthesized in the interest of the social order."19 Thinking about the subject of cannibalism in cannibal fictions is one of the primary means by which American culture, according to the interests of prevailing social orders, has synthetically substituted the literal practice of cannibalism.


1" (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986) 51.
Thinking about cannibalism can give rise to it where it may not otherwise literally exist. Gananath Obeyesekere, for one, has provocatively suggested that western European discourse about cannibalism may have actually instantiated and promoted the practice in the South Sea Islands that Captain James Cook visited. In fact, Obeyesekere suggests that islanders might have believed the English were cannibals, given their feeble attempts--through rabid biting gestures--to inquire about the islanders' cannibalistic propensities. Similarly, Toby's and Tommo's preoccupation with "who is the cannibal?" inevitably turns the tables on them. In an attempt to flesh out the true identity of the Typees they first encounter, Toby's pantomime of cannibalistic behavior may have given them the impression that he and Tommo were cannibals. This reversal deconstructs the logic of binaries and suggests that the process of Othering, ever reliant on the existence of binaries, is a fiction which elides the nuances of material reality.

The power of such dual thinking begins to lose hold on Tommo as he yearns to be incorporated into the pleasures and felicities of the Typee way of life. Much of Tommo's

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narrative surveys the preferred social and political conditions of life in Typee. Such views exonerate, in part, the Typee from malicious rumors:

So pure and upright were they in all the relations of life, that entering their valley, as I did, under the most erroneous impressions of their character, I was soon led to exclaim in amazement: 'Are these the ferocious savages, the blood-thirsty cannibals of whom I have heard such frightful tales! They deal more kindly with each other, and are more humane, than many who study essays on virtue and benevolence, and who repeat every night that beautiful prayer breathed first by the lips of the divine and gentle Jesus.' (203)

Most specifically, this desire for Typee is mapped out in Tommo's desire for the beautiful maiden Fayaway and, more elliptically, for his handsome, muscular servant, Kory-Kory. Eventually, the beneficence of the Typees even begins to erode Tommo's suspicions of their cannibalistic rituals. But, his fears of being cannibalized are renewed when Toby fails to return one day. Perhaps, Tommo thinks, Toby has been consumed and subsumed by the Typees. When he finally does see the remains of a cannibal feast, his thoughts turn to his future among the Typee:

For what [other] conceivable purpose did they thus retain me a captive? What could be their object in treating me with such apparent kindness, and did it not cover some treacherous scheme? Or, if they had no other desire than to hold me a prisoner, how should I be able to pass away my days in this narrow valley, deprived of all intercourse with civilized beings, and for ever separated from friends and home? (239)

Tommo fears losing himself, either through incorporation into an alien culture or through literal incorporation through
cannibalistic destruction. Consumption by another collapses identity boundaries: in being consumed, You become Me, I become You-Me. Figuratively or literally, cannibalization threatens one's sense of integrity. Being cannibalized—whether it is literal or through captive acculturation—makes one estranged from one's familiar self/selves. In sum, cannibalization makes the familiar uncanny. At the same time it threatens to make the unfamiliar familiar. It erases difference through the collapse of boundaries.

It should be clear that the threat of cannibalism evokes a sense of the uncanny made popular by Sigmund Freud’s literary meditation on the subject. The unheimlich/uncanny carries within it the sense of the familiar, and this double sense is precisely at the heart of the feeling of familiar disfamiliarity. The uncanny/unheimlich emerges when heimlich/homey/canny becomes estranged from itself. Thus, for Tommo, his fear of the Typee is partly a product of his pleasure, his feelings of ease; that is, the feelings of unheimlichkeit emerge from his feelings of homeyness. 

This fear of alienation from oneself and one's culture is iterated discursively through Tommo's fear of tattooing. Each Typee male's face is inscribed with intricate markings; for Tommo this bodily imprimatur enunciates an uncanniness he

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wants no part of. Early on, Kory-Kory's tattooed face reminds Tommo "of those unhappy wretches whom I have sometimes observed gazing out sentimentally from behind the grated bars of a prison window" (83). His servant's tattoos remind him, not surprisingly, of his own captivity and engender a renewed desire to escape. After three months in their valley, not a day passes without a Typee importuning him to be tattooed: "Their importunities drove me half wild, for I felt how easily they might work their will upon me regarding this or anything else which they took into their heads" (231). If they succeed, marked by the sign of profound alienation, Tommo fears a return to his own kind would be impossible: "That in some luckless hour I should be disfigured in such a manner as never more to have the face to return to my countrymen" (219).

The mystery of Typee cannibalism also reminds us of the difficult work of cross-cultural understanding. Tommo's efforts to find out whether or not his captors practice cannibalism are repeatedly thwarted. He even remarks,

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

Tommo's knowledge is limited because the Taboo groves where the cannibalistic feast might be practiced are literally off-
limits; thus, in attempting to fathom an extreme difference such as cannibalism, and because the word--through testimony--can't give evidence to such realities, the limits of understanding are breached. This fact emblematizes how he is more generally cut off from full comprehension of Typee culture. While the veil imposed between Tommo and the act of cannibalism is eventually lifted, he never understands the metaphysics of such practices, nor does he penetrate the meaning of a complex ritual such as the Feast of the Calabashes or the intricate network of taboos which are also beyond his and others' comprehension. This narrative, it should be clear, once again makes use of the tension between absence-presence.

It might seem that Tommo's incomprehension simply highlights Melville's ambivalent recognition of the insurmountability of cultural divides. But Melville also points to cannibalism as a supreme site of cross-cultural misrecognition. Culturally entrenched ideologies are the root cause of intercultural misreadings and give rise to the twin civilizing missions of Imperialism and Christianity. The perceived practice of cannibalism lends credence to both causes and validates the desire to incorporate and acculturate the alien culture at any expense into the ways of "civilization."
Tommo's account in Typee, though, deconstructs the false dichotomies of civilization and savagery. The subject of cannibalism becomes the occasion for ideological critique, a rhetorical tradition in the vein of Michael Montaigne's famous essay "Of the Cannibals," wherein he writes,

[P]rying so narrowly into their faults[,] we are so blinded in ours. I think there is more barbarisme in eating men alive, than to feed upon them being dead; to mangle by tortures and torments a body full of lively sense, to roast him in peeces, to make dogges and swine to gnaw and teare him in mammockes (as wee have not only read, but seene very lately, yea and in our own memorie, not amongst ancient enemies, but our neighbours and fellow-citizens; and which is worse, under pretence of pietie and religion) than to roast and eat him after he is dead."

In Typee, Melville's Tommo echoes these sentiments when he questions, "I ask whether the mere eating of human flesh so very far exceeds in barbarity that custom which only a few years since was practised in enlightened England" (125). And like Montaigne, he catalogues in grotesque detail capital punishment in the west. Through Tommo Melville draws an even more nuanced critique of the Christian missionary project in the Pacific. Early on he says fairly cryptically,

The enormities perpetrated in the South Seas upon some of the inoffensive islanders wellnigh pass

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Michael Lord of Montaigne, "Of the Cannibales." The Essays of Michael Lord of Montaigne, trans. John Florio, Vol. 1 (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1921) 223-4. To rather different effect, but attempting to use a similar logic, George Fitzhugh, in his pro-slavery treatise, Cannibals, All! or Slaves Without Masters (1856), outlines the evils of wage-slavery in the industrial age by saying that industrialists are more cannibalistic. He argues, among other things, that enslavement of blacks is a lesser evil than industrial enslavement.
belief. These things are seldom proclaimed at home; they happen at the very ends of the earth . . . and there are none to reveal them . . . How often is the term 'savages' incorrectly applied! (26-27)

During the novel's production, Melville fought with his publishers to retain this ideological bent but nevertheless had to make some concessions. Despite his omissions, he was still able to movingly write:

Let the savages be civilized, but civilize them with benefits, and not with evils; and let heathenism be destroyed, but not by destroying the heathen. The Anglo-Saxon hive have extirpated Paganism from the greater part of the North American continent; but with it they have likewise extirpated the greater portion of the Red race. Civilization is gradually sweeping from the earth the lingering vestiges of Paganism, and, at the same time the shrinking forms of its unhappy worshippers. (195)

Clearly, Melville's commentary is meant to prick the ears and conscience of folks back home, and thus the discourse of cannibalism about the South Seas becomes a displaced site for an ideological critique of U.S. policies. Evidence that readers made connections between international and domestic policies through imaginative literature—a critical premise throughout much of this dissertation—can be found in comments made in an April 4, 1846 edition of The National Antislavery Standard:

We would advise our readers who are sick at heart, from reading the daily reports of the murders committed by our army in Mexico; or of the inhuman cruelties practiced by Christian judges, and lawyers in the Halls of Justice, to turn for relief to the amiable savages of Typee, whose greatest
cruelty consists in devouring the body of an enemy who has been killed in a hand to hand scuffle.\textsuperscript{4}

The cannibal Typee return Melville's readers to the frayed seams of the U.S. national fabric. The ending of Melville's novel, itself, reminds us of these rough edges, and suggests that even seemingly Utopian visions contain their own unmaking. Afraid that Mow-Mow will grab hold of him and pull him back to Typee unwillingly, Tommo lashes out with a boat-hook and impales his pursuer in the neck. Instead of expressing immediate remorse, Tommo notes that he will never forget that ferocious face.

**Cannibal Studies**

Anthropologists have long fixated on the subject of cannibalism, and my work, as evidenced already, relies on such theoretical inroads. But, it is not my purpose to survey such criticism--that would require a book all its own.

In terms of literary-cultural studies, the subject of cannibalism is beginning to receive more and more attention. In December 1995, an MLA panel convened on the topic and from that evolved a forthcoming anthology. Maggie Kilgour's *From Communion to Cannibalism: An Anatomy of Metaphors of Incorporation* as well as C. J. Rawson's ongoing serialized

articles on the subject of cannibal fictions have laid crucial groundwork for studies more specifically focused on American writing. Kilgour’s book, briefly touching on Moby-Dick, is preoccupied with the continuum of metaphors of incorporation present in the writings of Homer, Augustine, Rabelais, Milton and Coleridge, among others. Such metaphors examine the relation of inside and outside, which she says, “plays an important role in the conceptualization of all antitheses” and the “foundation of all binary oppositions”; the basis of this dualism in western culture, Kilgour believes, is a “nostalgia for total unity and oneness.”

This analysis inevitably turns to literary questions of authorship, genre and the relationship between source and model, something C. J. Rawson picks up on in a different context. Throughout the last couple of decades Rawson has published articles on the subject of cannibalism and fiction, primarily in terms of non-American writers such as Swift, Fielding, Flaubert, Genet and Wittig, among others. His chief concerns are with generic effects and the various formal maneuvers the subject of cannibalism brings about. Rawson contends that important distinctions can be drawn about diverse forms of fiction by noting the different methods used to deal with this topic.  

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"Cannibalism and Fiction: Reflection on Narrative Form and 'Extreme' Situations: Part I: Satire and the Novel (Swift, Flaubert and
While Kilgour and Rawson discuss a range of texts and instantiate a peculiar cannibal critical-literary tradition, in the name of metaphorical understandings, each ignores the subject's roots in the materiality of culture, particularly in terms of western imperialism and, in terms of an American context, the Puritan's errand into the wilderness and its prototypical heir, the U.S. political-philosophical conception of Manifest Destiny. Such literality and attention to materiality is suggested by the practice of cannibalism itself. Surely, cannibalism has metaphorical overtones; but, it is invested—assuming, of course, it is practiced—in the literal incorporation of human flesh. My study attempts to maintain a link between the textual and the literal, material world—a world where skin color, sex organs, embodied sexual desires and the ability to generate and accumulate capital are things that matter and affect the processes of acculturation. While certainly such predeterminants do not universally tyrannize our social order, such bodily matters come into play in an important way that must not be ignored in talking about the metaphorical implications of cannibalism, particularly when it is remembered that the cannibalistic act is the most literal of all metaphors.

In *Moby-Dick*, Flask's reflections on Queequeg's actions and thoughts before the interpreted text of the doubloon, quoted above in an epigraph, remind us of the embodied literality of cannibalism. Melville's representation through Flask, of course, is rife with problematic, culturally-limited notions—the *savage = brawn* circuit, for one thing—but it does remind us of the link between the material body and cannibalism. Perhaps my reading is overdetermined by my interests, but this passage also reminds us that the cannibal renders a text; that is, the cannibal presence can illuminate and enunciate that which is silently figured in the text.

The most sustained literary criticism focusing on the social and material implications of cannibalistic fiction chart the connections between authorship, homosexuality and cannibalism. Foremost among such work is the groundbreaking chapter "Cannibals and Queers: Man-Eating" from David Bergman's intriguing *Gaiety Transfigured: Gay Self-Representation in American Literature* wherein he constructs a genealogy of gay writers who have written about and transformed earlier gay writers' treatment of such topics (Tennessee Williams' repeated allusions to Melville, for example). Careful to note that there is nothing inherent or

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"Of course the last phrase comparing his actions to "the old women [who] talk Surgeon's Astronomy in the back country" can be read two different ways: 1) his interpretation is a castle in the air, pure fancy with no foundation; 2) his interpretation is grounded in deeply entrenched and practiced folk ways, powerful in their own brand of science."
natural in the association of cannibalism and male homosexuality, Bergman explains that this thematic focus does provide us with a particularly good case of the gay transformation of heterosexual representation. Introduced by heterosexual theologians as a way to increase the horror of sodomy, the association was explored by successive generations of homosexual writers, who transformed it slowly, with increasing skill, to reflect the ideals of homosexual love and affection.  

Caleb Crain tightens the focus of Bergman's approach in examining Herman Melville's exploitation of the connections between cannibalism and homosexuality: "Cannibalism and homosexuality violate the distinctions between identity and desire; between self and other; between what we want, what we want to be, and what we are." This, he explains, is what both horrifies and appeals to the sensibilities of a nineteenth-century man such as Melville.

Two very recent books more specifically trace the connections between the textual cannibal and the material world, but neither limns the surface of an American literary tradition. Deborah Root, in Cannibal Culture examines the need within modern western cultures to consume the non-western Other and denotes this as symptomatic of our culture's wetiko (or cannibal) psychosis. Examining Montaigne, Diderot, Flaubert, Barthes and Naipaul, Roger Celestin's From Cannibals to Radicals similarly makes sense
of western authors' exploration of the exotic and the cannibal, to negotiate, in part, the tensions between home and empire and to critique prevailing discourses of "home." 1c

**What Says the Cannibal?**

What follows in the next four chapters and a brief coda is not an exhaustive encyclopedic account of the cannibal's presence throughout all of colonial and United States history, although certainly my discussion is attuned to the palimpsest of the cannibal. Instead, I provide several deep cultural readings of widely popular, and hence, significant, U.S. texts ranging from the Reconstruction era in the early 1870s to the early 1990s. By tracing one mutable subject--cannibal fictions--over a century's time, my project explicates the complicated means by which popular culture and entertainments inform Americans about sexuality, gender, race and nation.

In chapters two and three I examine P.T. Barnum's display of four humans purported to be Fiji cannibals during the early 1870s. In chapter two I sift through Barnum's conflicted position on race, his characterization of himself as an ur-American, tapped into the national psyche, as well as his museum-making practices. I argue that these factors coalesce and apply pressure to his display of Fiji cannibals.

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making such a display one type of machine through which an American Imaginary is constructed. The national narrative constructed across the racialized body of non-Americans enacts a complex discourse about race relations in Reconstruction-era America, a period which also evidenced escalating violence against Indian nations in western territories.

My analysis of the Fiji display in chapter three builds on such theoretical bases by examining key documents related to the case, most specifically one authored by Barnum’s public relations writer, W.C. Crum, and another penned by a man whom Barnum called his agent in Fiji, W.C. Gardenhire. Such analysis allows me to unfold the myriad ways an alien Other is constructed and produced for popular consumption by Americans. I focus on the rhetorical maneuvers in each, their reliance on earlier missionary documents about Fiji and "ethnographic" accounts of savages, and their imbrication in the intertwined projects of Christianizing, capitalism and imperialism which functioned in part through the legalistic mechanism of "treaty-making."

The relationship between the scene of writing, the English book and an illiteracy signaled by the excessive orality of cannibalism is the focus of my fourth chapter. Edgar Rice Burroughs' originary novel *Tarzan of the Apes* (1912/14) explores several crises of identity which are set
in motion by the appearance of the written English word. The word accounts for the split between textuality/literacy/civilization and orality/illiteracy/barbarity. Specifically, Tarzan's identity splits under the uncanny pressure of the English book and his difficulty in merging his written and oral identities inevitably allies him with the cannibal tribe. In addition to tracing the dynamic circuit of literacy and its oppositional relationship with cannibalism, I suggest that Burroughs arms his hero with literacy both to fulfill cultural necessities but also to ease his own anxieties of authorship.

An anxiousness about romantic lesbian love and the reality of racial, gender and economic oppression are the focus of my fifth chapter which examines the film adaptation of Fannie Flagg's novel *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe* (1987). This text marks the incursion of the cannibal into the domestic arena when the accidentally killed body of an abusive, racist man is disposed in the cafe's barbecue. I explore the various ways that this secreting through cannibalization consolidates and condenses a number of secrets which emerge (disappear?) through the processes of production. For example, the novel gives particular attention to the romantic love which exists between Idgie and Ruth, but this all but disappears in Jon Avnet's 1991 film based on a screenplay co-authored by Flagg. Similarly, the
film only peripherally represents the lives of African American characters although the novel pays careful—albeit through a saccharine, stereotypicized lens—attention to their lives. The highly charged subject of cannibalism, itself a secret twice visited by the film, reveals these secretings and offers a hidden critique of reigning ideologies of normative whiteness and putative heterosexuality. The presence of cannibalism in the domestic sphere operates to make the home an uncanny place, a frontier in its own right.

Thus, not only is the outcome of cannibalization an estranging, de-familiarizing experience (I become you), but the discourse of cannibalism itself highlights the strange uncanniness (unheimlich) of home (heimlich). The following chapters argue that the cannibal presence in cultural and literary fictions estranges familiar, homey national narratives, most particularly that of e pluribus unum, by highlighting divisive historical and contemporary practices which preclude the many from becoming one. The textual articulation of cannibalism reminds us of the means by which people of color, women, lesbians, bisexuals, gay men, and the economic underclass have been repeatedly disenfranchised and excluded from reigning ideologies and thus effectively barred from equal protection under the law and equal access to the rights of citizenship. Priscilla Wald, in her recent study
Constituting Americans, explains, "the uncanny sends us home to the discovery that home is not what or where we think it is and that we, by extension, are not who or what we think we are." Donald E. Pease, for one, has suggested that "when these figures [such as the uncanny Wald refers to] surge up at these internal divides, as unintegrated externalities, they expose national identity as an artifact rather than a tacit assumption, a purely contingent social construction rather than a meta-social universal." Thus, my theoretical approach, one which uncovers the lingering presence of the uncanny cannibal, provides a corrective lens through which to view United States culture and history. The cannibal presence articulates the practices of oppression and repression, and simultaneously exposes the need for alternative modes of negotiating differences as well as alternatives to standard notions of American nationality.

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2 "National Identities, Postmodern Artifacts, and Postnational Narratives," National Identities and Post-Americanist Narratives, ed. Donald E. Pease (Durham: Duke UP, 1994) 5. To be sure, Pease is not referring to "cannibals." Instead, he refers to those who have been previously disenfranchised and who have been/are a structural necessity for the construction of a coherent national identity. He suggests that in contemporary culture such people have become the "postnational" forces of social change. While I think Pease is right about their motoring of social change, he is too hasty in appending the postnational label: new or different national narratives do not destroy individuals' relationships to the nation; new narratives (despite the shift to transnational capitalism and the effects of diaspora) do not entirely transcend notions of nationhood, but, rather, revise prevailing narratives.
CHAPTER 2

P.T. BARNUM, RACE AND THE AMERICAN NATION

"Mr. Barnum, America.---Letter from New Zealand addressed to P.T. Barnum

Talk of songs of a nation! . . . What I say is, 'Let me furnish the amusements of a nation and there will be need of very few laws.'

---P.T. Barnum

"Ratanga once said to me, 'Do the Americans never eat each other?' 'No,' I replied, 'we know better. Our pigs and cats sometimes devour their young, but we are not like pigs and cats.'

---Mary Wallis, Life in Feegee'

In one of the many amended chapters to his autobiography, The Struggles and Triumphs of P.T. Barnum, the renowned American showman states that he had recently fulfilled one of his lifelong goals: to procure some real live cannibals:

But perhaps the most rare and curious addition to my great show, and certainly the most difficult to obtain, is a company of four wild FIJI CANNIBALS! I have tried in vain for years to secure specimens

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1 P.T. Barnum, Struggles and Triumphs; or Forty Years' Recollections of P.T. Barnum (Buffalo, NY: Warren, Johnson, 1873 [entered into copyright 1871]) 736. Hereafter referred to as S&T unless a different edition is cited.

2 From an interview in New York Sun, September 5, 1880.

3 Mary Wallis, Life in Feejee, or, Five Years among the Cannibals By a Lady (New York: William Heath, 1851) 155-6.

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By his own admission, at this point in his life, Barnum had almost done it all, continuously seeking to bring before the eager American populace the unusual, the unbelievable, the unseen. After looking the world over for exotic specimens, Barnum claimed that cannibals were the one living curiosity he yearned for but had been unable to bring into the collection. Even though the historical record suggests that Barnum had earlier exhibited "Vendovi, a cannibal chief," at the American Museum in 1841 during his first year of ownership, nevertheless, in the definitive version of his own life, Barnum omits this fact and, instead, exaggerates the height of his recent successes. He adds this installment to his life story in 1873, two years after he and other business associates had initiated the traveling version of his long-running and successful American Museum, officially called P.T. Barnum’s Museum, Menagerie and Circus. This great traveling show would traverse the northeastern section of the United States, drawing record crowds. A. H. Saxon explains that "Although his tents, covering a total of three acres, could hold as many as 10,000 spectators at each performance.

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4 S&T 760. Originally published in 1871, the biography was republished almost yearly with new installments up until the time of his death in 1891.

it was common throughout the season for thousands to be turned away."

Certainly Barnum had struck a chord with American audiences, both creating a need and filling a void. That millions of Americans in the decade following the close of the Civil War would have been drawn to Barnum's venues, would have paid the fifty-cent admission price, and who knows how much more on incidentals such as the nickel pamphlets or other souvenirs and refreshments is certainly remarkable. It would be an exaggeration to assume that the chief draw could or would have been the Fiji Cannibals on display, or the so-called Digger Indians, or Zip the Pinhead, from "the deep reaches of Africa," whom Barnum frequently displayed. Nevertheless, as Barnum's audiences viewed his continuing display of Ethnographic Others, it is indisputable that they must have paused in front of, or read or heard about the Fijians indirectly. Certainly, the promotional machine of Barnum--"Come See the Fiji Cannibals!"--would have escaped the eyes and ears of very few attendees.

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7 For many Americans the chief draw may simply have been the other entertainment acts, the exotic animals such as the never-before seen walruses, or the "Western" human curiosities: the giants, the thin-men, or dwarfs. Such displays still exploit the dominant-other position, regardless of who or what is on display. "Nature" or the natural world is on display, ripped out of context, employed for purposes of comparison.
Why would Barnum have been interested in displaying Fiji Cannibals? Or, cannibals in general? This chapter explores a peculiar and literal example of Americans reading the cannibal body. I make a foray into what might be considered a non-"literary" realm in order to discover the means by which cannibal fictions are passed off as histories and the means by which such fictions are marketed for mass consumption.

We have already noted the means by which Melville appealed to contemporary audiences in Typee, but what did the renewed interest in the South Sea Islands, this time Fiji, offer to post-Civil War Americans? In part, Barnum was interested in this project because it pushed the limits of his hyperbolic display of ethnic others—it allowed him to take things one step further, to fully employ the rhetoric of racial hate (allowable because these others represented in full all that defined barbarity and savagery). It also capitalized on Americans' preexisting (voyeuristic) interest in the region, made familiar by missionary accounts widely available during this period. But if Barnum was filling a need, what was this need? What did such a display fulfill for nineteenth-century Americans? More generally, the Fiji Cannibals on display at Barnum's American Museum and Traveling show operated as a nexus of complementary yet competing discourses about race in America. In effect, the
display of Fiji cannibals as well as other indigenous and non-indigenous Others sustained for nineteenth-century Americans the Puritans' errand in the wilderness, that is, the project of beginning the beginning all over again in the land of non-Western peoples.

My use of the word Barnum more correctly might be signified as "Barnum." That is, I mean "Barnum" to signify/stand for all that Barnum and his production company came to represent. When I state then that Barnum did X, I mean to suggest that Barnum and the social forces within his and his company's control effected and affected X. In this regard I echo Jennifer Wicke, who, in her study of Barnum’s influence on advertising, claims that "Barnum the historical figure will be read as ‘Barnum,’ a force-field of advertisement." "Barnum," then, henceforward signified as Barnum, will be read as a force-field upon, across, and through whom certain discourses about race and nation were described and inscribed in the social field. In examining Barnum in this manner, my goal is not to establish that such discourses were sui generis, or that he offered the most crucial means of instantiating such discourse. But, in examining Barnum in this way I want to articulate the way that such practices are inscribed in the local arena, in the personal lives of typical Americans.

To understand more specifically the nature of this "force-field," I first examine Barnum's position in American culture and his conflicted views on race before noting the means by which the bodies of racialized Others become informing principles of the American Imaginary. I suggest possible reasons why Americans might be interested in a narrative concerned with Fijian cannibalism in the wake of the Civil War and in light of U.S. Government policy toward Native Americans. Some Americans were preoccupied with how difference might be assimilated and woven into the nation's fabric; others were interested in the means by which difference could be transformed; while, still others wondered how the fabric could be maintained without such interweaving, how the threat of difference could be contained and not incorporated into the national body.

The primary structural mechanism through which Barnum transmitted and rhetoricized these discursive topoi was the museum. It was through the museum collection that Barnum constructed, sorted, and categorized a controlled universe, a wilderness of his own. Thus, through this museum-making, Barnum could reconstitute the natural world; moreover, he could establish his own narrative of evolution which easily tugged on the purse-strings of consumers whose interests had been newly piqued by Charles Darwin's 1871 *Descent of Man*, the follow-up to his 1859 *Origin of Species*. The
construction of ethnographic Others played into both scientific and popular studies of the origin of humans." Americans, upon viewing Barnum's hierarchical depictions of ethnographic Others, used this shaping of international relations as a basis for forming race relations at home, a basis for the way such conflicting contests would be played out within the nation. Barnum's display thus enacted a foreign and domestic policy simultaneously. Barnum, of course, is not original in employing this brand of foreign "policy," nor would it have been possible for his displays to have alone elicited such effects. But by enacting a national relationship with a foreign body over the very "stereotypicized" body of racialized Others, Barnum encouraged Americans to walk away with his particular brand of American nationality and internationality.

Preceding the development of an official national museum, Barnum's American Museum contributed to a sense of an American identity. Through its collection processes of inclusion and exclusion, the museum was a site of education, a pedagogical tool and, as such, helped to constitute notions about the American Nation. By viewing the non-U.S. Other, specifically the Fiji Cannibal Other, Americans could constitute their own internal reality here in the States and territories. This physically-embodied collection offered a

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*John Lubbock's The Origin of Civilization and the Primitive Condition of Man: Mental and Social Conditions of Savages (New York: D. Appleton, 1870) is a case in point.*
particularly slanted view of the United States, but more especially of the non-white world. In putting so-called savages on display in the Museum of America, Barnum made entirely clear what role they now had in the constituting of this nation both at home and abroad. They were things to be collected, studied, controlled, produced.

**Barnum on Race: Making a Nation in the Face of Difference; or, Making Difference in the Face of the Nation**

You will find plenty of elbow room in America.
---P.T. Barnum

D--n Indians anyhow. They are a lazy, shiftless set of brutes.
---P.T. Barnum

[T]he eye of barbarism, ignorance and idleness will light up with the fire of intelligence, education, ambition, activity and Christian civilization.
---P.T. Barnum

But if the colored man is indeed a man, then his manhood with proper training can be developed.
---P.T. Barnum

"I am as white as you are, sir!"
---P.T. Barnum, dressed in blackface

---S&T 471. Comment made to a London penny show proprietor who displayed albinos, armadillos and "atrocious wax sculptures."


---S&T 628.

---S&T 626.

---P. T. Barnum, Struggles and Triumphs (1869) 90. Saxon refers to this episode in a footnote (83n33).
The showman's influence was wide-reaching and his knowledge of American culture was close to intuitive. Indeed, according to Saxon, using contemporaneous population counts, his American Museum in New York outdrew Disneyland.\textsuperscript{15} It's quite clear that Barnum occupied an important critical-crossroads:

Nor did the American Museum ever cater to any particular 'class' of spectator. . . . With no financial support for his museum other than what he took in at the door, he had been 'obliged to popularize it,' and while he had indeed offered his visitors a 'million' bona fide curiosities, 'millions of persons were only induced to see them because, at the same time, they could see whales, giants, dwarfs, Albinos, dog shows, et cetera.' . . . Yet among these same patrons, it must be noted, rubbing elbows with farmers fresh in from the countryside, tradesmen, apprentices and laborers, and 'respectable' citizens with their families in tow, were famous scientists like Louis Agassiz and Joseph Henry of the Smithsonian Institution, authors like Walt Whitman and Henry David Thoreau, eminent statesmen, religious leaders, and ambassadors from abroad. . . . From sunrise until 10 p.m. seven days a week, its untold wonders summoned the democratic multitude. It was one of the greatest, most universally popular institutions of its day.\textsuperscript{16}

If Barnum's popularity is this expansive, spanning the decades before and after the Civil War, it's surprising that no one has extensively analyzed his attitudes toward non-white peoples or the implications of his productions in terms of nineteenth-century race relations. Previous biographies of

\textsuperscript{15} P.T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man 108. Saxon states, "The First American Museum, during its years under Barnum's management, actually sold more tickets in proportion to the population than did Disneyland."

\textsuperscript{16} P.T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man 108.
Barnum, most specifically Neil Harris' and A.H. Saxon's, have only limned the surface of the showman's complicated relationship to peoples of color. Saxon does admit that Barnum early in his life was racist. For example, evidence suggests that Barnum was a slave holder at one time, but the biographer dismisses this evidence by saying that Barnum is no different than many other Americans in the pre-Civil War era, and that his slave-owning was perfectly legal and was in accordance with the prevailing attitude that slaves were chattel, like any other commodity. Debating the issue in such terms, though, ignores the effect his racist position had on his protracted displays of people of color during and after the Civil War and the effects of such productions on their viewers. From my late twentieth-century perspective, I would be quick to call Barnum racist, although this is not an argument which I wish to pursue in much depth. To be sure, the paper record makes his position on race a deeply conflicted one, ambivalent at moments. Quite clearly, his exhibitions of non-western others explicitly undermines any public profession of assimilationist rhetoric.

Despite the end of the Civil War a decade earlier, Americans were faced with surmounting racial strife and potential division of the Union by competing factions in the

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18 P.T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man 85.
Western territories. Renewed and sustained conflicts with Indians represented a potential loss of new land, a potential loss of new and undiscovered resources, and dangerous settlement in the territories. Native Americans at war with the government, resistant to its "civilizing" mission, were a threat to the integrity of the nation's fabric. By the time Barnum toured with his Fijians in 1871, the U.S. House of Representatives had voted to restrict future treaty-making with Indian Nations, effectively denying them nationhood status, an unconstitutional move which ignored all legal precedence. Stripped of their sovereign status, Indian nations were at the mercy of the Federal Government's programs to westernize, civilize and assimilate in order to accommodate increased expansion into land held by Indigenous peoples. Whether through the terms of treaties or through the implementation of policies during the early post-treaty era, the U.S. government administered programs which attempted to inscribe the appropriate role of Native Americans in this country. During this Reconstruction period, America was also faced with the "perplexing" task of

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19 This situation was complicated by the mechanism through which tribal nations were officially dealt. According to the Constitution, if the U.S. Government had contracted treaties with a nation, this nation was recognized as sovereign; thus, by treaty, Indian nations were recognized as sovereign nations. This classification frustrated official efforts to bring peaceful Indians under the full control of the Federal Government. But, indeed, informal pressure was often applied by both U.S. civilians and officials which treated Indian nations, more often than not, as "less than sovereign." See Priscilla Wald, Constituting Americans (Durham: Duke UP, 1995).
assimilating both free Blacks and former slaves, a task, that many white Americans, despite having pushed for abolition, were not up to.

How would white culture accommodate, how would it acculturate, how would it "civilize" the freed slaves? While these concerns may not have manifested themselves in early government policy decisions, such concerns certainly were being mapped out by the government and by the popular imagination with regards to Indian policy. The enterprise of civilizing was concurrent with the aims of expansion. Incorporation of new territories and peoples could be possible only through civilizing assimilation. While seemingly opposite goals--expansion/inclusion and constriction/exclusion--both were viewed as simultaneously achievable, as is evidenced both by popular opinion and government policy. Through the broad figure of Barnum the discourse about Indians and the discourse about assimilation and rights of citizenship after the Civil War dialectically informed white America's consciousness in profound, yet ambivalent ways.

In my discussion about race, thus far, it may seem as if I have blurred together distinct ethnic and racial categories. While I intend to steer clear of such homogenizing, it is absolutely crucial to examine what I see in nineteenth-century American culture as coterminous discourses. In the popular consciousness of the nineteenth
century, racial and ethnic differences were slippery concepts. Barnum, as evidenced by his comparisons, discussions about, and use of non-white peoples, is no exception; to his sensibility, there was little difference in kind between the Indian, the African, the Fijian. A contemporaneous treatise, by Sir John Lubbock, *The Origin of Civilization and the Primitive Condition of Man: Mental and Social Condition of Savages*, is representative of the reasoning of the time. The term "savage" for him is monolithic and adheres equally in the Congo, in Fiji, in China. Such leveling of differences is commonplace in his work, but I will quote one brief example:

As a general rule savages do not set themselves to think out such [theological] questions, but adopt the ideas which suggest themselves most naturally; so that, as I shall attempt to show, races in a similar stage of mental development, however distinct their origin may be, and however distant the regions they inhabit, have similar religious conceptions.  

The aforementioned study of savages, obviously influenced by evolutionary thinking, sheds light on an additional reason why white middle-class culture became preoccupied by and interested in such matters. With the

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*New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1870* 115. Unlike Lubbock, I aim not to collapse race upon itself and assume reductively that all non-white people are interchangeable. For this reason, I want to be clear that in no way do I set up such an equation: Native American equals Fiji Cannibal equals African American. Yet, I definitely do find it useful and necessary to examine how the rhetoric of race about different ethnic minorities is similarly inflected by the hegemonic logic of white America.
publication that year of Descent of Man, a follow-up to Origin of Species, Darwin's revolutionary thinking was obviously still influential and was easily deployed to support racist ideologies. In his display of non-western peoples, Barnum was quick to appeal to the popular drama of evolution. In Barnum's Living Wonders, an 1871 pamphlet, the narrator asserts, "[we] understand how it is that in certain portions of Africa, a race of wild hairy men exists, perhaps allied to the gorilla, whose entire persons are covered with a mass of long, disgusting hair." The confounding of the human animal-binary quite often condensed for Barnum the appeal to evolutionary thinking. According to George Odell's Annals of the New York Stage, appearing during the 1873 season of the Theatre Comique were "some Fiji Island Cannibals (cousins, perhaps, to Barnum's Feejee mermaid of long ago." This blurring of animal and human, vis-à-vis Fiji, is exactly what I am arguing coheres in the figure of the "Fijian cannibal." From his display of The Missing Link, a.k.a. Zip the Pinhead (in reality a mentally-impaired African-American man), to his Feejee Mermaid (an unconvincing taxidermist's rendition of a half-fish, half-monkey), to the Fijian Cannibals, Barnum focused Americans' attention on the

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11 Barnum's Living Wonders (New York, Wynkoop and Hallenbeck, 1871) 11.

collapse of the human/animal binary. Barnum raised doubts in people's minds about race by creating a substitute reality, by invoking a myth of an unknown (to white civilization) population of subhuman, animal-like beings. Moreover, by highlighting the barbaric practice of cannibalism, and in doing so, invoking metaphorically charged language, ripe with animal parallels, Barnum served to further blur the line between animal and non-Western human, a line non-assimilationists, anti-abolitionists, slaveholders, and pro-expansion Indian haters were happy to see erased. Many of these so-called savages were nothing of the sort, but rather down and out people of color from Barnum's own backyard—at least such was the case with Zip the Pinhead, although this secret was closely guarded by the showman, and, if certain contemporaneous 1871 accounts are to be trusted, it also proved the case with the so-called Cannibal Princess from Fiji that Barnum toured with the three cannibal warriors.

Barnum can manufacture the appearance of strange hybrid creatures or savage non-white races. Race is understood as a mutable, constructable entity. Indeed, in 1850 he featured a man at his museum who professed that he could change the color of an African-American's skin.\(^2\) Understood this way, race becomes a humbug, of sorts, to be deconstructed by his audiences. Barnum also performed in blackface during his

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1850s' tour with the Swedish Nightingale, Jenny Lind. One night, still in blackface, Barnum attempted to break up a dispute and was almost shot because of his impudence. He defended himself by saying, "Dare you use such language to a white man?" then turned back his sleeve and proclaimed, "I am as white as you are, sir!" Barnum momentarily experienced a loss of agency because of his skin color, yet for him, race was easily transformable, something from which he could turn a profit.

During the 1830s and 40s, as I mentioned earlier, Barnum owned a slave for a short time, in public spoke rather ambivalently about slavery, and was generally anxious about assimilation. But in the decade prior to the Civil War, Barnum adopted a different attitude about slavery which slowly gave rise to his forming a new sensibility about African Americans. In an 1855 letter to Reverend Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Barnum demonstrates his commitment to the anti-slavery cause. Thanking the minister for the abolitionist pamphlets, Barnum writes,

I read them all last night with great satisfaction, both to myself and my wife. My wife attends the Unitarian church, but her hatred of slavery is so strong, that they are too tame for her. I have traveled much in the southern states and have got to abhor the curse from witnessing its fruits. I have spent months on the cotton plantations of

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^4 Struggles and Triumphs (1859) 189-90.

^5 For substantiation of this generalization, see exhibits 1 and 2 in the appendix.
Mississippi, where I have seen more than one "Legree."

Barnum invokes his time spent in the South to authorize his beliefs, but conveniently elides his own very personal experience with slavery. When secession was threatened in 1860, like many, Barnum changed his party affiliation from Democrat to Republican. In the early years of the war, Barnum clearly allied himself with Lincoln and his administration. In February 1861, for example, Barnum arranged for Lincoln to visit his museum in New York—a fact which he was sure to publicize in the New York press—and, later in August of the same year, he wrote to the President, expounding about the widespread anti-secessionist support that he could find in Connecticut, after "the strong arm" of government had dealt with anti-Unionists.  

A decade before Barnum's tour of Fiji Cannibals embarked, in the early years of the Civil War, Barnum took time away from the American Museum in New York City to promote General Commodore, a dwarf, by paying a visit to Lincoln at the White House. Even Barnum, himself, seemed aware of the incongruity of their presence and the important business before the cabinet members during "the dark days of the rebellion."

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26 Selected Letters of P.T. Barnum, c. April 1855, Letter 70.

27 Selected Letters of P.T. Barnum, Letters 93 and 96.

28 S&T 572.
After the war in 1865, as a representative to Connecticut's Senate, Barnum made an "appeal" for suffrage. He spoke before this body as it considered legislation that aimed to strike out the word "white" from the clause which defined the qualification of voters. Barnum spoke earnestly and passionately to those reluctant or hesitant to vote in favor of such changes:

I agree with the gentleman that the right of suffrage is 'dearly and sacredly cherished by the white man'; and it is because this right is so dear and sacred, that I wish to see it extended to every educated moral man within our State, without regard to color . . . where was the poor, down-trodden colored race in this rebellion? Did they seize the 'opportunity' when their masters were engaged with a powerful foe, to break out in insurrection, and massacre those tyrants who had so long held them in the most cruel bondage? No, Mr. Speaker, they did not do this. My 'democratic' friends would have done it. I would have done it. Irishmen, Chinamen, Portuguese, would have done it; any white man would have done it; but the poor black man is like a lamb in his nature compared with the white man. The black man possesses a confiding disposition, thoroughly tinctured with religious enthusiasm, and not characterized by a spirit of revenge."

This arguably positive characterization is diluted when compared against some of his other utterances made during the very same speech. In the following excerpt he speaks more generally of the civilizing mission of whites and the requirements necessary for the advancement of African Americans:

So it is with the poor African. You may take a dozen specimens of both sexes from the lowest type

\[8\text{ S&T 621-3.}\]
of man found in Africa; their race has been buried for ages in ignorance and barbarism, and you can scarcely perceive that they have any more of manhood or womanhood than so many orang-outangs or gorillas. You look at their low foreheads, their thick skulls and lips, their woolly heads, their flat noses, their dull, lazy eyes, and you may be tempted to adopt the language of this minority committee, and exclaim: 'Surely these people have no inventive faculties, no genius for the arts, or for any of those occupations requiring intellect and wisdom.' But bring them out into the light of civilization; let them and their children come into the genial sunshine of Christianity; teach them industry, self-reliance, and self-respect; let them learn what too few white Christians have yet understood, that cleanliness is akin to godliness, and a part of godliness; and the human soul will begin to develop itself. Each generation, blessed with churches and common schools, will gradually exhibit the result of such culture; the eye of barbarism, ignorance and idleness will light up with the fire of intelligence, education, ambition, activity and Christian civilization; and you will find the immortal soul asserting her dignity, by the development of a man who would startle, by his intelligence, the honorable gentleman from Wallingford, who has presumed to compare beings made in God's image with 'oxen and asses.'

According to Barnum, with the aid of a civilizing influence the brutish African can be bettered. The passive construction of that last phrase makes clear the dynamic at work: this Darwinian evolution, from orangutan to citizen, can take place only under the guidance of whites. The African cannot raise himself/herself up, cannot come to understand that cleanliness is next to godliness, that idleness is something to be rooted out. The seemingly contradictory use of negative stereotypes at the behest of an argument about the right to vote exposes this speaker's apparent ambivalence. One
wonders if the "uplifted" Africans will ever become his equal? Will the trace of the "grime" of Africa still float about them? To believe that "they" have "dull, lazy eyes" and that their "low foreheads, their thick skulls and lips, their woolly heads, their flat noses" connote some inherent intellectual capability, undermines his own civilizing mission.

That Barnum is ambivalent about his brotherhood with non-whites is evident. Clearly, he finds meaning in his role as uplifter. Does this mean more to him than the innate qualities he finds hidden deep in the breasts of others? This question is more than a poignant one when you consider that Barnum also made the following remarks about Native Americans in his employ twenty years before:

The Indians arrived and danced last night. There are five Indians, two squaws, and a little papoose five or six years old besides the interpreter . . . . The lazy devils want to be lying down nearly all the time, and as it looks so bad for them to be lying about the Museum, I have them stretched out in the workshop all day, some of them occasionally strolling about the Museum. D--n Indians anyhow. They are a lazy, shiftless set of brutes--though they will draw.11

While his racist ideology in the aforementioned speech is thinly masked, here it is utterly transparent. P.T. Barnum displays no ambivalence toward his Indian charges and he sees within the breasts of the Indians little possibility of

improvement. Still, he learned early on that Indians could draw huge crowds, as is evidenced by his grumbling diatribe against the Indians in his employ. In 1864, en route to visit the President in Washington, D.C., a dozen chiefs paid a visit to New York City. Naturally, Barnum wanted a piece of the action. His recollection of this event in his autobiography is interesting. He laments, for example, the status of the chiefs. Their status, of course, means that he was unable to easily procure their services: "They were real chiefs of powerful tribes, and would no more have consented to give an exhibition of themselves than the Chief magistrate of our own nation would have done." Nevertheless, Barnum managed to secure their presence but only, their interpreter stipulated, if it seemed as if all "your patrons come to pay them visits of honor. If they suspected that your Museum was a place where people paid for entering, you could not keep them a moment after the discovery." Barnum used the occasion to bolster his own self-image: "The Indians liked this attention from me, as they had been informed that I was the proprietor of the great establishment in which they were

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1 Just as important Chiefs visit Lincoln, so they visit the showman, P.T. Barnum. This juxtaposition highlights Barnum's perceived image of himself as Nation-maker, as someone who seriously affects American politics.

11 S&T 573.

14 S&T 574.
invited and honored guests.”

Barnum takes pleasure in reciting the names of his visitors:

Among these Indians were War Bonnet, Lean Bear, and Hand-in-the-Water, chiefs of the Cheyennes; Yellow Buffalo, of the Kiowas; Yellow Bear, of the same tribe; Jacob, of the Caddos; and White Bull, of the Apaches. The little wiry chief known as Yellow Bear had killed many whites as they had traveled through the ‘far West’. . . . He would fawn about me, and although not speaking or understanding a word of our language, would try to convince me that he loved me dearly.16

This and the rest of the interlude reads like a précis of U.S. government policy toward Native Americans. The Indians were his guests, but they’re deluded deliberately for Barnum’s own profit. He fashioned himself as admirable, a force to be both recognized and reckoned with. At one point during their visit, he took them to a public school where teachers had arranged, according to Barnum, “an exhibition of special exercises by the scholars, which they thought would be most likely to gratify their barbaric visitors.” After the exercises, Barnum reminisces, “One old chief arose, and simply said, ‘this is all new to us. We are mere unlearned sons of the forest, and cannot understand what we have seen and heard.’” 17 Who knows if the chief really said this; who knows if he really meant it? What we do know is that Barnum found it significant enough to remember, or that he found it

15 S&T 574.

16 S&T 576-7.

17 S&T 575.
significant enough to make up, important enough to repeat, a
necessary item to include in his overburdened autobiography.
The comment fits perfectly with Barnum’s preconception of the
Indian and finds, Barnum seems quite aware, a warm reception
in the popular imagination. Undeniably, too, this Indian
chief’s comment resonates with Barnum’s speech before the
legislature (less than a year later): the ignorant savages
require the white man to bring them into the light of day.

In between visits to the school, the mayor and the
governor, Barnum would return with his guests to the American
Museum, where he recalls, tongue firmly in cheek, “the people
had there congregated ‘to do them honor.’” Bar
Barnum is
thoroughly pleased with his humbuggery, his success in
bamboozling the chiefs of “powerful tribes.” This pleasure
undeniably is two-fold: first, he asserts his power over
those who are recognized officially as powerful and, second,
he pulls the wool over the eyes of the stupid savages from
way out West. In the following pages of his autobiography,
he takes particular pleasure in the methods by which he
fooled the chiefs. As if he were unlocking the secrets of
his humbuggery, Barnum walks through his presentation in
detail:

In exhibiting these Indian warriors on the stage, I
explained to the large audiences the names and
characteristics of each. When I came to Yellow
Bear I would pat him familiarly upon the shoulder,
which always caused him to look up to me with a

— ST 575.
pleasant smile, while he softly stroked down my arm with his right hand in the most moving manner. Knowing that he could not understand a word I said, I pretended to be complimenting him to the audience, while I was really saying something like the following: 'This little Indian, ladies and gentlemen, is Yellow Bear, chief of the Kiowas, he has killed, no doubt, scores of white persons, and he is probably the meanest, black-hearted rascal that lives in the far West.' Here I patted him on the head, and he, supposing I was sounding his praises, would smile, fawn upon me, and stroke my arm, while I continued: 'If the blood-thirsty little villain understood what I was saying, he would kill me in a moment; but as he thinks I am complimenting him, I can safely state the truth to you, that he is a lying, thieving, treacherous, murderous monster. He has tortured to death poor, unprotected women, murdered their husbands, brained their helpless little ones; and he would gladly do the same to you or to me, if he thought he could escape punishment. This is but a faint description of the character of Yellow Bear.' Here I gave him another patronizing pat on the head, and he, with a pleasant smile, bowed to the audience, as much as to say that my words were quite true, and that he thanked me very much for the high encomiums I had so generously heaped upon him.¹⁹

Barnum is amused by the fawning pose of Chief Yellow Bear because of its incongruity with his narrative. An equally important part of Barnum's discussion is his belief that Yellow Bear and the other chiefs are acting just as much as he is. He says,

"[Yellow Bear] was a sly, treacherous, blood-thirsty savage, who would think no more of scalping a family of women and children, than a butcher would of wringing the neck of a chicken. But now he was on a mission to the 'Great Father' at Washington, seeking for presents and favors for his tribe and he pretended to be exceedingly meek and

¹⁹ S&T 577-8, my emphasis.
humble, and continually urged the interpreter to announce him a 'great friend to the white man.'

Barnum is certain that the chief's fawning is simply a pose aimed at garnering white support and white money. This reading gains support from Barnum's discussion of the ways the chiefs carried on during their time at the museum:

As they regarded me as their host, they did not hesitate to trespass upon my hospitality. Whenever their eyes rested upon a glittering shell among my specimens of conchology, especially if it had several brilliant colors, one would take off his coat, another his shirt, and insist that I should exchange my shell for their garment. When I declined the exchange, but on the contrary presented them with the coveted article, I soon found I had established a dangerous precedent. Immediately, they all commenced to beg for everything in my vast collection, which they happened to take a liking to. This cost me many valuable specimens, and often 'put me to my trumps' for an excuse to avoid giving them things which I could not part with."

According to his account, Indians wanted more than could possibly be exchanged. They expected too much. They would eat up the coffers of the government and would exhaust the enterprise of the nation (the collection). Moreover, could the Indian's actions be trusted? Did the Indians act in a certain way only for personal gain? Could they be trusted to keep their promises? Would the Indian be happy with a conch shell (a reservation of several thousand acres) or would the Indian break the treaty—implicitly cemented when the exchange took place—and want an abalone, too? Barnum's luck

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40 S&T 577.

41 S&T 576-7.
burns out, eventually, and he is found out. He writes, "Their dignity had been offended, and their wild, flashing eyes were anything but agreeable. Indeed, I hardly felt safe in their presence, and it was with a feeling of relief that I witnessed their departure for Washington the next morning."  

According to his own estimation, Barnum understands America, understands what it needs and what it wants: in this case, a duped and stupid, kowtowing, reformed and meek, former savage. Certainly this is a powerful scene that helps to illustrate the means by which government Imperialist policies are mediated by and through the popular consciousness. Does government policy dictate popular reaction or does popular reaction formulate policy?  

But if this scene in a popular venue implies that savages, stripped of their familiar environments, can be transformed into malleable ragdolls who will fawn over the "superior" white man, government policy in the following years officially maps out the bureaucratic intricacies of this sort of dispossession and oppression. During the year Barnum first toured his Fiji cannibals, the Indian General Council met to map out the future of Indian Territory. The Council concurred on the necessity during a probationary period of "The Non-Intercourse Law," which, in effect, simply

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4. S&T 578.

41 See exhibits 3 and 4 in the appendix for more on Barnum’s and popular culture's attitude toward Indians' visits to New York and Washington, DC.
shored up the boundaries between white America and Indian nations. In short, such policies restricted and contained the Indian menace. If the Indians were left peaceably alone on their designated lands, popular sentiment paternalistically believed the Indians would be sufficiently happy and that there would be land enough for white settlers. Once the threat was effectively managed, the nation could continue to expand since there was plenty of elbow room in America.

Collecting America: the Museum
So preoccupied with a vastly racialized social culture--at least in textual discourse if not in social intercourse--both at home and abroad, it is not surprising that Barnum and many of his contemporaries were compelled by the study of racialized Others. The "enigma" of the non-white Other became a paramount concern after abolition, with escalating violence in western territories and with slowly developing interest in foreign "development." The errand into the wilderness depended upon an efficient means of controlling unassimilable elements, and the newly emerging science of evolutionary biology had as much to offer social policy makers as it did ethnologists. A comment by John Lubbock in The Origin of Civilization and the Primitive Condition of Man (1870)
condenses the multiple and simultaneous narratives about
professed "primitive" races:

Is there a definite and assured law of progress in human affairs—a slow and gradual ascent from the lower to the higher? and was that low condition of humanity, of which we have the prehistoric traces, and which is illustrated by the present condition of savage reaches, the starting-point of this ascent? or was primeval man a developed and superior being, who has retrograded and degenerated into the savage state? These are grave questions now impending in the world of thought, and which are of high practical interest; for, to know the fundamental law of movement in humanity, is the prerequisite of all wise and successful measures of social amelioration."

The study of "the primitive" was a guide for social practice, for imperial policy. Moreover, through the spectacle of the savage body, the civilized could be known. As Marianna Torgovnick has succinctly stated, "The needs of the present determine the value and nature of the primitive. The primitive does what we ask it to do . . . or so we like to think." Thus, by viewing the Fijians, bodily spectacularized as savage cannibals, nineteenth-century white Americans could come to know their civilized selves . . . or so they liked to think. Barnum understood that one of the most efficient ways of asking the primitive to "do as we ask of it" was to collect, to gather, such primitive specimens under the roof of his museum. The showman's technique is

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4 Lubbock, iv.

reiterated by the following comment in a *Boston Journal* review quoted in his autobiography: "Here in almost endless variety we see gathered together from all parts of the earth a miniature representation of the wonder world, that nobody but Barnum would ever have thought of securing for a traveling exhibition." Thus far in this chapter, the discussion has focused on the discursive operation of race during the era leading up to Barnum's tour of the Fiji Cannibals, but in this section I will sharpen the focus by examining the more specific apparatus used by Barnum to administer a discourse of race: the museum collection, specifically his Museum, Menagerie and Circus.

It may perhaps seem curious to a twentieth-century sensibility that Barnum would call his traveling show a "museum." Certainly, his use of the term borrowed signifying power from its association with his highly successful American Museum. But, it is also important to understand that the idea of museum has become fixed only in the last hundred years. The term, "museum," at least in nineteenth-century America, was slippery. Neil Harris says, by 1851 Barnum's American Museum had become the most popular institution of its kind in the country [and this marked] the vulgarization of the museum and its transformation from a place for scholarship and rational instruction to an amusement center [which itself] symbolized the larger shift from

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*S&T* 753
Jeffersonian republicanism to Jacksonian democracy.\textsuperscript{47}

More generally, loosely signified, the museum was a site in which culture was undergoing a pinning down, a "fixing." In this way it is simultaneously a clearing house and publishing house, a scientific laboratory and hall of learning, a house of worship and a legislature.\textsuperscript{47} In explicating the function of museums, Eugenio Donato has written:

The set of objects the Museum displays is sustained only by the fiction that they somehow constitute a coherent representational universe. The fiction is that a repeated metonymic displacement of fragment for totality, object to label, series of objects to series of labels, can still produce a representation which is somehow adequate to a nonlinguistic universe. Such a fiction is the result of an uncritical belief in the notion that ordering and classifying, that is to say, the spatial juxtaposition of fragments, can produce a representational understanding of the world.\textsuperscript{48}

It's clear from contemporaneous accounts that Barnum's traveling show, as well as his museum, attempted to establish a substitute reality, bringing diverse and incompatible elements together in its own "meaningful" way. While this "reality" may be a fiction, it nonetheless has the power to insert itself as "reality" into the minds of its patrons.

\textsuperscript{47} Harris, 33.

\textsuperscript{48} Robert Bogdan suggests that the word "museum" connoted a level of authority and linked dime exhibitions to the culturally sanctioned study of natural sciences. \textit{Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit} (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1988) 106.

Thus it is within Barnum's power to recreate the world, to represent it, to put it on tour: Barnum can bring the world to Americans more easily than he can bring Americans to the world. Recently, Bluford Adams has analyzed P.T. Barnum's hippodromes and circuses between 1874 and 1891--my analysis carries us up to this point--and the shifting nature of the showman's display of non-western Others. He suggests tellingly that non-Westerners, outsiders to "Western systems of knowledge and economics" embodied "a whole range of white fantasy and fear." Robert Rydell's important theoretical and historical study, All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916, quite specifically delineates how the site of Barnum's traveling show and Museum was the launching pad for foreign and domestic Imperialist practice. Admittedly, his work picks up where mine leaves off (although Fiji Cannibals were still on display at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, and cannibals in general continued to be displayed by Barnum and Bailey in their Ethnological Congress of Savage Tribes starting in 1884). It is quite likely that Barnum and other

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51 The Circus Courier sensationally listed the roster as consisting of: "Bestial Australian Cannibals; Mysterious Aztecs, Embrouited Big-Lipped Botocudos; Wild Moslem Nubians; Ferocious Zulus; Buddhist Monks; Invincible Afghans; Pagan Burmese Priests; Ishmaelitish Todars; Dusky Idolatrous Hindus; Sinuous Nautch girls; Annamite Dwarfs; Haughty Syrians; Oriental Giants; Herculean Japanese; Kaffires; Arabs; Arabian Sheikhs;"
similar traveling circuses and fairs gave business and civic leaders the promise of ideological and economic payoff for such exhibitions--indeed, the groundwork and planning stage of the Philadelphia Centennial began in earnest in 1871-1872. Such fairs, according to Rydell's estimation,

presented new mediums of entertainment and opportunities for vicarious travel in other lands. Diversity characterized the expositions, and this heterogeneity was part of their attraction. Diversity, however, was inseparable from the larger constellation of ideas about race, nationality, and progress that molded the fairs into ideologically coherent 'symbolic universes' confirming and extending the authority of the country's corporate, political, and scientific leadership.52

Such symbolic universes enabled American citizens to understand how they fit into a world that existed before them and that will continue to live on beyond them.53 Thus, organizers of the Centennial Exhibition, viewed their enterprise as "a school for the nation."54 The exhibition

Persians; Kurds; Ethiopians; Circassians; Polynesians; Tasmanians; Tartars; Patans; Etc." Reproduced in P.T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man, 308.


53 The parallels to John Lubbock's objectives in his treatise are remarkable: "The study of the lower races of men, apart from the direct importance which it possesses in an empire like ours [England], is of great interest from three points of view. In the first place, the condition and habits of existing savages resemble in many ways, though not in all, those of our own ancestors in a period now long gone by; in the second, they illustrate much of what is passing among ourselves. many customs which have evidently no relation to present circumstances, and even some ideas which are rooted in our minds, as fossils are imbedded in the soil; and thirdly, we can even, by means of them, penetrate some of that mist which separates the present from the future" (1).

54 Rydell, 11.

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became a venue through which white male corporate, political and civic leaders, could disseminate their views about the world at large and this nation's place within that world order.

Barnum and others mapped such practices through the text of human bodies. According to Susan Stewart, the "truth" is magnified through the spectacle of the grotesque, in venues where "human curiosities" are displayed:

[T]here are a number of ways in which the body and the world, the experienced and the imagined, mutually articulate and delimit each other. First, the bodily grotesque of carnival offers the possibility of incorporation: the image is not detached from the body here; rather, it moves within the democratic space of carnival, that space of the face-to-face communication of the marketplace. But in the miniaturized world of the freak show, the body is taken from movement into stasis. Through the transcendent viewpoint offered by this variety of spectacle, the body is made an object and, correlative, is something which offers itself to possession. Hence, while the freak show may seem, at first glance, to be a display of the grotesque, the distance it invokes makes it instead an inverse display of perfection. Through the freak we derive an image of the normal; to know an age's typical freaks is, in fact, to know its points of standardization.  

Both moments operated simultaneously during Barnum's exhibitions: the interaction of a demographically diverse body of peoples inscribed, redefined and/or reconfirmed power relationships. The trope of cannibal and savage—all attached to images and "realities" tied to the body--

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determined the lines of such power structures. The limiting or narrowing of such experiences to the specific venue of the display of "human curiosities," the relegation of human beings to a collection of sorts, necessarily elides the diachronic to create a synchronous universe, devoid of historical referents. While I would argue that Barnum's Fiji Cannibals are part of a collection, the various discourses inscribed on their bodies make them into a collection as well. These collections/collected human beings calibrate the engine of normalcy.

Such interpretations are guided, in part, by comparison, an inherent feature of displays of curious artifacts such as those included in Barnum's museum. Difference relies on comparison, on oppositional dichotomies, on hierarchies. For something to be classified as "curious," it requires its binary opposite "common"; for something to appear "archaic," it necessitates comparison, explicitly or implicitly with the "progressive," the "innovative"; for something to appear "barbaric," it must be compared with the "civilized." This comparative mode is part and parcel of the World's fairs that Rydell examines: "World's fairs, often christened 'world universities,' put the nations and people of the world on display for comparative purposes. Americans had often measured their achievements against those of different

"When I refer to Fiji Cannibals, for the most part, I mean it to be understood in this way: "Fiji Cannibals-as-collection."
nations." In this way economic productivity, intellectual advancements, international policy, military capability, moral probity, and so on could be gauged against other segments of the world. It's easy to see how alliances could be formed among equally "powerful" nations, in essence, those most like one another. Those thought to be living in the dark ages were deemed savage, or at best, primitive, in need of the colonizing mission of other, more powerful nations (a dynamic not all too dissimilar from what many whites felt to be their mission within the boundaries of the nation and its expanding territories). Intellectual, Militaristic, Spiritual and Fiscal missions conjoined to speak for each other. "Lack" of spiritual sophistication (that is, in many instances, lack of Christianity—as was the case in Fiji during the nineteenth century) often came to signify "lack" of knowledge about efficiently managing and exploiting natural resources. But often the reverse "proved true" as well. "Lack" of geographical knowledge—missionary reports suggest Fijians were dismayed to find how small their land was in comparison to the large and powerful American and British Empires—as well as the absence of a necessary vigor and competitive spirit signified an inability to navigate the

Rydell, 5. The author quotes Joseph Hawley, who, in 1879, stressed, "Comparison is vital to the success of any exposition . . . . You can never discover your success or your failure without comparison. You cannot gauge your status without comparison with other nations . . . . Comparison is essential to show the effects on the industries and the arts of climate, of race, of geographical position, of raw materials, of social and political institutions" (32).
competitive waters of nineteenth-century capitalism. It's also important to note the tension between the concept of historical progress (the mission of civilizing) and historical backsliding or perpetual state of stasis. While Barnum and others addressed the possibility of bringing enlightenment to the savage, they also persisted in their dehistoricist impulses, putting the natives back into an unchanging history. As will be seen in the following chapter, this took the form of rewriting the reality of recent and present social-histories and also manifested itself through the assemblage of artifacts intending to construct a simulacrum of Fiji: equipping reformed cannibals—ancestors of cannibals, even—with cannibal forks, war clubs, etc., further undermining any sense of their movement toward "civilization."

Comparisons with other nations—specifically Fiji in the case of Barnum’s traveling exhibition—inevitably hinged upon concepts of nation invested entirely in race. National identities were tied to specific races and became substitutable terms. Ideologically, if the discourse promoted one nation's superiority over another, it simultaneously established that some races are superior, more powerful, more intelligent, more moral, more spiritual, and that others are deficient, in need of fiscal, spiritual, military, or

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"Ironically, the section of his autobiography in which he discusses the Fiji Cannibals is titled "Rest Only Found in Action."
intellectual uplift. Part of this sorting out took the form of an appeal to anthropology or, more rightly, an appeal to pseudo-anthropology. According to Rydell,

[A]t the fairs, the idea of technological and national progress became laced with scientific racism . . . World's fairs provide a partial but crucial explanation for the interpenetration and popularization of evolutionary ideas about race and progress . . . The scientific approach, with its emphasis on classification, stressed the diversity of racial 'types' and an evolutionary hierarchy that tended to blur class distinctions among whites while it invited them to appraise the relative capabilities of different groups of nonwhite for emulating the American model of progress."

One of the eventual outcomes of the proliferation of such ideas was the systematized efforts of eugenicists (including implicit eugenic projects related to immigration restriction) in the first third of the twentieth century—a related, but separate tale of the interstitial relationship between foreign and domestic policies. Thus, these displays, with their emphasis on white supremacy as a utopian agency, legitimized racial exploitation at home and the creation of an empire abroad, while simultaneously condensing for a "homogenous" white culture, a sense of shared national purpose. Such exhibitions inevitably reassured the dominant culture, almost always aligned with the producers of such shows, of their own superiority and continued advancement, of the likelihood of the perpetuation of their own individual

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"" Rydell, 5.

"" Rydell, 236.
errand(s) in the wilderness(es), and the concomitant need of their efforts and general being in the world.

But what else sparked the interest of Barnum's fans? Barnum took pains to illustrate how bloodily barbaric the Fijians were, yet also explained that one of the Fijians was Christianized and read the Bible to the others. Certainly, his crowds' fascination with the cannibals depended on such mutually unresolvable contradictions. How, fans wondered, can someone be a man-eater, yet still listen to the words of the peace-keeper in the gospel? This tension is what piqued the interest of attendees, sent them in search of the riddling contradictions, looking for the answer at the root of Barnum's most recent humbug (Barnum's Fijian Cannibals, as I discuss in the next chapter, were humbugs through and through).^1

The Nation-Maker

As I have emphasized repeatedly in this chapter, Barnum certainly sensed that professionally he occupied a seminal place in American culture. This is obvious in an interview with the New York Sun in 1880, wherein Barnum proclaimed,

^1 Here I am relying on Neil Harris' concept of Barnum's "operational aesthetic." Harris coins this phrase to explain the appeal of Barnum's productions: "The objects inside the museum, and Barnum's activities outside, focused attention on their own structures and operations, were empirically testable, and enabled--or at least invited--audiences and participants to learn how they worked. They appealed because they exposed their processes of action." Harris, 57.
"Talk of the songs of a nation! . . . What I say is, 'Let me furnish the amusements of a nation and there will be need of very few laws.'" According to his own estimates, he had become the machine through which assimilation and incorporation into the National body is possible. Indeed, Barnum could be called the enabler or facilitator of the National Symbolic, which, according to Lauren Berlant, is the order of discursive practices whose reign within a national space produces, and also refers to, the 'law' in which the accident of birth within a geographic/political boundary transforms individuals into subjects of a collectively-held history. Its traditional icons, its metaphors, its heroes, its rituals, and its narratives provide an alphabet for a collective consciousness or national subjectivity; through the National Symbolic the historical nation aspires to achieve the inevitability of the status of natural law, a birthright. This pseudo-genetic condition not only affects profoundly the citizen's subjective experience of her/his political rights, but also of civil life, private life, the life of the body itself. 

Thus, through his productions, Barnum proved to be a nexus of a burgeoning national culture. According to him, if his amusements were available to the masses, all citizens would come together, without the force of the law, as a community of individuals, wherein members could simultaneously fulfill

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62 New York Sun, 5 September 1880.

the goals of "We, the People." His endeavors produced a constellation of national signs which, again in the words of Berlant, provided "the common language of a common space, and shored up the shaky state apparatus." This sense of nation, with its own national culture, is imagined, in part, through a complex narrativization, an act whose "performance," Homi Bhabha notes, "interpellates a growing circle of national subjects."

One of the ways that Barnum made "the nation" and a shared "national culture" a reality to Americans was through, not surprisingly, the narrative of his own life." It became for him his greatest advertisement and his greatest production, reproduced endlessly in amended versions, in ever cheaper, and hence, more available, editions. Indeed, by the end of the nineteenth century it had sold more copies than any book but the Bible, more than corroborating his far-

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" Berlant, 21.

"Dissemination: Time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation," 145. Bhabha, of course, eventually notes the ambivalence of nation as a narrative strategy, something I will return to near the end of this chapter. The notion of nation as "imagined community" originates with Benedict Anderson who defines nation as "an imagined political community--and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign." Imagined Communities (New York: Verso, 1991) 6.

" My sense of interpellation is influenced by Frantz Fanon, who writes, the purpose of a national culture is to "make the totality of the nation a reality to each citizen. It is to make the history of the nation part of the personal experience of each of its citizens." The Wretched of the Earth, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove P, 1963) 210.
reaching popularity and influence in American culture. In his autobiography Barnum included numerous excerpts from newspaper articles which helped to substantiate his role in the story of America. For example, he included an article from the New York Sun which reviewed an impromptu oratory he delivered to his employees following the destruction by fire of the American Museum in July, 1865. Of note is the way that it frames Barnum as being tapped into the American psyche, a representative of a national way of thinking. In sum, Barnum knows what it means to be an American:

Every word, though delivered with apparent carelessness, struck a key note in the hearts of his listeners. Simple, forcible and touching, it showed how thoroughly this extraordinary man comprehends the character of his countrymen, and how easily he can play upon their feelings. Those who look upon Barnum as a mere charlatan, have really no knowledge of him. It would be easy to demonstrate that the qualities that have placed him in his present position of notoriety and affluence would, in another pursuit, have raised him to far greater eminence. In his breadth of views, his profound knowledge of mankind, his courage under reverses, his indomitable perseverance, his ready eloquence and his admirable business tact, we recognize the elements that are conducive to success in most other pursuits. More than almost any other living man, Barnum may be said to be a representative type of the American mind."

Certainly the overwhelming success of his 1871-1873 traveling show more than secured Barnum's sense that he had a keen understanding of this nation. In 1873, writing about his

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*Wicke, 55.*
latest venture, Barnum was clearly astounded by its drawing power. He takes up precious space in his behemoth of an autobiography—its size became an increasing concern because of his desire to make an inexpensive, one volume available to the masses—to include press accounts of crowd turnout at the expositions. An article from the Boston Journal, included in Struggles and Triumphs, states,

About a year ago Mr. Barnum, desirous to do good in his day and generation, instituted and put on wheels his present mammoth enterprise, at a cost of nearly three-quarters of a million dollars, which has met with a success unparalleled in the annals of the show business. This success is so sudden and complete as to astonish everybody, and none more so than professionals themselves. Knowing the interest the public feels in all that pertains to P.T. Barnum, and especially his "last great effort," (Barnum himself calls it his last great 'splurge,' which we readily grant in deference to his known modesty,) we sent one of our reporters to interview the whole affair, and as his injunctions were imperative to 'stick to facts' (fiat justitia ruat coelum), our readers will be able to judge of the big show as it appeared. One thing is very evident. Since starting from New York, Barnum's show has been patronized by the largest concourse of people ever known in New England. His transit across the country has been like "Sherman's March to the Sea," while his entertainments have been visited by the great masses, including eminent clergymen and their families, and the most respectable of all persuasions—in fact, by everybody, 'without reference to race, color, or previous condition,' etc. . . . The first impression that one receives on entering is that of bewilderment, such is the magnitude, extent, variety and uniqueness of the combination. Here in almost endless variety we see gathered together from all parts of the earth a miniature representation of the wonder world, that nobody but Barnum would ever have thought of securing for a traveling exhibition."
Because of space limitations, Barnum chose not to include in his autobiography the newspaper's account of individual exhibits. But even this excerpt reveals much, especially the register of the language purportedly guaranteed to "stick to the facts." Importantly, the reporter invokes a militaristic metaphor, comparing Barnum's tour to that of Sherman's March. Certainly, this comparison, made less than a decade after the original maneuver, struck a nerve in contemporary audiences. To northeastern audiences, Sherman's March to the Sea signified the last real push of the Civil War; thus, Sherman could be seen as a unifier, someone who could bring the nation back together, someone who could suture the fissure; of course, the metaphor also extends to Barnum the audacity and ingenuity ascribed to Sherman. Metaphorically, the Sherman allusion extends also to Barnum the authority of a military general, and links him to the leadership of the Republic. This metaphor is doubly interesting because hidden within it is an admission of mass destruction which links Barnum to destructive military strategy heretofore unknown. While this may not be the intended connection, the comparison is complex enough to allow room for this slippage. Is Barnum's own "Push to the Sea" just as single-minded in its motivation (with profit rather than the union the motive), is it just as destructive (in seeking economic gain at the expense of the less
fortunate), and it is just as ideologically invasive and divisive (in constituting appropriate and inappropriate models of nationality and internationality)? While Sherman could be seen as a unifier, he effected such union through division, through death and destruction; similarly, Barnum, in the name of the American nation, engaged in divisive practices to support his economic enterprise. Such ambivalence is part and parcel of the impulse to narrate nation. Bhabha, for one, says that

the narrative and psychological force that nationness brings to bear on cultural production and political projection is the effect of the ambivalence of the 'nation' as a narrative strategy. As an apparatus of symbolic power, it produces a continual slippage of categories, like sexuality, class affiliation, territorial paranoia, or 'cultural difference' in the act of writing the nation. 10

Nation understood as "community," as a "shared sense of culture," is a homogenized/homogenizing narrative, reliant on the fantasy of an (imaginary) wholeness and, as such, will inevitably split into ambivalence if the elements of the storyline do not cohere.

But, to more fully understand Barnum's homogenized/homogenizing narrative, let us return to the language of the extensive passage quoted above. While not as explicit as the aforementioned metaphor, the language used to describe the audiences streaming to the shows is similarly revealing. It suggests that Barnum, under the rubric of his

10 "Dissemination" 140.
Museum (still connoting a certain official "Americanness" because of association with the former American Museum), could level all differences, appeal to all Americans, disregarding the fact that social realities precluded racial and class harmony. According to this account, Barnum was a nation-maker; his grand vision made it possible to carry out the mission of the country's founding fathers. The language of inclusion used to describe the demographics is interesting as well. Regardless of "prior condition"—race, nationality, class, religion—people flocked to see the traveling show. One wonders if such "conditions" were affected or altered by a visit to the fair midways. It should not be ignored that such differences are defined in negative terms; that is, these states of prior condition are something to be overcome, something to leave behind. In this way the newspaper engenders the Barnum show with a leveling prerogative or effect.  

Superlatives abound: mammoth, unparalleled, sudden, complete, largest, great masses, eminent, most respectable, magnitude, extent, variety, uniqueness, wonder world, as well as the aforementioned military metaphor. The breadth of

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I'm reminded here of Fanon's assertion: "A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence." Fanon would say that this newspaper article is the story that Barnum, the newspapers that supported him, and the current regime of power needed to tell in order to maintain a (fictive) sense of national coherence. *The Wretched of the Earth* 233.
public interest in Barnum is clear—as Barnum was quite well aware, thus explaining his decision to include the rather lengthy, yet still amended extract. But to ensure that his readership was well aware of his reach, he also reproduced in this same section of *Struggles and Triumphs* a letter from a Winthrop, Maine, correspondent included in a *New York Tribune* August 19, 1871 article titled "Barnum's Menagerie and Circus":

The business in Maine has been immense, contrary to the predictions of showmen generally . . . While exhibiting at Gardiner and Augusta persons came all the way from Bangor. When they reached Waterville, a scene occurred which has never been equaled in this or any other country. The village was crowded with people who had come from the surrounding country, many of them traveling a distance of seventy-five miles, all the morning crowds were pouring in from all points of the compass in carriages, wagons, ox-carts, and on foot. Near the circus tents, in an adjoining field, were several large tents pitched, which had served to shelter the people the previous night who had come long distances and encamped there . . . . The early morning performance was commenced and it was found that they could not accommodate a tithe part of their patrons, and ere its close an excursion train of twenty-seven cars, crowded in every part, came in from Bangor, closely followed by another of seventeen cars from Belfast. Seeing this vast accession to the already large numbers of visitors, the manager was somewhat puzzled how to accommodate them. Finally, it was decided to give a continuous exhibition, giving an act in the circus department every few moments. This style of performance was kept up without cessation until nine o'clock in the evening when a heavy shower of rain falling, afforded the manager an excuse to close the exhibitions.

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*S&T* 754.
As in the previous extract, superlatives are commonplace and do much to undergird the democratic impulse enmeshed within Barnum's mission. Different segments of this country's population—those that arrive by ox-cart, by foot or by excursion train—could crowd under the umbrella of Barnum's tent. Moreover, it was the desire of the democracy which formed policy: if people wanted to see the show, new shows would be added, new tents erected, accommodations, made. It's easy to read this as an allegory for the intersection of democracy and empire-building, if more people wanted to squeeze under the tent, a bigger tent would have to be found. The show has to go on, the nation has to expand. Another contemporaneous account of a show in York, Pennsylvania, corroborates these notions:

thousands of people from the rural districts poured into town at an early hour. The huge canvas, under which the attractive sights were to be seen, covered a large portion of the (Civil War) hospital grounds and immediately after the hour of opening, dense masses of human beings thronged in its direction and soon filled every available space and avenue leading to and from the different places of exhibition.

The presence of such an immense concourse of people, representing every district in our large and populous county, was itself worth the price of admission, but when the wonders which Barnum had collected and brought together from the remotest and most distant parts of the world, burst upon the eye, the spectators were more than satisfied that

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For more on the political-philosophical basis of this expansionist mentality, see Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995).
taking it all in, they ne'er should look upon the like again."

How did Barnum convey this sense of nation on the concourse of his traveling show? More specifically, how did he engage Americans to think about their country when viewing the cannibals from Fiji? Such cross-currents of desire are manifested in Barnum's narrative about their procurement:

Three of these Cannibals having fallen into the hands of their Royal enemy, who was about to execute, and perhaps to eat them, the missionaries and my agent prevailed upon the copper-colored king to accept a large sum in gold on condition of his majesty's granting them a reprieve and leave of absence to America for three years, my agent also leaving a large sum with the American Consul to be forfeited if they were not returned within the time stipulated.

According to his version of events, Barnum becomes an agent of America, interceding, making symbolic treaties, if you will, with foreign powers. Moreover, Barnum is the means by which barbaric practices are put to an end, or at best, staved off. It takes the agency of Barnum and the missionaries to prevail on the colored Other to end this moral depravity. The white man, extends his gold to the man of copper—an interesting metallurgical lesson in racial power struggle—and effects change. Barnum's motive? More gold in his hands. If investors are interested in investing in and

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4 Shettel, *The Circus Scrapbook* 45. This report was originally filed during the 1872 season.

5 *S&T* 760.
taking advantage of neglected resources—as is eventually evidenced by the account given by Barnum's agent, Gardenhire—it will mean more gold in other westerners' hands. And, to justify such transfer of capital, the copper-colored race will find themselves lifted from the depravity of their ways.

Barnum ensures that his readers will see this aim as his primary goal, thus joining him to the tradition of missionary workers in Fiji. In his autobiography, after the section just alluded to, Barnum continues,

Accompanying them is a half-civilized Cannibal woman, converted and educated by the Methodist missionaries. She reads fluently and very pleasantly from the Bible printed in the Fijian language, and she already exerts a powerful moral influence over these savages. They take a lively interest in hearing her read the history of our Savior. They earnestly declare their convictions that eating human flesh is wrong, and faithfully promise never again to attempt it. They are intelligent and docile. Their characteristic war dances and rude marches, as well as their representations of Cannibal manners and customs, are peculiarly interesting and instructive. It is perhaps needless to add that the bonds for their return will be forfeited. They are already learning to speak and read our language, and I hope soon to put them in the way of being converted to Christianity, even if by so doing the title of "Missionary" be added to the many already given to me by the public."

This extract demonstrates the competing aims that cohere in efforts by Barnum. He wants to convert, to squelch heathen impulses—as is made so clear in the above mythologized account—to install moral principles, to ensure that colonial

\[S&T\] 760.
subjects become good mimics, learning the language as well as the colonialists' ways of thinking and behaving.

Although Barnum's rhetoric is laden with a moral impulse, it is simultaneously motivated by private profit. The language of conversion folds in upon commerce, not an uncommon practice in other missionary accounts of Fiji. For example, consider this example from Barnum's "agent." W.C. Gardenhire's *Fiji and the Fijians*:

> There is a wide field for enterprise in this fertile but yet uncultivated domain, which only requires labor and capital to utilize its undeveloped resources. They who go forth with brave hearts and willing hands to replenish the earth and subdue it, have before them the prospects of those high rewards which have already been reaped by the first hardy settlers of Virginia. Theirs is a glorious work to redeem to peace and usefulness a generous soil, to make the rich flats teem with sugar-cane, the vacant valleys laugh with plenty, and the tropic wilderness to blossom like a garden.

Barnum's profit was, in large part, dependent on the sense that he was a moral bulwark. This is corroborated by an advertisement he includes at the back of a nickel pamphlet, *The History of P.T. Barnum's Fiji Cannibals*, sold at the exhibition. This advertisement reminds patrons that they can visit the winter home of the traveling exhibition in New York: "P.T. Barnum's Great Moral Exhibition, Museum, Menagerie, Caravan, Hippodrome, Polytechnic Institute, and

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W.C. Gardenhire, *History of the Fiji Islands and Cannibalism* [title on cover] or *Fiji and the Fijians; and Travels among the Cannibals* [inside title] (San Francisco: B.F. Sterett, Steam Book and Job Printer, 1871) 30.

88
International Zoological Garden, The Largest Combination of Exhibitions Ever Instituted in this or any other age of the world."

That Barnum would title his exposition a "Great Moral Exhibition" is revealing. This emphasis on moral improvement underscores that Barnum walked a fine line throughout most of his career, constantly needing to justify his promotions, promising healthy entertainment, education, and moral improvement. Another pamphlet, *Barnum's Living Wonders*, sold at the same exhibition, explains his motives:

In instituting and equipping this vast enterprise, Mr. Barnum has but just commenced to carry out a plan which he has for many years been maturing, viz., of furnishing to the American people, for the simple sum of fifty cents, the largest and best combination of exhibitions the world has ever known.

In accomplishing this purpose, he will receive, as he justly deserves, the lasting gratitude of his myriad patrons in every section of the United States.

Year after year, as the vast orders and accumulations come in, and are added to the already vast and illimitable aggregation of living and representative wonders, the people will have constant cause of gratulation, and feel themselves under obligations to one of the most enterprising and magnanimous managers that ever catered to useful and instructive amusements in this or any other generation in the past.

With regard to the Fiji Cannibals, Barnum was wholly aware of the need sell his product to the moral arbiters and thus, in

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"Not surprisingly, Barnum includes a plug for *Life of P.T. Barnum*, written by himself, "nearly 900 pages, muslin gilt, steel portrait, 32 full page engraving, reduced from $3.50 to $1.50."

"*Barnum's Living Wonders* 31."
one instance, solicited the help of Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, editor of the New York Christian Union. Barnum includes in his autobiography what he calls a "happy hit from the pen of Beecher" written for the February 28, 1872 issue:

Should not a paternal government set some limit to the enterprise of Brother Barnum; with reference at least, to the considerations of public safety? Here, upon our desk, lies an indication of his last perilous venture. He invites us 'and one friend'--no conditions as to 'condition' specified--to a private exhibition of four living cannibals, which he has obtained from the Fiji Islands, for his traveling show. We have beaten up, in this office, among the lean and tough, and those most easily spared in an emergency, for volunteers to visit the Anthropophagi, and report; but never has the retiring and self-distrustful disposition of our employees been more signally displayed. This establishment was not represented at that exposition. If Barnum has remembered to specify the 'Feeding-time,' we might have dropped in, in a friendly way, at some other period of the day."

This humorous endorsement clearly demonstrates the acumen with which Barnum manipulated the press to promote his business and underscores why he once said, "I owe my success to printer's ink." As evidenced by Beecher's comments, Barnum is backed by a clergyman, and thus Americans can be ensured that Barnum offers moral substance. In his autobiography this is further reiterated by anecdote. Barnum explains that several editors from the Christian Union

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" S&T 760-61.

" The Circus Scrapbook 1.2 (April 1929): 34, from a clipping of 1887, source not listed.
inevitably did bring their daughters to the exhibition of Fiji Cannibals, but these blooming young ladies refused to sit on the front seat in the fear of being eaten; but I remarked that there was more danger of some of the young gentlemen swallowing them alive, than there was from the cannibals. The belles subsided and were safe.\textsuperscript{3}

Conclusion by Way of Introduction

By now the resolution of Barnum's portrait should have come into focus: a profit-oriented businessman, deeply conflicted—like his contemporaries—about race, who had a keen understanding of this nation, or at least, a sense that he had a keen understanding of it. The present chapter has examined P.T. Barnum in order to contextualize the particular apparatus of his collection and display of Fiji cannibals. In the narration of nation which gels around the figure of Barnum, one thing has become clear: the simultaneous and paradoxical story of inclusion and exclusion. Barnum's story of Fiji Cannibals, in many ways a surrogate narrative about non-westerners and people of color—as will be further outlined in the subsequent chapter—reveals the means by which individuals are excluded from national narratives. The figure of the cannibal—that is, Fiji-Cannibals-As-Collection—exemplifies the paradoxes of nationhood. This

\textsuperscript{3} S&T 761.
figure occupies the knife-edge between assimilation and exclusion; the assimilable and the unassimilable; the civilized and the uncivilized. This liminal inhabitant threatens to collapse clearly demarcated boundaries. Such a threat, according to Slavoj Zizek, is paradoxical because nation is "conceived as something inaccessible to the other, and at the same time threatened by it." On the one hand, the cannibalistic savage is not of the nation and by opposition props up the national narrative; yet, on the other hand, the national rhetoric of assimilation suggests that through the civilizing mission it might be. This paradox or ambivalence—inherent in the testy case of the cannibal menace—threatens to explode the national narrative at the same time that it supports it. The grammar of the American nation will not ultimately admit the "ungrammatical" elements of non-white Others despite protestations to the contrary.

In the following chapter I continue this examination of internal self-differentiation of nation and a national culture, a project coterminous with the (delusional?) ur-narrative of consensus and unity-in-difference.  

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2. My thinking and terminology is influenced by Eric Lott's "call to arms": "The contest between cultural forms for national hegemony was matched only by that among various 'national' cultural elements for control of particular forms. If the issue of the national culture is, as I believe is should be, at the center of U.S. cultural studies, this
examine the textual traces of the case study of Barnum's Fiji Cannibals. In addition to my analysis of W.C. Crum's *The History of P.T. Barnum's Cannibals* (1871) and W.C. Gardenhire's *Fiji and the Fijians; and Travels among the Cannibals* (1871), I logically extend my analysis to missionary texts, books that would have received widespread attention in ante- and post- bellum America. Barnum, ever the smart businessperson, was ready to tap into and further arouse this preexisting intrigue. In comparing the diverse accounts, it's possible to trace the transmission and distortion or reinterpretation of histories and facts through the original missionary texts through the more commercial, but still "historical" account aimed at investors, to the blatantly souvenir-oriented pamphlet.

Americans would have been interested in the parallels between America and Fiji: it was categorized as a land of bounty, ripe for the picking, save for the brute savages standing in the way of progress. In Fiji, the missionaries, their converts and other western investors, like Americans, were engaged in a drama about land rights, slavery and related labor issues, as well as sovereignty and volatile engagement and internal self-differentiation of cultures, rather than the consensus models of cultural assimilation or unity-in-difference, must become our focus. Popular forms and popular audiences are less fixed referents than sites of continual reconstitution, the popular less an object than a space" (92). My arguments in this chapter and the next attempt this sort of analysis by examining one particularized site of the contested constitution of national culture.
expansionism. By now it should be partially clear how Barnum's carefully managed public representation of the Fiji Cannibals—as well as the public image of other non-whites—raised a specter of doubt about the likelihood of assimilation and attempts at civilizing. The Fiji Cannibal bodies, bodies representing and signifying "civilized culture's" worst fears about the barbaric and the savage, engaged and encouraged a discursive debate about race, assimilationist incorporation, territorial expansion, the civilizing mission, and Christianity. If such a debate arrived at any final solution, it was that if non-white savages submitted to the management of whites, the latter would find greater economic opportunities, freedom, and expanding sphere of influence for the government and nation.
CHAPTER 3

"A WILDERNESS OF WONDERFUL, INSTRUCTIVE AND AMUSING
REALITIES": WRITING ABOUT FIJIAN CANNIBALISM, EXHIBITING FIJI
CANNIBALS

It was the world's way then, as it is now, to excite the community with flaming posters, promising everything for next to nothing. I confess that I took the world's way; and if my 'puffing' was more persistent, my advertising more audacious, my posters more glaring, my pictures more exaggerated, my flags more patriotic and my transparencies more brilliant than they could have been under my neighbors, it was not because I had less scruple than they, but more energy, far more ingenuity, and a better foundation for such promises. In all this, if I cannot be justified, I at least find palliation in the fact that I presented a wilderness of wonderful, instructive and amusing realities of such evident and marked merit that I have yet to learn of a single instance where a visitor went away from the Museum complaining that he had been defrauded of his money. Surely this is an offset to any eccentricities to which I may have resorted to make my establishment widely known.

--- P.T. Barnum

The separation anxiety underlying liberal society expressed itself in a longing to regain lost attachment to the earth by expanding, swallowing, and incorporating its contents. Liberalism sought to regain the 'dual-unity' of the primal infant-mother connection from a position of strength instead of infant helplessness, by devouring and incorporating identities culturally out of its control. In relation to Indians, whites repressed to the most primitive form of object relation, namely the annihilation of the object through oral introjection. America was pictured by defenders of Manifest Destiny as a 'young and growing country,' which

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1 P. T. Barnum, Struggles and Triumphs (Buffalo: Courier Co, 1879) 59.
expanded through 'swallowing' territory, 'just as an animal needs to eat to grow.' Savagery would inevitably 'be swallowed by' civilization... Indians were emancipated from the land only to be devoured by a white expansionism that could not tolerate their independent existence.

---Michael Rogin

"Barnum, you are the Self-Offered American Moral Sacrifice, and National Columbian Scape-Goat of the Century."

---Vanity Fair

"There is no question of national dignity, be it remembered, involved in the treatment of savages by civilized powers. With wild men, as with wild beasts, the question of whether in a given situation one shall fight, coax, or run, is a question of what is easiest and safest... the Indians should be made as comfortable on and as uncomfortable off, their reservation [as possible]."

---General Francis C. Walker, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1872

This chapter extends the previous chapter's reading of Barnum and national-racial discourse by exploring the means by which the topic of cannibalism transformed into a narrative about peoples and places. We have seen how the discourse of race--while specifically about American Indians and African Americans, but equally revealing about whiteness--operates through general practices of museum-making and collecting, particularly during the late nineteenth century. In closely

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2 Ronald Reagan, the Movie and Other Episodes in Political Demonology (Berkeley: U of California P, 1987) 139.

1 22 December 1860: 306.

4 "A Sketch of the Development of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and of Indian Policy" (Washington: Bureau of Indian Affairs, December 1956) A.
inspecting the figure of P.T. Barnum and his social milieu, we have come to understand both how his persona and enterprise embody a racist and imperialist position, a proposition with which his biographers have been reluctant to grapple. His biographers, including the account in his own autobiography, have gotten him off the hook by claiming, as did Vanity Fair in the quote above, that he was merely a scapegoat for moralists. While the term scapegoat suggests that he has been unfairly targeted, it equally suggests that he has been ceremonially installed at the center of the Columbian project, a characterization which supports the basis of my argument. Barnum's biographers have also exonerated him by claiming he was simply translating popular taste into private profit. Building on such observations, I want to redirect our critical gaze at the pivot-point of this translation: in what ways did Barnum's influential productions build upon popular opinions and in what ways do they parallel official policy? By now, it should be clear that seemingly cutaneous events such as Barnum's treatment of non-white ethnic Others in a profit-oriented exhibition and the response of average Americans in the press to cross-racial exchanges, some excessively violent, others more systemically pernicious, are part of a complicated mixture of issues which are tangibly and inextricably bound up with what emerges as imperialist, official governmental domestic and
foreign policy. In this chapter I am interested in ascertaining the means by which Barnum's presentation of "a wilderness of wonderful, instructive and amusing realities" collapses into the Columbian project and the theory of Manifest Destiny which gave expression to anxieties about cannibalistic, devouring, out-of-control savagery and instantiated itself in the process of swallowing and devouring as much territory and as many Indians, among other non-Western others, as necessary to fulfill its expansionist, civilizing vision.

This chapter locates the zones in which fantasies and fictions are remade into reality; cannibalism, after all, whether "real" or "imagined," operates in a fictive, symbolic mode. Even literal anthropophagy connotes deeply freighted symbolic meaning--its meaning varying, of course, depending

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5 In this respect, my mode of argument has parallels to John Carlos Rowe's "Melville's Typee: U.S. Imperialism at Home and Abroad," in which he establishes a link between Melville's novel, the institution of slavery in the U.S. and the "Euroamerican colonialism in Polynesia." He suggests that while "it is customary to associate nineteenth-century U.S. colonialism with Manifest Destiny, westward expansion, and the policies of genocide and removal practices against native American peoples[,] Melville argues in Typee, however, that the domestic sins of slavery and westward expansion were already finding their equivalents in foreign policies just as insidious." He establishes that Melville made such connections by fusing the conventions of both Puritan captivity narratives and the fugitive slave narrative to the form of the nineteenth-century travel narrative. National Identities and Post-Americanist Narratives, ed. Donald E. Pease (Durham: Duke UP, 1994) 256.

6 Eric Cheyfitz says that "Beginning with Columbus, the idea of cannibalism developed not as an anthropological fact but as a political fiction that the West employed to justify its exploitation of Native Americans." The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from The Tempest to Tarzan (New York: Oxford UP, 1991) 143.

98
on the specific context. Anthropologist Marshall Sahlins has suggested, for example, that while capitalist, Western involvement in Fiji raised cannibalistic fervor to a fever pitch, this quite literal manifestation of "a consuming passion" was in part caused by a deeply complex symbology already firmly entrenched in Fijian culture. The traditional Fijian myth of the origin of cannibalistic practice, for example, explains that it derives from foreign "tabuas" who invaded their land. It is this cultural construct already in place which gets reinvigorated during the "emergency situation" of Western involvement and increased competition between chiefdoms. I am not capable of speculating anthropologically on the origins of escalating cannibalism in the islands, nor would such an endeavor help to unfold Barnum's relation to such material. I am interested, though, in specifying the dialogic nature of discourse about cannibalism. Gananath Obeyesekere has explained that anthropologists have undertheorized the effect of dialogism.

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7 Marshall Sahlins has said, tellingly, "Cannibalism is always 'symbolic,' even when it is 'real.' "Raw Women, Cooked Men and Other 'Great Things' of the Fiji Islands," The Ethnography of Cannibalism, eds. Paula Brown and Donald Tuzin (Washington, D.C.: Society for Psychological Anthropology, 1983) 88.

8 Sahlins, 90.

in contact between Western explorers and non-Westerners. He suggests, for example, that an anthropologist such as William Arens, known for his revisionary theories, "does not deal with the dialogical nature of cannibalistic discourse, and does not recognize the possibility that where there is fantasy, there could be slippage into reality and from there into human institutions." In his example, he argues, European cultures came to non-Western lands predisposed to find cannibalism among those they encountered, and this fantasy was inserted into reality through a dialogical relationship which emerged post-contact. Regarding the specific case of Captain James Cook et al and the Maoris of New Zealand, he concludes that "the British discourse on cannibalism produced, in very complicated ways, the Maori practice of cannibalism."

This chapter picks up where Obeyesekere's valuable study leaves off. Working from the assumption, established by

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Obeyesekere, 653.

To be fair, Obeyesekere does conclude that "as a consequence of historical events, both Maori and British cannibalism moved from a highly charged symbolic arena of personal fantasy and religious sacrifice toward the shedding of some of these symbolic attributes for a pattern of conspicuous anthropophagy" (654). Inhered within this statement is a suggestion that, as a consequence of dialogic interaction, the British practiced a less symbolic version of consumption. I wonder if he is not referring to the same processes which I am fundamentally interested in investigating.
historians of the region, that Western involvement in the Fijis contributed to escalating incidences of bloody and retributive cannibalism by the Fiji people, I examine the effects that such "realities" had on renewed discourse about the region. Thus, while I accept Obeyesekere's premises, I feel it is necessary to examine the Western discourse which emerged after the escalation of such incidences. Specifically, I deterritorialize the discourse of Fijian cannibalism by locating its popular transmission in post-bellum America in the years just prior to the official colonization of Fiji by Britain, in an effort to expose what such situations offer to post-bellum Americans. The example of Fiji gave Americans--through displacement--a means to speculate about the civilizing mission which had immediate and drastic consequences in terms of official government policy toward Native Americans/American Indians in the west and in a less obvious way toward freed blacks, non-white citizens and immigrants.

Having laid this groundwork, I will now examine in more specificity the traces in the historical record of the epiphenomenon of Barnum's Fiji Cannibals. Two contemporaneous documents chart the transmission of the Fijian Cannibals to the domain of Barnum's traveling Museum, Menagerie and Circus. The first is W.C. Gardenhire's *Fiji and the Fijians; and Travels among the Cannibals* published in 1871 in San Francisco. For unknown reasons, the cover of
this work conveys a slightly more authoritative title: *History of the Fiji Islands and Cannibalism*. This text, as we will see, promoted the very same Fijian cannibals, save for one, before they made their way to Barnum's exhibition.

The second important text to consider is W.C. Crum's--the editor of Barnum's official publications--*History of P.T. Barnum's Fiji Cannibals*, 1872, a nickel pamphlet, sold presumably at the exhibitions. To support my readings I rely on several other contemporaneous documents: John Lubbock's *The Origin of Civilization* (1870), Thomas Williams' *Fiji and the Fijians*, and James Calvert's *Missionary Labors among the Cannibals; Extended with Notices of Recent Events* edited in one expansive volume by George Stringer Rowe (1870). Through my reading of both Gardenhire and Crum, more specifically, I particularize the means by which cannibalism--a practice, at least according to most accounts, promulgated and perpetuated by Western involvement--once "inserted into reality," operated to sustain and revitalize an imperialist, religiously zealous, capitalist hunger, a desire to eat up the world; furthermore, the discourse of cannibalism served to substantiate and give rationale to the efforts to civilize and "assimilate" through the reproduction of a standard of

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11 Rowe also edited the biography of Reverend John Hunt, *A Missionary among Cannibals, or the Life of John Hunt* (New York: Phillips and Hunt; Cincinnati: Walden and Stowe, 1859) [I quote from the 1901 reprint].

102
civility. This regime of power and knowledge was offered to Americans by Barnum in the guise of simple entertainment, by Gardenhire in the guise of business opportunity. Both efforts, as I will argue, are complexly imbricated in a larger imperial project, but are also more locally imbricated within each other's projects—more precisely, entertainment and business are interwoven, politically repercussive endeavors.

In this chapter, I first examine the intersection of the textual and visual in the production of the aforementioned primary texts. Next, I theorize the function of Crum's souvenir pamphlet. Once I have discussed these preliminaries, I explore the apparatus of authenticity and other specific ways Fiji is narrativized: through the stories of history, race and culture, and clothing. This exploration sets the ground for understanding the portrayal of cannibalistic practice in the following section. In the second half of the chapter the discussion moves to the parallels between Fiji and the United States, specifically with regard to the imbricated projects of civilizing and capitalist expansion. This will set the stage for a detailed examination of Barnum's and Gardenhire's divergent accounts of the Fiji cannibals and their passage to the United States. In this section, I specifically examine the mechanism of treaty-making, its relationship to land alienation, and the more generalized belief that non-Western peoples could not be
trusted. These coterminous strands all merge, I finally argue, in the story of America circa 1871-1873.

Judging a Book by Its Cover

The cover titles of both W.C. Gardenhire's *History of the Fiji Islands and Cannibalism* and W.C. Crum's *History of P.T. Barnum's Fiji Cannibals* invoke, not surprisingly, the authority of history, purporting to lay out an accurate, ideologically neutral account of the Fijian cannibals. But this authority, however feigned, is easily undermined: the nickel price of Barnum's account and the possessive adjective belie the intent. In the case of Gardenhire's text, the following sentence frames the bottom cover: "The Fiji Cannibals will be exhibited throughout the United States and Europe." Beneath are the names of the "Principle Agents," E. Loomis, San Francisco, Cal., and J.C. Smith & Co., Levuka, Fiji Island, G.T. Chapman, Auckland, N.Z., C.C. Bennett, Honolulu, Hawaii Islands. The proprietary nature of the cannibals is clear. They are chattel. Immediately it possible to see that the history is owned as well, colored by the lenses of those in power. Barnum, not surprisingly, in titling the work, *The History of P.T. Barnum's Fiji Cannibals*, goes one step further by claiming sole ownership--something he frequently did in publicizing his attractions.
One other similarity that both documents share is their cover engravings (see figures 3.1 and 3.2). Both obviously are from the same template with only minor variations in the iconography of the three Fijian Cannibals. The Gardenhire cover engraving places the three Fijians in a tropical context. Jungle plants appear dimly in the background and ocean fowl can be seen flying in the space above the figures' heads. General Ra Biau, the "notorious" midget cannibal, is flanked by Ko Ratu masi Moa and Ki Na Bose Yaco. The countenances and postures of each are staid, complacent. Each wears a grass/reed skirt with a belt cinched about the waist. In the right hand each carries what appears to be a scepter of sorts or ceremonial club. Only the figure on the left, the tallest and most muscular of the three, holds a

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14 The name of the artist is unclear on the Gardenhire manuscript. The most I can make out in the bottom left hand corner is "---man." Barnum included this engraving (the adapted one from his pamphlet) in his amended edition of Struggles and Triumphs, 1873, 761. The absence of Princess Otevah is noticeable in Crum's pamphlet: her absence, and lack of mention by Gardenhire, point to the suggestion that she is not a Fijian, an account provided by the York, Pennsylvania True Democrat after Barnum's exhibition had left town: "Barnum, although confessedly a great showman, is determined not to be outdone in the work of humbugging, a reputation for which he has sustained through a long life of singular changes and fluctuations. It is now positively averred that the female member of the cannibal troupe was born in the state of Virginia and was at one time a domestic in the house of a gentleman at present residing in Baltimore. This, had it been known in York last Tuesday, we venture to say, would have raised a loud laugh, if not something worse, at Barnum's expense and his man-eating party." James W. Shettel, "The Death of Barnum's Cannibal," The Circus Scrapbook 1.2 (April 1929): 49.

105
Figure 3.1: The History of P.T. Barnum's Fiji Cannibals
Figure 3.2: History of the Fiji Islands and Cannibalism
club in his left hand. The two outside figures appear, on first glance, to be wearing elaborate headdresses, but as will become clear, it's likely that each, or at least one, has styled his hair in one of the myriad of unique styles the Fijians are renowned for. Around the neck of each is a necklace of bone-like sharpened teeth, most likely whale’s teeth.

Some level of authenticity is striven for: shadows are shaded in, careful attention is given to the structure of the complicated belt as well as the individual physiognomies of the figures--each is remarkably distinguishable, with seemingly distinct personalities. There is the perception of depth which suggests that the figures represent real people, that they are not just cardboard cutouts. For the most part, their faces connote a level of nobility, a serenity that masks the savagery so evidenced in textual accounts. Such tranquil visages--itself a not unproblematic trope when it comes to racialized Others--are also at odds with the obvious iconography of the Gardenhire cover in which a skull and bone fragments lie scattered about the ground.

Because of Barnum’s interest in generating the least expensive and most easily writable account, W.C. Crum’s--is he author or editor?--pamphlet borrowed heavily from Gardenhire, who, borrowed extensively, it turns out, from
George Stringer Rowe and the group of texts with which he is associated. Barnum's nickel souvenir or throwaway makes use of the same engraving, but because the booklet is miniature, at most four and one-half by three inches, the quality of reproduction is bargain-rate, the paper quality is poor, and the details are minimized. The physiognomies are blurred and fail to connote individual and distinct personalities; onto their impersonal, mysterious faces, it's easy to inscribe the tales of savagery absent in the more nuanced and less colorful accounts found in Gardenhire. The foreshortening and perception of depth present in Gardenhire's cover is absent in the Barnum text (although small depth-like shadows persist). The three figures are in the same plane with the right figure, exotic headpiece looming high and wide, towering over the others. To compensate for the shift in dimensions, the previously larger figure on the left had his "scepter" replaced with a tall spear with severely pointed blades. A backdrop is absent in the Barnum cover, and the figures seem to float on the mint green paper, framed by P.T. Barnum's moniker (in bold) and the appellation, "Fiji Cannibals" (in bold highlighting). Surprisingly, the skull and bones are also eliminated, but these figures, unlike the ones on Gardenhire's pamphlet which boasts nothing about cannibalism on the title page, are firmly rooted on a surer signifier, the word "cannibals."
The back cover of Barnum’s text features four engravings of Fijian male visages, with bare shoulders, two in profile, two head-on and the words “Modes of Hairdressing Among the Fijians.” These engravings are lifted from the frontispiece of the American edition of George Stringer Rowe’s A Missionary Among Cannibals; Or the Life of John Hunt, Who Was Eminently Successful in Converting the People of Fiji from Cannibalism to Christianity, originally published in 1859. In this original engraving there are nine busts, a greater diversity of hair styles, and a similar title, “Hair Dressing in Fiji.” In selecting the images to include in his pamphlet, Crum/Barnum seems to have represented the widest possible range of variation as well as the most exoticized and spectacular hairstyles. Hair becomes in both texts the visible marker of difference and comes to signify cannibalism! The absurdity of such pictorials in a missionary text more than points to the mechanism of such linkages.

Hair was one visible racial marker in nineteenth-century America which received much attention (not that this has changed much). Even the medical community, specifically the American Medical Association, was similarly preoccupied. In Joseph Jones, M.D.'s Observations on Albinism in the Negro Race (Philadelphia: Collins. 1869), for example, much attention is given to the similarities of hair among both non- and albino “Negroes” and then considerable time is spent evaluating the differences between the hair of “Negroes” and the wool of other animals. Through fairly advanced analysis, Jones concludes that by applying reagents one can “reveal an entirely similar structure to that of the hair of the other varieties of the human race” and claims in his final sentence, “The hair of the Negro possesses all the characteristics of hair, and is not wool” (45).
Only one other engraving graces the pages of Barnum's pamphlet: an engraving of his own half-profile. This practice seems common to him since he included his own visage on the cover of *Barnum's Living Wonders*, 1871, another nickel pamphlet sold during the traveling show. The whiteness of his skin is noticeable, due in part to his balding, but he still displays an ample head of curly hair. Clearly dressed in Western, business dress--suit-coat, white collared shirt and black tie--unlike the naked Fijians, outfitted with little more than the odd necklace and skirt, Barnum allows for a perfect point of comparison. He occupies a proprietarial space on the copyright page, above the entry of copyright according to Act of Congress, thus reaffirming his ownership and superior standing. In effect, the conjunction of his image and the copyright further establishes him as "author" of the display of cannibals and thereby authorizes him as the agent of moral superiority, a "fact" further substantiated by the advertisement discussed in some detail at the end of the previous chapter.

**Theorizing Souvenirs: Crum's Cannibal Pamphlet**

One shouldn't ignore the manner in which the Fijians are commodified through Crum's pamphlet, miniaturized--quite literally in terms of the pamphlet size--and, moreover, "souvenir-ized," that is, made into a souvenir. By miniaturizing the Fiji Cannibals through a nickel souvenir
pamphlet, Barnum enabled patrons of his exhibition to own their own Fiji Cannibals. *The History of P.T. Barnum's Fiji Cannibals* could become Honorable Chas. Sumner's History of P.T. Barnum's Fiji Cannibals as it did in the case of the existing copy in Harvard's collection.¹ The Harvard library itself seemed interested in pinning down ownership (and, of course, in giving credit to the donation) by inscribing the first page of text in this way: "1872, Aug. 13. Gift of Hon. Chas. Sumner, of Boston. (H.U. 1830)." Also of note is the way in which Harvard originally and still to this day houses this artifact: bound loosely among pamphlet after pamphlet and short articles on the islands of the world, many in languages other than English. Such a collation itself is a museum-making of sorts. Relationships are established without explanation, contextualization; the production of meaning is, I grant, more loosely coordinated than Barnum's museum, but the impulse is similar. Information, as random as it may be, as uninformed, as unconnected to any reality, comes together and, by virtue of its being collected, gains authenticating status and the ability to represent a historical reality.

Susan Stewart explains that the souvenir bears "a trace of use value in its instrumentality," but once it becomes part of a collection, it loses this value since "the

collection represents the total aestheticization of use value." She goes on to say that "the collection is a form of art as play, a form involving the reframing of objects within a world of attention and manipulation of context." Thus, separated from the rest of the collated items found in the Harvard Geography library, it is possible to uncover the traces of use value in the Barnum pamphlet. Rather transparently, its use value is to disseminate information in an elaborate advertisement for Barnum's exhibition. Joined with the other collated texts, this use value is occluded, made part of a complicated, confounding narrative about islands. While this purported use value may be more "obvious" outside of a collection and with some historical distance, I would argue the ostensible use value is multivalent, not self-evident in the artifact itself. Stewart's theories don't easily account for the linguistic nature of the Barnum souvenir, undeniably a different sort of artifact from a souvenir cane or souvenir cup. For example, the pamphlet doesn't reveal its own usefulness in the way that a cup might. This use value becomes known only when we trace the processes of production of the Barnum pamphlet, seeing the ways in which missionary texts were co-opted and outright plagiarized to effect a pseudo-anthropology and

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1 Susan Stewart, On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1984) 151.

113
history of the Fiji Islands and the Fiji Cannibals, all for the commercial gain of Barnum. But this, too, is only part of the story, for Barnum, whether purposefully or indirectly, furthered the imperializing agenda of late nineteenth-century America, extending its proprietorship well into the Pacific rim.

Stewart does explain that language itself in the promotion of "freaks" "is made object, divorced from communication. . . . The language of spectacle is properly that of the showman, the hyperbolic pitch which further distances the points of equivalence between audience and object, which presents another layer of surface as it articulates the to-be-presented facade."¹ This seems to hold true, too, for the Barnum pamphlet. A facade is erected that supports the spectacular vision of Fiji cannibals, one that may in fact have little connection--or point of equivalency--to the actuality of those human beings being displayed.

Robert Bogdan, in his study Freak Show says that by 1860 most pamphlets promoting human freaks followed an established pattern. In this regard, Barnum's marks no departure. Since the Fijians came from an exotic place, the document spends some time charting the nature of that place, its history, and other relevant geographical information. The document similarly gives a biography of the humans on

¹ Stewart, 110.
display, and the means by which they were procured. And, it provides a physical description of those on display, as well as some sort of account by members of the community vouchsafing for its authenticity. Barnum, in this case, invokes his "agent" in Fiji, W.C. Gardenhire, the author not incidentally of the other document under consideration in this chapter. Whether or not such invocation authenticates the Fijians will be discussed in detail in a later section of this chapter.

Preceding the body of W.C. Crum's pamphlet appears a précis which purports to map out the contents of the document:

Supposed Origins and Descent--Past and Present History--Manners and Customs--Savage Modes of Warfare--Cruelty to Captives--War and Household Implements--Modes of Dress--Human Flesh their Favorite Diet--Religion and Modes of Worship--How four Fijians (three of them at present Prisoners of War belonging to King Thokambau) came into possession of P.T. Barnum for his Great Traveling Exhibition, and many other Interesting Details of Fiji Life (1)

Crum's preview accomplishes the standard goals of any carnival barker: to hook a potential audience. While most of the details of this "carnival bark" are necessarily vague and open for rather loose interpretation, the preface is quite explicit about both the islanders' delight in human flesh and

19 Bogdan, 19.

20 "Cokabau" is the preferred spelling of Thokambau today, but in maintaining accurate reference to contemporaneous accounts circa the 1870s, I will maintain this archaic spelling.
P.T. Barnum's role in the present endeavor. The only match for such extreme barbarity is Barnum's extreme civility.

The first sentence deliberately refers to Darwin, and thus it's not surprising that this preface itself charts the evolution of the Fijians from the darkness and cruelty of savagery to the lightness of Barnum’s "Great Traveling Exhibition." The agent of evolutionary change in this narrative, of course, is Barnum. Crum casts him as the true missionary among missionaries, the one emissary of the U.S. government who is able to intervene and put an end to the horrifying bloodshed.21

**Constructing Authenticity**

The authenticity which is verified vis-à-vis an appeal to authority--through historical accounts, references to someone like Gardenhire, but also in this instance to Barnum

21 David Spurr claims that "Darwinian theory implies at various points that the active intervention of one society in the life of another--for example, the intervention of culturally advanced peoples that either transforms or displaces primitive peoples--is also part of a natural evolutionary process. . . . In The Descent of Man (1871), Darwin writes that the extinction of human races follows chiefly from 'the competition of tribe with tribe with tribe, and of race with race.' Apart from local natural causes, such as famine and epidemic disease, a greater degree of civilization generally allows one race to prevail over another, so that 'when civilized nations come into contact with barbarians the struggle is short, except where a deadly climate gives its aid to the native race.' Civilized races, because they have experienced a greater variety of climates and conditions of life, are able to 'resist changes of all kinds better than savages,' who are likely to become either sterile or 'weary of life' with any radical change in their environment [542-543]." *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing and Imperial Administration* (Durham: Duke UP, 1993) 161.
himself—is simultaneously visually established through the collection of artifacts displayed alongside the Fiji cannibals. In order to illuminate the apparatus involved in the construction of this purported reality, and the possible humbuggery of the entire enterprise, it is useful to pause on the means by which both Gardenhire and Crum/Barnum close their accounts. Each concludes with a survey of "the curiosities illustrating Fiji life and manners, which these Cannibals brought with them" (Crum 16). Crum's document reserves a significant portion of the last page of text to such issues. In Barnum's display, Fiji is replicated for viewers through the assembly of objects such as spears, clubs, native cloths, canoes, cotton, instruments, obelisks, fish-hooks made of "human bones and tortoise-shells." It appears that many of the relics were passed from Gardenhire to Barnum; many of the same items are listed in the advertisement for Gardenhire's exhibition which visited "all the principal cities on the Pacific slope during the fairs, then preceding east, via Virginia City and Salt Lake" (32). Gardenhire primarily relegates to the margins references to his exhibition of Fijians; information about such relics takes the form of an advertisement which follows the body of the document (see figure 3.3). The relics from Barnum's

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22 In general, Gardenhire relegates to the margins any references to his personal commercial interest in touring the Fijians. Except for mentioning his "troupe" he doesn't mention the three men being exhibited throughout the west coast.
display may very well be the same ones listed in Gardenhire's since the lists are similar, but the history of such artifacts is unclear.23

It is known, though, that several years later Barnum wrote to a museum director to request some authentic artifacts to sustain the realistic illusion. When putting together his Congress of Nations, Barnum wrote to Joseph Henry of the Smithsonian,

I have some Fiji cannibals in Philadelphia, and I want to obtain and put in the main building some implements of any kind: clubs, ornaments, fishing or hunting tackle, maps or pictures of those regions, or anything else appertaining to them.

I hope that you may have some such articles that you can loan me till the exhibition closes 10th Nov.--and if you can give me any trinkets, bows and arrows, or anything to please these fellows, I shall be glad.24

Clearly such items allowed Barnum to sustain the illusion of authenticity. Deborah Root, in her recent study Cannibal Culture, explains that "authenticity functions as an ideal . . . for the people trying to sell commodified versions of

23 Gardenhire, 32. Notably absent among Barnum's artifacts is "the hand of the late Lovoni Rebel King, killed in battle with Thakombau, present King of Fiji, and presented to W.C. Gardenhire on the day before sailing, June 17th 1871." The absence of this artifact is interesting--specifically with regards to major discrepancies in the two accounts. I believe it sheds light on Barnum and Gardenhire's relationship; it is highly unlikely that Barnum would hold back such a relic unless he and Gardenhire were not the cooperative partners Barnum wants his readers to believe. Later, too, the discrepancy in accounts will further explain the seeming importance of this omission.

24 Selected Letters of P.T. Barnum, Letter 172. In an editorial note, Saxon writes, "The Smithsonian, always eager to keep so prominent a donor in good humor, was happy to comply with his request"
culture . . . This appearance of seamlessness itself has a pacifying effect and with a conceptual trompe l'oeil effect can decoy attention away from the margins that do exist." But no appearance can be so seamless as to not reveal its frayed edges; as Root further explains, "No cultural practice is or ever has been totally authentic, fully and seamlessly inserted into a social context in such a way that permits the experience of perfect presence." Barnum's paper trail easily brings into relief the humbuggery that purported to be perfect presence (if the mishmash of objects he brought together and the mistaken and distorted histories did not give him away themselves). At the same time, Barnum's process of collecting and displaying such objects was one further way that he exoticized and alien-ated the Fijians.

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THE
Fiji Cannibal Exhibition
WILL VISIT ALL THE
Principal Cities on the Pacific Slope
During the Fairs,
Then Proceeding East, via Virginia City and Salt Lake.

Two Celebrated Fijian Chiefs.
KO RATU MASI MOA, KI NA BOSE YACO,
and
General So Siau, the Dwarf,
Thirty-five years of age, and only 3 feet 4 inches high, all regular Man Eaters. They will perform National War Dance, Siamese Fights and Songs in Native War Costumes, with Fijian Weapons, consisting of Spears, Clubs, &c.

Also, a great variety of,
FIJIAN AND NEW ZEALAND CURiosITIES,
Consisting of
Cannibal Knives and Forks, used for eating human flesh; 50 kinds of Wood, including the celebrated Sandal wood, used for burning before Chinese Idols; 50 different sorts of Clubs, Spears, Bows and Arrows, and other Implements of War.
Malay War Mask and Cloths, Fijian Shark's-tooth Swords, Model of War Canoes, Fishhooks made of human bone: Tape, or native Cloth, made from the bark of trees; Head Dresses and Mates: Native Ladies' Powder Bees: Necklaces of whales' teeth, Fans, Bracelets, Coins; Spirit Houses, where they suppose the spirits go after death, Idols, Crockery, Baskets, Kava Bowls, used for making the grog from kava root.

Vampire of Flying Fox, all the tropical species of Fish, Snakes, Lizards, Tortoise-skull Turtle, one half cat and half snake (Salamana), and a large collection of Lava Formations from the Hawaiian Islands, and 300 different varieties of Fungi.

Also the
HAND OF THE LATE LOVONI REBEL KING,
Killed in battle with Thakombau, present King of Fiji, and presented to W. C. Gardenhire on the day before sailing, June 17th 1871.

Some superior specimens of Fiji Sea Island Cotton (the best grown in the world) and Tobacco.

Photographs of Kings and Chiefs, &c., on Sale at the Exhibition.

Figure 3.3: Advertisement from Gardenhire's Pamphlet
through a process of fragmentation. Root explains this process in detail:

Exoticism is synecdochal, and fragments of culture work to exemplify and evoke a larger whole. Cultural and aesthetic fragments refer to and express tropes, and in this respect exoticism can be thought of as a system of appropriation of fragments that symbolize, or substitute, a given cultural totality.26

Thus, the complexity of an island and a people gets reduced to a dozen or so things (maps, plants, implements, and so on). The cannibal fork, the fish hook made of human bone, and the like, are substitutable, interchangeable with the cannibal ways, with the cannibal Fijians for that matter.27 The fork, for example, is an efficient means to estrange the familiar (see figure 3.4). While the forks resemble those Westerners used, contemporary readers of accounts such as Thomas Williams' Fiji and the Fijians would have known, for example, that the cannibal fork was "used for taking up

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26 Root, 42.

27 Ronald Wright, On Fiji Island (New York: Viking, 1986), writes that "In the Fiji Museum there is a curious wooden artifact with a carved handle and four sharp prongs. Beneath it is the short but eloquent inscription: FORK USED IN EATING REVEREND BAKER. The display also contains dishes used for serving the Wesleyan's cooked flesh, and informs the reader that Mr. Baker was the only missionary eaten in Fiji, and that he passed away (if that's the right expression) in 1867" (i). The curator of the museum seems to redeploj with charm and humor the rhetoric historically used against the Fijians. Certainly the fork in this instance operates synecdochally; but the textual referent controls the interpretation of the artifact, suggesting a subversive re-reading of Western involvement in the region. The fork seems to warn: we had had enough!
morsels of the flesh when cooked as a hash, in which form the old people prefer it" (180) and was taboo for other purposes.

Human bodies are generally cooked alone. I know of but one exception, when a man and a boar were baked in the same oven. Generally, however, ovens and pots in which human flesh is cooked, and dishes or forks used in eating it, are strictly tabu for any other purpose. The cannibal fork seems to be used for taking up morsels of the flesh when cooked as a hash, in which form the old people prefer it. It seems strange that man-eaters should be afraid to eat the porpoise, because it had ribs like a man; yet many old heathens have assured me that they used to have such fears.

Rare cases are known in which a Chief has wished to have part of the skull of an

Figure 3.4: Cannibal Forks from Fiji and the Fijians

Fijian History:
"Clothed in an Almost Unfathomable Mystery"

Having explored an important extratextual way that authenticity was manufactured both by Barnum and Gardenhire, it is possible to move on to a closer examination of the two documents themselves. Crum's preface is followed by a caveat that his history has had to cope with the vague historical accounts available to him: "So far as we are able to
determine, from the imperfect and unsatisfactory account of early navigators and missionaries, the origin and early history of the Fijians is clothed in an almost unfathomable mystery" (1). In contrast with the authoritative title of the document, Crum's comments are revealing, but not unusual for imperialist discourse at this moment in history. David Spurr, in Rhetoric of Empire, suggests that one common element of imperialist discourse is the claim that natives/savages lack a history. Spurr explains that such discourse constitutes "the past as absence, but [it] also designat[es] that absence as a negative presence: a people without history is one which exists only in a negative sense; like the bare earth, they can be transformed by history, but they cannot make history their own." While Crum's discourse is hegemonic, it is revealing in the way it codes/marks the pamphlet as participating in such discourse. This rhetorical strategy clearly marks the document as a cog in the wheel of the imperializing machine. It also implies that because of Barnum the true story of the Cannibal Islands is going to be made known; after all, navigators and missionaries have failed to give a perfect account. Only the consummate showman--the perfect American--can get to the bottom of

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Queequeg, Herman Melville's famous cannibal, has equally nebulous origins. He hails from Kokovoko, "an island far away to the West and South [but] it is not down in any map; true places never are." Moby-Dick (New York: Norton, 1967) 56.

Spurr. 98.
things. Of course, Crum's excessive "borrowing" from other documents suggests that this is indeed not the case. This dynamic is worth pausing on as well. While Barnum must pick up where others have failed or fallen short, the agents of history--missionaries and navigators--nonetheless, are all Westerners. Fijians, themselves, the statement presumes, are unable to provide an accurate and fathomable account of themselves and their land. Western rationality must work extra hard to decipher the inscrutable east whose history is mired in darkness.

After a paragraph of geographical background, Crum picks up on this notion once again--using the classificatory rhetoric referred to earlier--when he states, "Differing from almost all other nations (if they may be called a nation), the Fijians have no records of history, while amid the vagaries of a blind superstition, their legends are almost entirely lost. How they came there, or when their ancestors first took possession of those remote islands of the sea, is not known" (1-2). The lack of a recorded history even suggests that they lack the necessary prerequisites of nationhood.

Of course, under closer scrutiny, the implied lack of historical consciousness simply means the Fijians have no written history. "Spurr suggests that the Western
privileging of written histories finds support in Hegel. To him, the absence of history is signaled by the lack of a written history. And the absence of a written account in turn suggests that a people lack a teleological history, that there is missing "a movement toward a destiny." According to Hegelian notions, "writing fixes reality and imparts consistency to laws, manners, customs, and deeds, thereby creating the objective self-image of a people necessary for the creation of new institutions. To be incapable of writing is to have no historical destiny." This notion seems to undergird Crum's interpretation of the Fijians since he carefully points out that they are poor keepers of the legends that have been passed down, and that, moreover, they have no memory of how they came into "possession of those remote islands," something which is necessary for the creation of an "objective self-image."
The absence of teleology—or the presumption of its absence—makes it easy for someone like Barnum to take control of others, to (mis)represent their histories/lives, to use them for his own ends since they have no destinies but those outside themselves. Gardenhire's approach is a bit different and he devotes considerably more attention to an historical overview of the region (four to five pages). Nonetheless, it becomes clear that the story of Fiji is an instrumental one, not important in its own right. For example, as justification for his mode of inquiry, he says, "The habits, manners and customs of a savage nation, must always prove interesting and instructive, and, in this instance, there is much of the charm of novelty, revealing much which might shed a new light on that difficult study, 'man' (13)." Thus, the study of Fiji becomes an opportunity to better understand oneself.

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This comment is taken almost verbatim from Thomas Williams' *Fiji and the Fijians*, 116; "people" becomes "nation," it is only "to a certain extent, instructive" in the original, and an entire paragraph of prose that leads up to the concluding clause is eliminated. While this rhetorical move is similar to Melville's in *Typee* and in the tradition of Montaigne and Rousseau, as in those cases, it is necessary to acknowledge the privileged position of the analyst. In sum, for Gardenhire, the Fijians are the means by which Westerners come to understand themselves; while this equation bestows upon the Fijians some level of equivalency and suggests that they are already among "the family of men," it also makes them instrumental, serving the ends of the anthropologist/social scientist. Moreover, this instrumentality is more specifically foregrounded by the author's economic motives; he writes about the Fijians in order to secure greater investment in his endeavors.

At one point, Gardenhire extensively quotes a traditional speech made during a property transaction which, in part, goes "'We have
I find it more than suggestive that the reference to a lack of history in Crum's pamphlet precedes a fabricated account of the Fijians' lives; the claim of a missing history authorizes Barnum (via Crum) to tell whatever story he deems necessary. Indeed, like other historians, Crum finds it necessary to fill the void left by the Fijians. He inserts their history into a pre-scripted Western Biblical account: "That they have descended from some of the ten lost tribes of Israel, who fled from the King of Babylon after the first captivity, is extremely probable, when we take into consideration the striking similarity that exists between many of the present customs and manners of the Fijians, and those ancient Hebrews, whom, through the wickedness of Manasseh, God 'removed out of his sight,' by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon" (2). This scenario is particularly apt to Crum given the negative light in which the Fijians are eventually cast. Straying from the path of righteousness, the lost tribe of Israel is still wandering and has yet to find the straight and narrow path. Later in the pamphlet Crum remarks,

a chief who loves peace. We also love it. War is an evil; let us not fight but labor. Do not let difficulties or jealousies arise out of sharing this property. Our minds regard you equally; you are all our friends. Any difference in the quantity shared to each tribe is to be rendered by the tribe. There has been no partiality." Of note is Gardenhire's response: "Is this not a lesson from the savage to the civilized man? Are these not sentiments worthy of acceptance and adoption?" (9).
The truth is, before the introduction of Christianity into the Cannibal Islands, the Fijians, like the Athenians, who had erected their superscriptions 'To the Unknown God'--worshipped--they 'Know not what.' They have a vague idea, transmitted through many generations, and still prevalent, not withstanding the degeneracy of the race, of a Supreme Being, but of the nature and attributes of which they know comparatively nothing, only so far as they have been taught by their more enlightened Tongan neighbors, or the missionary teachers who have been laboring for nearly half a century to open their benighted minds and instruct them in the knowledge of the scriptures. (8)

Not only does this spiritual wisdom bring the wandering tribe back to the civilized fold of God's people, it also extends to the Fijians an historical and teleologically based awareness. In addition, in order to disseminate their message, Missionaries set to work in translating the Bible into Fijian, thus translating native dialects into Western diacritics and phonological systems.5 The historical sense that was "gained" was primarily a Westernized Christian history, then. Crum believes that readers will be interested in the facts of translation, and thus he reproduces two verses from Timothy copied from the Fiji Bible. This is occasion for Crum to remark on the ease with which "Fijian" readily incorporates linguistic innovations from French.

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5 John Hunt was foremost among the early Wesleyan missionaries in Fiji involved in such translations, and he writes, "The whole subject of education is now engaging much of our attention. We must now become schoolmasters. We have the New Testament printed, and if all be well shall soon have it in the hands of our dear people. But this will not do. They must have it in their minds and hearts, and transcribe its living truths into their lives." George Stringer Rowe, A Missionary among Cannibals, or the Life of John Hunt (New York: Phillips and Hunt, Cincinnati: Walden and Stowe, 1859 [1901 reprint]) 244.
Spanish and Italian (from the early Catholic and Jesuit presence on the islands) and thus intimates that Fijians can be encouraged to inculcate Western culture and mores. James Calvert, in his *Missionary Labors among the Cannibals; Extended with Notices of Recent Events* (1870), gives a thought-provoking account of Fijian reaction to such endeavors:

Great was the astonishment and delight of the people as they saw the marvels of the mission press. The heathen at once declared it to be a god. And mightier far than their mightiest and most revered deities was that engine at which they wondered. In the midst of the barbarous people it stood a fit representative of the high culture and triumphant skill of the land whence it came; and, blessed by the prayers of multitudes across the seas, and of the faithful ones who directed its might, the mission press began, with silent power, its great and infallible work, which was destined to deliver beautiful Fiji from its old and galling bonds, to cleanse away its filthy stains of crime, to confer upon its many homes the blessings of civilization, and enrich its many hearts with the wealth of the Gospel of Jesus. (397-8)

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He fails to note, of course, the circuit of translation and the forces which gave shape to the particular mode of "Fijian" which found its way to publication. Similarly of note is the way that Westerners interpret such conversions. The effect of such Biblical schooling is demonstrated by Barnum in his autobiography, a passage quoted in the previous chapter. Princess Otevah reads the Bible to the three men, and her doing so "already exerts a powerful moral influence over these savages. They take a lively interest in hearing her read the history of our Savior. They earnestly declare their convictions that eating human flesh is wrong, and faithfully promise never again to attempt it. They are intelligent and docile. . . . They are already learning to speak and read our language, and I hope soon to put them in the way of being converted to Christianity, even if by so doing the title of "Missionary" be added to the many already given to me by the public. S&T 760. It's hard to ignore the fact that these individuals were more or less indentured servants, at best, poorly paid performers whose job it was to enact the drama of conversion (whether feigned or truthful).
The allegorical implications of this passage are clear: the power of the written word will work its magic on the lost souls, bringing them back to the fold of civilization.

Of Race and Culture: "A Savage Aspect"

After Crum's discussion of history and religion, he continues to employ a rude form of structuralist analysis in order to establish a connection between culture and race:

We will mention in brief a few of the striking similarities--previously suggested--whence we draw our inferences as to their origin. We regret that we have not the space in this little book to enlarge upon this interesting theme. We have looked in vain in all treatises on the 'Origin of Races,' and especially of the aborigines of America, Mexico and Polynesia, but find nothing positive touching this important subject. (my emphasis 2-3)

Of particular note is the repetitive and insistent "We" beginning each sentence; the plural pronoun serves to reiterate how different the Western anthropologists/historians/showmen are from the barbaric Fijians. Moreover, it assumes that racial characteristics--that is, in a classificatory scheme, one "race"'s characteristics compared against others'--can be determined by cultural practices, habits and physical belongings. Crum's ethnological approach is in keeping with the practices of the era. Indeed, John Lubbock's The Origin of Civilization and the Primitive Condition of Man: Mental and Social Conditions of Savages (1870) includes chapters on art and ornaments,
marriage and relationship [sic], religion (three chapters),
character and morals, language, and laws to prove its thesis.
Yet Crum's list of "striking similarities" includes a strange
mixture of items, ranging from mourning customs to taboos to
laws of restitution to the similarity of plows, songs,
creation myths and "lingual characteristics" all of which
seem to suggest that Fiji is not all that disconnected from
the history and the people of the Western world. This tension
serves an important purpose: it reminds readers that the
shards of humanity exist within the heart and brain of the
ruthless cannibals, and that when offered the appropriate
moralizing and civilizing influence, they may be brought into
the fold of civilization. This thread of ambivalence and
modulation of fervor is a continuing presence in Crum's
narrative, and something which will receive further attention
below.

But such ambivalence is not as noteworthy as the manner
in which Crum emphasizes that Fijians "differ materially from
other races" in "their manners and customs":

Family ties, the relation of man and wife, and
respect for old age, are of little moment to a
Fijian. They inhabit principally the open air, or
live in the rudest kind of huts. Filthiness of
person and habit is their characteristic. Their
swarthy persons are but sparsely covered--
frequently almost entirely nude. A large head-
dress, necklace of whales' teeth, a masi of native
cloth is worn around the waist by the men, and a
broad plaited liku, or belt with long fringe, by
the women. Sometimes a coarse black stuff, having
the appearance of hemp, is tied around the legs,
below the knee, while they usually go in their bare
feet... They use oil for anointing their flesh, and when dressing for battle daub and paint their faces, arms, backs and hands in various colors, giving them a savage aspect. (6-7)

Non-Western dress and hygiene, skin pigment and "primitive" housing and household accessories become the visible markers of barbarity, substitutable with other ethically and morally suspect behavior--to Western eyes--such as lack of respect for the elderly, spousal abuse, and different familial formations including polygamy. Gardenhire in his account similarly pauses on such family relations:

Polygamy is looked upon as the principal source of a man's power and wealth: but this short story will illustrate the life they lead better than any remark I could make:--One day a missionary's wife asked a woman who was minus a nose, 'How is it so many of you women are without a nose?' The native's wife replied,--'It is caused by a plurality of wives. Jealously causes hatred, and the stronger tried to cut or bite off the nose of the one she hates.' (15)

Even in Gardenhire's more muted account of Fijian affairs, the reality of differing family relations offers the opportunity to narrate the social consequences of such configurations and give insight into the morality of such

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The description of household "furniture" and other accessories is quite detailed. Apparently, the alien nature of such items were remarkable to nineteenth-century sensibilities, and could be slyly used for cultural critique. Note the implicit critique in the following brief description: "the laqona bowl, (for holding native or civilized grog)" (6). It's highly probable that the effects spoken of by Crum are the accouterments already possessed by Barnum et al, and thus the exhibit comes to self-referentially define the nature of the Fijians themselves.

This comment was originally made in Fiji and the Fijians. 152.
people. Moreover, this discourse about the foreign "savage" family helped to define domesticity and secure for Americans at home a sense of normalcy.

Most noticeable, though, in the aforementioned passage from Crum is the intertwining of such disparate factors as clothing and family configurations. Intangible claims about morals and general practices of living are not as easily transcribed onto the body of the Fijian--except in the case of Gardenhire's anecdote about noses, which seems a perfect example of the pains taken to link "immoral" behavior with the Fijian body--and thus, it is not too surprising that in Crum's account he continually returns to the subject of their physical appearance. The attention Crum pays to their dress is also in keeping with the era's interest in such matters. The mark of civility is recognized as Western dress.¹⁹

Quite clearly, the cover engraving foregrounds this physical difference, a difference further underscored by its contrast with Barnum's own image in the frontispiece. The appearance of non-Western dress serves as a visible marker of

¹⁹ See Mary Wallis, Life in Feejee, or Five Years among the Cannibals. She describes a scene reminiscent of Tommo's dressing of Fayaway in Typee. On the other hand, Thomas Williams in Fiji and the Fijians says that Western dress did not lead to "civilized" ways, or improved taste. He writes, "Too much has been said about the cleanliness of the natives. The lower classes are often very dirty: a fact which becomes more evident when they wear calico, to which no soap is applied, and which presents a larger surface to the eye than the ordinary masi" (117). Western clothing, alone, he suggests, is not the panacea for "barbarity."
Figure 3.5: Mathew Brady, One of Barnum's Cannibals
the civilized/uncivilized dichotomy (see figure 3.5). When Crum first specifically refers to the four Fijian specimens on display, he extensively catalogues their manner of dress:

The dress or costume of these singular beings is of the rudest kind. A fancy headdress, necklace of pointed whale's teeth, a fantastic belt called liku, from which depended a multi-colored masi, composed of native cloth beaten out of the Papuan Mulberry, and dyed in different colors, are fastened to a cincture, or broad band of variegated braid-work which encircles the waist of the princess, the ends extending down from three to ten inches deep. The higher the rank, the more elaborate the costume, and the more expansive the method of decorating the hair, some head-dresses girting from three to five feet in circumference. Among the common class, in place of the elaborately made masi a simple kind of sash is worn around the waist, made of long strips of white native cloth, wound several times around the body, the ends being gathered into curious festoons, while a filament of dark stuff, resembling coarse hemp, made from the stems of a parasite called waloa, are tied around the legs, just below the knees, giving them an exceedingly rude and degraded aspect. Among no other class of people is there less exhibition of taste or good sense displayed in their dress, the most grotesque and incongruous objects being arranged into all kinds of fantastic shapes for their meager covering. (15-16)

That the Fijian mode of dressing is considered tasteless, rude and haphazard is comical after the in-depth and meticulous descriptions which imply that great care and forethought goes into such decisions. In this passage, decoration and decorousness are one and the same; taste and morality, good sense and civility are all conjoined.

Gardenhire's account of their dress is remarkably different. He devotes one brief paragraph in a thirty page book to this subject. 
As mentioned briefly before, the Fijians became world-renowned for their unique hairstyles which in turn became a prime marker of racial difference, and which so efficiently connoted cannibalistic barbarity that such connotations almost collapsed into denotations in contemporaneous accounts. Even Gardenhire, while more equivocal on most accounts, says that

"It is on the hair, however, the Fijian prides himself; this is the crowning finish of his toilette. The barber, or perruquier, is a person of some consequence, and, whilst engaged on the hair of a chief, his hands are TABU from touching anything else; they also dye it either jet black, blue black, or different shades of red." (14)

In his interpretation of Fijian behavior, Gardenhire suggests that hair management is a way of life, one which enacts a system of taboos in a culture which, surprisingly enough, does not (seemingly) have similar prohibitions against eating other humans.

The engraving of different modes of Fijian hairdressing which Crum includes in *P.T. Barnum's History* (see figure 3.6 and 3.7) is similarly included in Thomas Williams' *Fiji and the Fijians* (1870), edited by George Stringer Rowe, and, not insignificantly, as one of five engravings included in Sir John Lubbock's *The Origin of Civilization and the Primitive Condition of Man: Mental and Social Condition of Savages* (1870). The engraving can also be found in George Stringer
Figure 3.6: Engraving from
The History of P.T. Barnum's Cannibals
Figure 3.7: Engraving from Williams, Lubbock, Rowe
Rowe's *A Missionary among Cannibals* (1859). Lubbock's explanation of the Fijian's hairdressing casts them as excessively vain, willing to take unbelievable lengths to achieve the desired effect; in this vein, their extreme care—remember Crum referred to their extreme carelessness—is equally barbaric. The author/naturalist purports that civilized men, in particular, would never be preoccupied with such nonsense. Indeed, the passage gains its force from its categorization of male vanity; this is most clear when Lubbock writes more generally about ornamentation amongst "savages": "In some of the very lowest races, indeed, the women are almost undecorated, but that is only because the men keep all the ornaments themselves." The non-Western men are feminized, and thus this departure from Western notions of masculinity visibly marks their savagery; while it might be said that the non-Western women are masculinized by such characterizations, it seems that while the women are not inherently masculine, the men take all of the feminine ways for themselves, thus stripping the women of their rightful femininity.

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41 I am unable to trace the engraving's first appearance in an American publication. A 1901 version of Hunt's biography is the only copy available to me. Lubbock (1871) suggests that his engraving comes from George Stringer Rowe's *Fiji and the Fijians*; this transmission into later editions of Hunt's biography would not be at all surprising considering Rowe was editor of that as well.

42 Lubbock, 40.
While the Fijians' dress is discussed in quite specific detail in Crum's account and is dealt similar coverage in Lubbock's, the "four specimens on display" did not likely live up to the grandiose claims set forward by either. For example, Princess Otevah, granddaughter to Thokambau, wore Western dress the entire time she was traveling with Barnum. Not surprisingly, she is absent from the depictions of Fijians on the cover of Crum's account. About this difference, Crum writes, "Since the Princess came to America she has donned the dress of the country, and seems delighted with her finery, jewels, &c." (16). It is not surprising that Otevah is identified as being the furthest removed from cannibal behavior and the one best trained in the traditions of Western Christianity. In this regard she corroborates the discourse about civilization and clothing. But, an extant portrait taken by Mathew Brady (see figure 3.8) featuring the assemblage suggestingly reveals that perhaps Otevah was not so thrilled with her dress, as she appears ballooned in an oversized tent-like frock (with, incidentally, no finery and jewels), nor does she possess a demeanor or air of purposefulness or of command. This image contradicts the characterization of her as set forward by Crum when he explains that

A missionary convert, [she] was encouraged by [the American Consul and Barnum's agent] to accept this opportunity of traveling in the United States, to become familiar with the modes and customs of civilization, in order the better to prosecute her
missionary labors in Polynesia on her return. Besides these considerations, her familiarity with the Fijian language, and her ability to interpret the Scriptures might be the means of converting these savages from their pernicious habits, and instrumental for good at some future time (14-15).

The pamphlet explains that she is a willing captive/participant because her experiences in the U.S. under the guidance of Barnum will familiarize her with "civilized ways"; moreover, such experiences will allow her to become a better missionary so that when she returns she will be more successful in christianizing and converting cannibalistic Fijians. Thus, this scenario highlights that the converted savage is a crucial hinge upon which further civilizing depends. In essence, this logic assumes that the Westernized, Christianized former-cannibal enacts a regime of knowledge through her panoptic gaze. This gaze of course is something that she will refine and learn to practice during her time in the west, during her time, more specifically,

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41 In American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender (Durham: Duke UP, 1995), Robyn Wiegman explains "This insertion of the social body into a field of permanent and self-incorporated visibility took place alongside various economic upheavals that accompanied the production of the discourse of race, demonstrating the colluding specular and panoptic frameworks through which race was deployed as a technique of disciplinary power in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Indeed, the shift from the socially inscribed mark of visibility attending spectacle to the self-incorporated vision of the panoptic relation coalesced in the United States, not in successive stages but as intertwined technologies that worked simultaneously to stage the hierarchical relations of race. . . The disciplinary power of race, in short, must be read as implicated in both specular and panoptic regimes" (39).
touring with Barnum. Ironically, this passage suggests that she, the one who is gazed upon by Barnum’s visitors, will in turn become the enforcer of civility by replicating this mode of discipline. Through the exemplum of this moral, Westernized Fijian, a daughter of a former cannibal, Western civility will be imparted. (Of course, as will be seen in a later section regarding Barnum’s departure from other accounts, the role that is bestowed upon her is illusory in more ways than one.) In part, this “success” will come about because of increased Western interest in the region, an interest furthered by Barnum’s display. Thus, while she will
ostensibly function as a model missionary, one to whom others will look, and one whose look others will cower from, she is also someone whose presence engenders keen interest in the region. That is, those who gaze upon her and read about her will become interested in the plight of the barbaric cannibals. Presumably, viewers will want put an end to such distressful behavior, and will thus lend both fiscal and moral support, if not directly to the case of Fiji, then indirectly to a domestic policy agenda toward African Americans and indigenous peoples. Through their spectatorship, Barnum's audience consume the Fijian cannibals: through economic out-lay they are consumers, quite literally, but through their ideological sanctioning of missionary efforts, they are also the consumers of non-Westerners, who are swallowed up by the cannibalizing appetite of the civilizing mission.

One need only look at an 1868 treaty between the U.S. government and the Sioux--Bruele, Ogala, Miniconjou, Yanktonai, Hunkpapa, Blackfeet, Cuthead, Two Kettle, Sans Arcs, and Santee--and Arapaho to find the political implications of this attitude toward dress and appearance in terms of policy. In the specific case of this particular treaty, meant to bring a peaceable end to Indian wars through a policy of land bequeathal to Indians willing to farm and a

reservation land set-aside program, the cultural framework implicit herein discursively penetrates the popular rhetoric of Barnum's campaign. This process is also a recursive and dialogical one; in essence, such policies were as much enforcing popular notions as they were enforced by popular notions. At present, though, I am less interested in setting forward an argument which suggests that this specific treaty affected Barnum's notions, and even less interested in finding popular accounts which are immediate precursors to this official policy. For the time being, let me briefly survey the common threads. In addition to a programmatic effort to educate and train Native Americans to become farmers on the meager lots of land relegated to them, this 1868 treaty pays significant attention in Article 10 to clothing provisions:

In lieu of all sums of money or other annuities provided to be paid to the Indians herein named, under any treaty or treaties heretofore made, the United States agrees to deliver at the agency-house on the reservation herein named, on or before the first day of August of each year, for thirty years, the following articles, to wit:

For each male person over fourteen years of age, a suit of good substantial woolen clothing, consisting of coat, pantaloons, flannel shirt, hat, and a pair of home-made socks.

For each female over fourteen years of age, a suit of good substantial woolen clothing, consisting of coat, pantaloons, flannel shirt, hat, and a pair of woolen hose, twelve yards of calico, and twelve yards of cotton domestics.

For the boys and girls under the ages named, such flannel and cotton goods as may be needed to make each a suit as aforesaid, together with a pair of woolen hose for each. . .
And if within the thirty years, at any time, it shall appear that the amount of money needed for clothing under this article can be appropriated to better uses for the Indians named herein, Congress may, by law, change the appropriation to other purposes; but in no event shall the amount of this appropriation be withdrawn or discontinued for the period named. (77)

Dress, then, becomes an instrumental means through which civility is achieved and ultimately maintained. In this logic, it becomes something more than a marker of the difference between barbarism and civilization; it becomes, effectively, the machinery through which the former is transformed into the latter.

Confronting Cannibalism:
"Where Wild Savages and Brutalized Cannibals Hold Full Sway"

The truth is just this, that within the shores of this secluded group, every evil passion had grown unchecked, and run riot in unheard-of abominations. Sinking lower and lower in moral degradation, the people had never fallen, physically or intellectually, to the level of certain stunted and brutalized races fast failing, through mere exhaustion, from the mass of mankind. Constitutional vigor and mental force aided and fostered the development of every crime; until crime became inwrought into the very soul of the people, polluted every hearth, gave form to every social and political institution, and turned-religious worship into orgies of surpassing horror. The savage of Fiji broke beyond the common limits of rapine and bloodshed, and, violating the elementary instincts of humanity, stood unrivaled as a disgrace to mankind.

---James Calvert

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4 Missionary Labors among the Cannibals: Extended, with Notices of Recent Events, ed. George Stringer Rowe (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1870) 225.
In general, however, the Fijians object to the flesh of whites, saying that it tastes salt [sic].

---James Calvert

The subject matter about which readers are most interested is circled around for some time by both Crum and Gardenhire. On page four of Crum's pamphlet, the issue is for the first time touched upon, and cannibalism is finally defined:

The tales of adventurers among these rude barbarians, the horrors of their cannibal practices--habits of eating human flesh--and their brutality to shipwrecked mariners cast upon their wild, inhospitable coasts, whom they killed and devoured, according to Fiji custom, like so many ravenous hyenas, are facts narrated by the first discoverers of these Malayan and Papuan races, and subsequently attested by explorers and missionaries during the present century. (4)

Barbarity, beast-like passion, cannibalism and the Fiji islanders become undeniably and indelibly linked. The mere mention of cannibalism brings about an explosion of metaphorical language, which itself creates some tension between the appeal to authority also found in this passage: if the tales and "facts narrated" are to be believed, the hyperbolic comparisons work against such claims. In this moment, also, cannibalism and Fiji are made interchangeable; thus, when Fiji is referenced, cannibalism is invoked. "Eating human flesh," after all, is "Fiji custom." And, just as cannibalism is defined, it becomes defining.47

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Missionary Labors 240.

4 The substitution of cannibal for Fiji or Fijian was common in the nineteenth century. A survey of any contemporaneous account on Fiji

146
Several reasons for interest in Fijian cannibalism emerge and will be traced in this section of the chapter: 1) economic motivation, 2) Christian morality, 3) humanist concern, 4) and the either/or/both of voyeuristic delight/abhorrence. Comments such as the second one made by Calvert above--deeply buried and easily missed in the original--are absent in the accounts I am analyzing. If it were frequently noted that whites were not prey to the cannibal threat, white readers, more than likely, would have had less interest in the subject. Most obviously, the absence of such revelations rhetorically deepens the intrigue of white, American readers by allowing them to position themselves in the place of potential bakola, the cannibalized body, or as family members or friends of victims. Similarly, such an omission strengthens the cause of those interested in the region for monetary or spiritual gain (causes which are, as will be seen, deeply interwoven). That is, if white readers could relate to the horrifying possibility that like-minded, like/light-skinned individuals might be cannibalized, they would be more likely to invest and become invested in the missionary/civilizing cause.

Crum explains that "exploration" of the region began with a German expedition in 1643; soon, thereafter, other

reveals as much. Renaming Fiji the Cannibal Islands inscribes a mechanism of repetition--not unlike Crum's repeated definitions of the term "cannibalism"--which installs such a reality into the culture's consciousness.
Westerners followed, pursuing their own profits through trade in sandalwood and bèche-de-mer. Despite the bounty of the islands, it wasn't until 1838-1842 that the United States sent an expedition "partly to redress the wrongs of these savages to the Government and its citizens, and partly to make a thorough exploration of the islands" (4). What specific wrongs were committed against U.S. citizens, sailors, merchants or missionaries is unclear in Crum's account and obviously of little interest to Barnum; in this regard, the following pages of the pamphlet will more than fill the readers' imaginations with possible scenarios. The United States, according to this account, first became officially involved with Fiji when its rights and sovereignty had been threatened; but, significantly, the excursion to investigate wrongs was concurrent, presumably with the desire to seek out economic opportunities and the possibility of gaining a political foothold in the region.

Such interests were impetus for missionaries to first become involved in the region. But their work was even more necessary because of the intervention of renegade Westerners--escaped convicts from New South Wales--who "proved a moral blast and mildew to the future operations of the noble men of God" (4). Crum continues:

Who shall be able to estimate the injury done to missionary labor in Polynesia, by these diabolical parasites from civilization, whose excesses, crimes and evil practices, filled the hearts of the Cannibals with loathing and contempt for the white
race! Every evil passion and unheard of abomination, the worst deformities and foulest stains, disfiguring and blackening all the rest, had sunk them lower and lower in moral degradation, so that twenty years of faithful missionary labor was necessary to overcome the evil. (5)

This admission of Western contamination is of interest; it offers a moment of ambivalence and recognizes that the west is guilty of brutality and is uncivilized. Moreover, it admits that values are culturally transmitted, that behaviors are not genetically inherent and inherited. This ambivalent admission then opens the possibility for the civilizing work of missionaries and the likelihood that savage behaviors can be rerouted, that the contamination and moral ruin of the Fijian can be contained. But the pamphlet nonetheless admits to the lack of success missionaries had in Fiji: "For nearly half a century all attempts at civilization on the part of teachers and missionaries, almost utterly failed" (5). Despite almost fifty years of missionary work in Fiji, there were still regions "where wild savages and brutalized Cannibals held full sway" (5-6). Not wanting to disappoint paying customers, Crum provides a glimpse of cannibalistic cruelties at their worst:

Their cruelty to captives taken in battle, excels in devilishness any acts of barbarity ever known to have been committed by Indian savages. They not only torture them like fiends, but eat their flesh—tongue, heart and brains—considering them the most delectable and savory viands! (7).

Again, the reiterated phrase "eat their flesh" reminds readers of the cannibal's occupation. Crum seems to be
asking, Dear readers, Imagine!--to these Fijians, the human tongue and brain are "delectable and savory viands!"

Remarkably, in this comparative schematic, American Indians emerge as unsavage "savages," a remarkable utterance given the disparaging rhetoric proliferating the culture at the time--yet, even this left-handed compliment belies the belief that American Indians were inexplicably savage. Readers also finally hear, in part--these sensational details, after all, are what they have been waiting for--the physical details about such bloody practices. And if this were not enough, he ups the ante:

Children are hung by their feet at the mast-head of a canoe, to be dashed to death by the rolling of the vessel in the waves of the sea! Victims of their cruelty are tortured in the most inhuman manner; their tongues are cut out and eaten, their limbs severed, and the warm, gushing blood is drank as it flows from the lacerated parts. (7)

The register of language in both of the previously quoted passages is high-blown and seems particularly stilted in order to heighten the experiential effect of such information.

Crum rarely supplies contextualized explanations for such behavior and fails to establish if such rites are in accordance with any ritualized beliefs or network of symbolic meaning. Thus, when he says, "Dead men and women are dragged to the Bures (temples) amid the frantic shouts of triumphant fiends, where they are offered to the Kalva (god) before being cooked" (7), the act which obviously is deeply
freighted with meaning, is left unanalyzed. Readers, of course, may make such links themselves given the references to the temple and to the god. As we will see later, Gardenhire makes crucial links between religious beliefs and such practices, but Crum, interestingly, never offers such editorial assistance.

If any "assistance" is provided in Crum's document, it is that offered by the eyewitness testimonial of missionaries, a further attempt to manufacture an authentic version of reality. Crum quotes "the good" Mr. Williams, for example: "'Some captives, who had been stunned by the fearful blows of their heavy war-clubs, were cast into hot ovens, and when the fierce heat brought them back to consciousness, and urged them to fearful struggles to escape, the loud laughter of the spectator bore witness to their joy at the scene" (7)." The implications of this citation are vast. For one, it suggests that the cannibal urge is ever-present, ready to find fulfillment at the earliest convenience. Moreover, such a tale implies that the missionary can gain access to the inner psychological state of the Fijians and that such acts

"Of course Crum is referring to the author of Fiji and the Fijians (1870) from which this passage is derived: "Some, when stunned, were cast into hot ovens; and when the fierce heat brought them back to consciousness and urged them to fearful struggles to escape, the laughter of the spectators bore witness to their joy at the scene." After this sentence, another follows of which Crum later makes use: "Children have been hung by their feet from the mast-head of a canoe, to be dashed to death, as the rolling of the vessel swung them heavily against the mast" (42)."
of barbarity engender mirth (instead of the more "normal" sentiment of repulsion and terror). This example also suggests that these barbarities are conducted even in the presence of missionaries which further emphasizes how necessary their activities are. But, such an outlandish tale also can begin to fall apart at the seams if the threads--rhetorical, that is--are tweaked. How likely is such a story? What ends does it serve? Who benefits from its telling? Primarily the "good" Mr. Williams who needs the continuing presence of cannibalism to ensure his livelihood. But, by upping the ante of the "facts" with exaggerated claims, Williams inevitably raises doubts about the likelihood of such events.

While Crum does little to establish contextual reasons for cannibalistic behavior, he does so in a limited extent by outlining the general character of Fijians:

Covetousness, envy, ingratitude and revenge, are strongly developed in the character of the Fijian. To these deformities are added that of cowardice. Their fierce menaces and threats are the veriest boasting. True valor is the attribute only of the noble and magnimonious. A gaga ni cau sollvaki--'a brave man when not surround by enemies,' is the characteristic of Fijian valor. The truly brave man has so much of the good in him, that cruelty forms no part of his composition. (8)

This passage links Fijian moral turpitude to cannibalistic behavior. While the example begins with references to the

49 Much of the foregoing passage seems to have been taken from Thomas Williams' Fiji and the Fijians, 109-113.
seven deadly sins, it soon turns to matters of personal character. Quite obviously, the observation about revenge is an attempt to supply reasons for cannibalistic aggression; moreover, "this eye for an eye" mentality highlights the absence of Christian moral teachings and justifies the need for the civilizing influence of Christian missionaries. References to cowardice, on the other hand, assumes a link between Western notions of manliness/masculinity and morality.⁵⁰ Only cowards would behave as the Fijian cannibals do; real men do not eat the flesh of men! A truly brave man—i.e. a civilized one—would not resort to cannibalistic revenge.

Rather than painting the cannibal behavior as the excessive norm, as is the case in Crum's account, Gardenhire suggests that only on the rare occasion do such momentary outbursts of viciousness occur. This assessment does seem to depart from the details of savagery provided in the advertisement frontispiece—certainly it is meant to pull in eager crowds and is less concerned with a balanced version of affairs. For example, he writes "Some familiarity is needed to picture a Fijian justly; for strangers cannot look on him without prejudice. They know that cannibalism has made the

⁵⁰ In this not-atypical case, Western notions of masculinity are universalized—and applied to entire non-Western cultures—in an attempt to shore up the boundaries between west and non-west. The Fijians, despite their aggressive, threatening behavior are emasculated vis-à-vis their immorality.
history of his race a scandal to humanity, and their first contact with him is certainly startling" (11). Unlike Crum and Barnum, Gardenhire reads the reception of Fijians through a social constructionist lens. Similar to Melville's narrator in Typee, Gardenhire believes stories about the islanders have preconditioned Westerners who have had no previous contact with its people. In a rather honest yet racist vein, he continues,

Fresh from highly civilized society, and accustomed to the well clad companions of his voyage, the visitor experiences a strange and not easily described feeling when first he sees a dark, stout, athletic and almost naked cannibal; the weird influence of whose penetrating glance, many have acknowledged. To a sensitive mind, the Fijian is an object of disgust; but, as this feeling arises solely from the knowledge of his abominable practices, personal intercourse with him seldom fails to produce at last a more favorable impression. (11)

In sum, Gardenhire explains that it is the positioning of Westerners which affects their impressions of Fijians. But, as even-handed as the author attempts to be, his bifurcated rhetoric—once again reminiscent of Tommo's ambivalence in Typee—is impossible to overlook. To him, the startling visual reality of the Fijians, a dark-skinned athleticism, is as joltingly remarkable as the abominable practices of the Fijians—and, in the mindset of Gardenhire and others like him, more than likely conjoined.

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51 This is lifted verbatim from Thomas Williams' Fiji and the Fijians (1870), 90-91.
In the rest of the document, though, Gardenhire takes pains to take into account the manners of Fijian society and to situate them in terms of general human social behavior. For one, he establishes that the savage ways of the Fijian are no different from "the innate depravity which he shares in common with other men" (12). This innate depravity "has been fostered in his case, into peculiar brutality, by the character of his religion and all his early training and associations, for he has been brought up amidst bloodshed and cannibalism" (12). Gardenhire attempts to provide readers with a deep reading of cannibalistic behavior and finds that such systems of behavior are symptomatic of entrenched religious and cultural practices. He continues,

It is one of their institutions, it is interwoven in the elements of their society, it forms one of their pursuits and is regarded, by the mass, as a refinement. Whether it originated through famine, or a savage feeling of hate and revenge, is hard to say. Human bodies are eaten in connection with the building of a temple or canoe, or for the feasting of such as take tribute to a chief town. (15-16)

Such conduct, spoken of in vague terms--the pronoun "it" replacing "cannibalism," quite unlike Crum's account where the term "cannibalism" is parenthetically defined for us time and time again--is not directly named, a result, I conjecture, of Gardenhire's attempt to downplay it. While

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52 This comment was first made in Thomas Williams' Fiji and the Fijians, 97.

53 Again, Gardenhire lifts this passage from various places in Fiji and the Fijians, 175-182.
this passage does not overtly mention the efforts of missionaries, it does underscore the necessity of such endeavors. In order to desiccate deeply rooted behavior such as this, which rests on the foundation of traditional religion, an alternative system of belief, another world-view must replace it.

Gardenhire also offers a revisionist version of Fijian warfare in an attempt to dismantle stereotypical and inaccurate notions and to assure investors and other interested parties that Fijian violence is a force which can be reckoned with. Gardenhire notes that

as of most savage nations... they are warlike, and they have been pictured as bloodthirsty, fierce and eager for battle, but this is totally incorrect. When on his feet the native is invariably armed, and when employed at work, his weapons are always handy. This is caused more by fear than boldness, for he is ever suspicious of treachery. Nevertheless, Fiji has rarely been free from war and its evils, caused, principally, by a desire for aggrandisement on the part of the chiefs. (16)

Gardenhire's version of warfare is important in several regards: first, it establishes that the Fijians are not

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156

Gardenhire, here, seems to have "borrowed" from Thomas Williams' *Fiji and the Fijians* (1870): "It is said of the Fijians, as of most savage nations, that they are warlike: and they have been pictured as fierce, ferocious, and eager for bloodshed and battle. But this is a caricature, resulting from a too hasty and superficial estimate of the native character. When on his feet, the Fijian is always armed; when working in his garden, or lying on his mat, his arms are always at hand. This, however, is not attributed to his bold or choleric temper, but to suspicion and dread. Fear arms the Fijian. His own heart tells him that no one could trust him and be safe, whence he infers that his own security consists in universal mistrust of others. The club or spear is the companion of all his walks; but it is only for defence" (34).
motivated by bloodlust alone. For example, he also says, "In fact, wars in Fiji are sometimes bloodless and result only in the destruction of property" (16); in addition, Gardenhire asserts that Fijians are actually not ruthlessly brave (a point which cuts both ways as will be clear in a moment); third, he draws parallels between Fijian and Western warfare since war is described as being the tool of imperializing expansion (Melville makes a similar point in having Tommo "invent" pop-guns for the Typee children). The second point to which I referred is further expanded upon when the author says,

Take it from any point of view, there is nothing to excite admiration in Fijian warfare, and the deeds of which they boast at truly brave man would scorn. They make pretensions to bravery and speak of strife and battle with the tongue of heroes; yet, with of course a few exceptions, meet the hardships and dangers of battle with effeminate timidity. (17)

Such an assessment assuages the worries of potential investors—those who are concerned about excessive violence despite the eradication of cannibalism. According to Gardenhire's version of things, absent the limited outburst of violent cannibalism, a Fijian's bark is worse than his bite.

While this may restore a great deal of accuracy to the depiction of Fiji, when we compare it against the primary source from which Gardenhire derives most of his facts—and
words!—it is easy to realize that he jettisons information which contradicts his vision. For example, Williams writes,

And, it must not be forgotten that, in the case of murder, the act is not a simple one, ending in the first bloodshed. The blow which falls fatally on one man may be said to kill several more . . . Murder is not an occasional thing in Fiji; but habitual, systematic, and classed among ordinary transactions. (115)

Similarly, Gardenhire omits more exaggerated and descriptive accounts such as the following:

When the hidden flame burst forth, the transition is sudden from mirth to demon-like anger. Sometimes they are surprised into wrath, or vexed beyond endurance when they throw off all restraint, and give themselves up to passion. The rage of a civilized man in comparison with what then follows, is like the tossings of a restless babe. A savage fully developed--physically and morally--is exhibited. The forehead is suddenly filled with wrinkles; the large nostrils distend and smoke; the staring eye-balls grow red, and gleam with terrible flashings; the mouth is stretched into a murderous and disdainful grin; the whole body quivers with excitement; every muscle is strained, and the clenched fist seems eager to bathe itself in the blood of him who has roused this demon fury. (106)

This passage personifies Fijian aggression and would do much to undermine the delicate balance Gardenhire is trying to strike. After detailing the cannibal propensity of the Fijians, Gardenhire reflects on his editorial stance by saying, "In the foregoing details all coloring has been avoided, and many facts, which I could advance, have been withheld, being too horrible to relate" (16). While he

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55 Gardenhire lifts this passage from Williams' Fiji and the Fijians, 182.
claims to want to avoid contaminating the minds of his readers, does the lack of specific detail compensate for the previous presentation of facts? Certainly, it must be recognized, such omissions appeal to the "morally refined," likely an audience he would be trying to reach (or at least an audience who would want to consider themselves morally refined and not consumers of such lasciviousness).

But, realistically, don't these omissions further blur "the facts" and merely increase the level of misunderstanding? Or, as Gardenhire seems to be suggesting, in eschewing such spuriousness, does he offer an alternative portrait of the Fijians, a portrait not solely occupied by the lust for blood?

Both Crum and Gardenhire, despite their divergent characterizations of Fijian violence, concur that commercial and colonial expansion in the Fiji islands still faces the obstacle of cannibalistic vengeance. But, retrospective, historical accounts, as I have mentioned, suggest that it was actually Western meddling--i.e. involvement--in the region which fanned the flames of cannibalistic retribution in the first place. Anthropologist Marshall Sahlins claims, for example, "European trade and the beginnings of colonial settlement in the earlier 19th century fueled the ovens of

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56 Thomas Williams in Fiji and the Fijians makes similar moralizing comments, but then segues into a cataloguing of gruesome behavior. See 42-3, 179.
cannibalism in Fiji to the point of incandescence." Thus, the drive to quell cannibalism in the interest of furthering economic gain was a futile and self-fulfilling process, one which simply entrenched the behavior further. In fact, it is entirely possible that the capitalist and imperialist project depended upon the existence of cannibalism to foment missionary interest in bringing "civility" to Fiji. No matter the answer, it is easy to see how the missionary project was imbricated within the capitalist project since the effort to civilize was encouraged out of economic interest in the region.

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57 Marshall Sahlins, 89. Sahlins says no statistical judgments about the extent of cannibalism have yet been formulated, but does cite contemporaneous accounts from missionary Hunt as well as Reverend R.B. Lyth. Hunt estimated that during a five-year period in the 1840s, at least, if not more than, 500 were cannibalized. Lyth says that more than 300 were killed in the massacre of Rewa by Bau in 1845 and that there were more bodies (bakola) than could be consumed. According to the testimony of a cannibal chief in 1848, Lyth estimated that he alone had been responsible for 872 cannibal deaths (81). Lyth's tale is reported as well in Williams' Fiji and the Fijians, 185. Michael Howard, in Fiji: Race and Politics in an Island State (Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 1991), says, "Fijian politics during the first half of the nineteenth century consisted largely of rivalries between competing chiefs and of increasingly chiefly dominance over commoners. Europeans influenced both of these developments. Respect for the rights of commoners gave way increasingly to harsh exploitations, including exacting more tribute and making greater demands for labour. This was related, in large part, to the desire by chiefs for more European goods for warfare and conspicuous consumption" (20).

58 Indeed, Crum notes, "By the middle of the present century, many thousands of both Tongans and Fijians professed Christianity, and a reformation, spreading far and wide, was of such vast importance as to challenge the admiration of the Christian world. Foreigners were attracted by commerce with the islands, while the superior quality of the South Sea Island Cotton caused to be established large cotton plantations, which have since grown to vast proportions, and furnish quite a revenue to King Thokambau" (5).
In the Land of Cotton: Fiji

It is the purpose of the next two sections to unfold these coterminous interests by examining the way that the dynamic of land, labor and agricultural policies and practices were explored in both Crum's and Gardenhire's pamphlets. Crum, for one, attributes Barnum's procurement of Fiji cannibals to a treaty devised to end bloodshed between warring chiefdoms. But, according to reliable, retrospective historical accounts, the battle to which he refers more than likely originated when the more powerful chief Thokambau enslaved members of another tribe to fulfill his pecuniary debt to colonial interests. In sum, the issues of treaty-making, civilizing and missionizing, slavery, labor exploitation, land acquisition/theft, and agricultural and resource expansion rise to the surface in ways which very much resonate with contemporaneous concerns in the United States in the 1870s.

In addition to the revisionist approach Gardenhire employs regarding Fijian warfare, he suggests that Fijians are actually farmers, not fighters. This subject matter, not surprisingly, is left entirely untouched by Crum. Less interested in directly promoting the region for continued economic investment, Crum is bent on piquing crowds' interests and pulling in revenue from buyers of ticket and souvenir buyers. Unlike Barnum's publicist, Gardenhire promotes both the bounty of Fiji as well as the potential for
capitalist expansion. After surveying Fijian warfare, he
segues into a discussion of commerce and agricultural
practices:

It is pleasing to turn from horrible scenes of
barbarous war to the gentler and more profitable
occupations of peace, of which, the tillage of the
soil seems always the attractive type, and for
which, the Fijian seems eminently qualified.
Here it is observable one of the strange
contradictions in their character: Side by side
with the wildest savagism, we find an attention to
agriculture and arts of peace, not to be found
among the natives of any other of the numerous
islands in the Western Pacific. {17}

Gardenhire suggests the Fijians are naturally disposed to
such occupations, and under Western influence, such
predispositions can only be further developed. Clearly,
Gardenhire is motivated by the same logic as those making
treaties with American Indians. In fact, a significant
number of articles in the 1868 treaty to which I made
reference earlier make special allowances for cultivating
Indians. For example, the treaty stipulates, "a very
considerable number of such persons shall be disposed to
commence cultivating the soil as farmers" and to these will
be bestowed additional tillable land; furthermore, resources
for farmers will be made available, including, among other
things, seeds, equipment, a blacksmith, miller, carpenter,
engineer, physician, as well as a farmer especially appointed
for duty on individual reservations to instruct Indians in
the art of cultivation; moreover, exclusive, private
possession of land by individual farming Indians would be
allowed under the terms of the treaty. These terms of the treaty imply that farming will dismantle the savage and his lifestyle.

For Gardenhire the logic runs thus: farmers are not cannibals. If the primary occupation of Fijians is agriculture, to which they are "naturally" suited and to which they might further apply themselves, the line between civility and savagery is clearly limned. Beyond this, Gardenhire--like the treaty-makers--has other motives as well. The economic potential of the region is the dominant factor which drives his treatise. While the Fijians are adept agrarians with natural resources as their disposal, there is still much room for improvement. Nonetheless, the skills of the Fijians will be useful to Westerners, specifically the Americans whom he is targeting.

In order to entice investors to develop/exploit the bounties of the region, Gardenhire discusses the various natural resources. At least $40,000 worth of bêche-de-mer is annually harvested and exported. Moreover, he writes, "Many valuable commodities, cotton and sugar being the principal, greatly in demand here, are already found wild and uncared for in the Fijis, and might be cultivated with certain success" (18). Americans in need of an expanding source of

\[9\] Of course, Edgar Allan Poe in *Pym* imaginatively explores this terrain when the sailors consider colonizing Tekeli-li for profit. See chapters 18-20.
sugar and cotton—especially during this period in the American South—could look to Fiji for such resources; those looking to make a sound profit, especially, should look that way. Gardenhire notes that Fijian Sea Island cotton has been called by the secretary of the Manchester Cotton Association "superior to that grown in Georgia, as regarded length of staple, silkiness of texture and purity of color" (27); moreover, the author continues, "[t]he plant is perennial and that saves planting so often as in the United States" (28). Appealing to American investors, Gardenhire explains that Australian settlers in Fiji have greatly profited from the cultivation of cotton: "The quantity of cotton raised in 1865, was 200,000 pounds, valued at $46,500; and in 1869, 1,000,000 pounds, valued at $225,000, increasing five-fold in four years, and the cotton having, through greater care in the choice of seed and variety, increased over a fifth per pound in value" (20).

Such figures also sound a warning to Americans who need to keep abreast of international development. Great resources and the potential for more efficient cultivation may have been in reach, yet potentially vexing questions

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Michael Howard explains that "The American Civil War provided a major impetus to growing cotton in Fiji, as it did in other parts of the South Pacific. Since plantations in the American South were unable to provide Europe with much cotton immediately after the Civil War, the Fijian cotton trade was able to continue through the late 1860s. One important outcome of this boom was a sharp increase in land alienation by the settlers, with a total of 250,000 acres having been alienated by 1868" (21).
about land entitlement stood in the way. Uncertain land ownership complicated the pursuit of stepped-up, large-scale cultivation: Western powers had no systematic means to alienate Fijians from their land—as the U.S. government was attempting to do in the Western territories of the United States—without inciting bloodshed. Gardenhire's pamphlet admits that such concerns are valid ones in a place such as Fiji: "In some instances, chiefs have sold the land twice over, or else, it did not belong to them—or land of a conquered force has been sold and reclaimed by them when victorious" (19). Keeping with his attempt at "even-handedness," Gardenhire also qualifies that there are other instances whereby whites have "tried to cheat the natives by placing wrong boundaries in the agreements" (19).

But, since the general thrust of his pamphlet is to encourage rather than dissuade investment, once again he calms fears by smoothing over the issue of land disputes. In part, he effects this by replicating King Thokambau's June 5th, 1871 proclamation which explains his reasons for forming a new government which follows the model of Hawaii's and which includes a ministry consisting of "influential whites and Fijians" (19). The King's comments are meant to assuage the anxieties of the

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61 As will be seen in a later section, the date of this pronouncement falls during the same period, according to Barnum's account, when missionaries were appealing to the king to spare his opposition's soldiers from being cannibalized. In Barnum's account King
many foreigners [who] have acquired by purchase and lease considerable areas of land, upon which they are expanding much capital and exercising great skill and labor. It is therefore clearly evident that to preserve that perfect harmony which should exist between the two races, to facilitate the increasing European commerce, to establish foreign relations, a properly constituted Government has become an absolute necessity. (19)

This proclamation of racial and international/national unity is particularly remarkable given the characterization of the Thokambau in Crum's pamphlet--in brief, he portrays him as being only nominally Christianized. Most obviously, the king's proclamation is an effort to retain economic investment in the region. His top priorities under the new administration of government include the following (in descending order of priority): "to measure for the adjustment of Titles and claims to Lands"; "to survey and management of Public Lands"; "the protection of European residents and property" (20). His speech also marks, at least for Gardenhire, the extent to which the civilizing impulse has taken root, and gives some indication of how the Fijians can adapt to civil ways. But, additionally, it marks an effort by Thokambau to be recognized as a sovereign nation by other nations, a definitional question at the center of negotiations with Indian "nations"/nations in contemporaneous America. Settling such land issues clears the way, Gardenhire suggests, for greater economic investment in the region.

Thokambau is cast as a ruthless cannibal who has barely, and perhaps only nominally, given up his man-eating ways.
Thokambau also recognizes that the "Labor Question" is paramount on the list of issues which will be taken under consideration by his advisers. Gardenhire concurs. The account of Fiji as it is in 1871, he says, "can be reduced to "the question of labor and land." (18). Aware that Americans in the wake of the Civil War are quite likely interested in and vexed by similar issues, Gardenhire outlines the process of procuring a labor force in Fiji: Fijians assemble their laborers from other islands; these indentured servants are returned after a year's work on Fiji and paid the equivalent of fifteen dollars. At first Gardenhire's account sounds as if the practices are a form of intra-Fijian slave trade. But, then, it becomes more apparent that the author is referring to the management of labor by white settlers. The practice of procuring laborers through speculators who are paid a fee has "led to the belief that a species of slave trade is being carried on" (19). This suspicion required both the American and British Consul to examine laborers on board ship to determine if they were willing or enslaved servants. Such worries were becoming more prominent in the public record of nations such as Britain and the United States. Both were eager to avoid tainting their respectability. Seemingly aware of such thinking, Gardenhire attempts to allay fears about slavery and instructs would-be investors that it is in the planters' best interests to establish a good rapport with workers so a fresh pool of
workers will not be dissuaded by slanderous accounts. Near the end of Gardenhire's document he returns to the vexing issue of labor by detailing a letter from the British Consulate to the planters of the region. In many ways these suggestions hint at the best ways to avoid raising the specter of slavery. The letter reminds growers that the relationship between planter and laborer must adhere to the conventions of civilized countries, and that "[i]t is desirable that these natives should be permitted to have access to any teacher of Christianity in your district, and encouraged to attend church, taking care that when they do so they be decently clad. This will improve their condition, and go far towards removing the disfavor with which the importation of labor is regarded elsewhere" (28). Schooling in religion and proper clothing, once again, are the solution to the problem; in this case, the "suggestion" of slavery will be avoided if such pains are taken. It seems likely that Gardenhire includes this reference as a way to convince investors that simple measures can be taken to ensure that the vast supply of cheap labor will not be cut off despite the crackdown on anything resembling the slave system.

Thus, great potential looms on the horizon if the abundant resources and the cheap labor can be administered by

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62 This point is historically interesting—but not a part of this study's scope—since in the 1880s British-colonial Fiji was met with a huge influx of Indian laborers "imported" by the British; the majority of Fiji's population today consists of the progeny of such workers.
someone with sound Western business sense. "The natives," he says, "know nothing of either plough or horses" and thus he believes the recent introduction of such technologies seems bound to revolutionize the industry (28). Each day, this possibility is becoming much more of a reality:

There is good reason to hope that the enlightened enterprise of intelligent settlers will, ere long, develop the resources of these fertile islands; the terrors and dangers of a residence on them having disappeared through the influence of Christianity.

"For here great spring greens all the year,
And fruits and blossoms blush in social sweetness,
On the self same bough." (18)

In this endeavor, the bedfellow of capital investment is Christianity, the force by which the region is stripped of its terrifying/terrorizing threat. This verse implies that Fijians are no more than produce cultivated and groomed for the market, ready to be plucked and consumed at will by Westerners. Moreover, the Edenic ideal referred to in the saccharine verse evokes a Fiji where all can live at peace and assumes that "social sweetness" is possible for the Fijian islanders once Christianity and Western capital

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1 The Fijian method of planting, Gardenhire says, is "very rude: They dig a hole in the ground with a stick or a hoe, the seed planted, and in three or four days it is up." The representative of the Manchester Cotton Association estimates that were "the cotton better cultivated, and that if the plants were ploughed and hoed they would produce a stronger staple" (28).

4 Cheap labor is the most enticing fruit of the land. Gardenhire, for example, claims, "[W]ith the cheap labor obtained in those parts, [Fiji] offers a wide and lucrative field for either large or small capitalists (21).
investments take root, never recognizing that such grafting may very well produce a very strange (and bitter) fruit.

**Recently arrived in this country, expressly for P.T. Barnum's Great Traveling Exhibition**

The circumstances surrounding the solicitation, procurement and the eventual display of the Fijians is worth considerable analysis; in particular, the version set forward in Crum's pamphlet casts Barnum in the role of diplomat and missionary, civilizing agent and treaty-maker extraordinaire. Barnum's benevolence comes under question and Crum's rhetorical moves are set in high relief when set against Gardenhire's version. Gardenhire, Barnum's purported agent in Fiji, a man from whom Barnum supposedly secured his Fiji cannibals, offers a version quite distinct from that offered by the showman. It is the purpose of this section to compare these two versions; such a comparison will inevitably link back to discussions in the previous section concerning labor and land alienation and the coterminous issue of treaty negotiation. The example of "Barnum's" negotiation with Fijians suggests uncanny parallels to the contemporaneous status of treaty-making/negotiation between the United States and Indian nations/"nations."

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**In 1871, the very term "nation" was called into question since the passage of an 1870 pact forbade the continuation of treaty-making with Indians in an attempt to undermine and mis/dis-recognize their self-sovereignty.**
In order to understand the context of the Fijians' transfer to Barnum, Crum provides a historical overview of monarchical and governing practices. Unlike other Fijian chiefs and the neighboring kings of Tonga and Rewa, Crum says, King Thokambau refused to be easily converted by zealous missionaries. Initially, missionaries gave up on such attempts due to escalating violence in the region; but, during a bout of serious illness, Thokambau succumbed to the pressure of missionaries and his neighboring monarchs. But it is outrightly conjectured by Crum and further supported by his version of events that the king's claim to conversion is largely a nominal one.

As the most influential of the kings among the South Sea Islands, he is often called upon by missionaries to negotiate between warring tribes in neighboring regions where "systems of bloodshed, murders, strangulation of widows, wars, strifes, and man-eating, [is] so much indulged in by these sanguinary savages" (11). While endeavoring to proselytize to a "tribe of degraded Cannibals" in the province of Barautu, two native missionaries from Mbau were taken captive by the rebel chief Lovoni, and, "according to their custom,

"Crum says that his claims to Christianity can be nominally corroborated by "the intercourse of trade and commerce, the immigration of whites to establish cotton plantations, together with the spread of the Scriptures in the Fiji language" (10-11). I find it interesting that such events corroborate someone's profession of faith. Undeniably, Christianity, capitalism, whiteness and civility are imbricated in the same regime of knowledge and power."
[they] were doomed to be eaten alive by piece meal" (11). Not surprisingly, the encroaching missionaries raised the stakes in the region, making the behavior of the Barautuans something to be reckoned with: "[They] have become a terror to all who have sought to carry the Gospel into their wretched abodes . . . endeavoring to reclaim them from their errors, and restrain them from their cruel practices" (11). If the missionaries were not there to do "their work," to complete their errand into the wilderness, in the first place, one wonders whether the menace of cannibalism would be so magnified.

Missionaries appealed to Thokambau to assert his influence for the release of their fellow missionaries. Glad "for an opportunity to avenge himself on an old enemy, [the king] sent several hundred of his bravest warriors to assist in the rescue" (11). The missionaries, according to Crum's account, were pushing for a peaceful negotiation for the release of their own. But, alas, Thokambau "remonstrated, advising an open and relentless assault, after making a formal demand for the captives, should they not be forthwith given up, [and a] parley ensued. . . ." (12). The report of such occurrences reminds Crum's readers that even the "converted" are not to be trusted. Thokambau's "misbehavior" raises doubts about the authenticity of colonial subjects' claims to loyalty, and highlights the threat of the same, but not same.
One wonders in a document such as this one, which attempts to proffer the solution of Christian civility, what the story of King Thokambau's "misbehavior" has to offer. Certainly it does serve to mark and inscribe the difference that exists, serving as a reminder that even though the converted Fijians may be Christian in name, their difference, inscribed visually and culturally, will always separate them from other white, Western Christians. The surveillance of "almost the same but not quite . . . almost the same but not white" is the function of colonialist documents such as Crum's. Inescapably, the narrative of the civilizing process is commingled with the menacing threat of the newly civilized, of the "mimic man." Homi Bhabha, for one, claims this ambivalence is endemic to colonialist discourse:

(C)olonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference . . . mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus, the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both 'normalized' knowledges and disciplinary powers.

(86)

Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," The Location of Culture (New York: Routledge, 1994) 89.
Thus, Crum's narrative, and Barnum's role in the ensuing "treaty" negotiations, all secure and intensify surveillance in order to restrain and control the menacing cannibalistic threat which has defied the logic of the missionary/colonialist regime (that is, the logic which promises that cannibalistic barbarity will be quelled and controlled in the spirit of Christianity, the logic which promises that civility and Christianity march hand in hand)."

To manage the sly civility of someone such as Thokambau, Christian civility, Crum explains, finally brought the opposing factions together for negotiations: "[I]t was finally decided to adopt the plan of the missionaries. The latter were to call the tribes together, and seek, by a friendly interview, to reclaim the native missionaries from these blood-thirsty cannibals" (12). The first meeting, which was witnessed, Crum is quick to point out, by W. C. Gardenhire (who in this account is described as the "gentleman who brought these Fijians to America for Mr. Barnum") seemed "ominous of good" (12). Lovoni's "cunning-

69 "Of Mimicry and Man," 91. For Bhabha, "menace" is the oppositional complement to mimicry. While mimicry is "a difference that is almost nothing but not quite," menace is "a difference that is almost total but not quite." In this case, the menacing behavior of King Thokambau is due in part to his prior profession of good will and faith: once he was completely different, but in becoming Christianized, in becoming the mimic man, this absolute and total difference was destroyed, thus making him "not quite" totally different.

69 As will be discussed in more detail, it seems quite clear, based on reading the Gardenhire account, which makes no reference to
eyed matas (the rebel's messengers)" recognized that they were outnumbered by the "native missionary teachers and their aids sent by King Thokambau" (12). The inclusion of missionaries in the list of forces which instilled fear into Lovoni is noteworthy and suggests once again the bias of Crum's account (which partakes again and again of the missionary-civilizing logic).

Both sides agreed to the terms of the treaty, but following the ceremonial close to the negotiations and the release of the captives, "Lovoni, the rebel chief, raised the war-cry, (a sautu, lamolamora!) which was quickly responded to by about 500 of his followers, when an indiscriminate hand-to-hand fight of the most desperate and brutal kind ensued, having probably no parallel for ferocity in the annals of Fijian warfare" (12). Over a hundred men on each side, including Lovoni, were killed in the battle; fortunately, Crum writes, none of the missionaries were killed (13). King Thokambau's forces, though, took several Burautuans prisoner including Kina bose Yaca, Kora Tumasamora, and the dwarf general Ra Biau."

Barnum, that this attribution is a product of creative hindsight; such connections thus insert Barnum into the network of treaty-making and missionary work. Barnum's display of the Fijians casts him as a benevolent force, someone who can intervene in the situation and effect change (i.e. civilizing).

"Ra Biau, "the intrepid Lilliput," is vilified by Thokambau (not to mention Crum) because he alone, showing "dauntless bravery," killed with his own hands four of Thokambau's men, although "they were Perizitian giants compared to him" (13). His dwarfism seems to make his
Despite the King's claim to Christianity, Crum explains that Fijian code required that these captives be condemned to death by "the most cruel and systematic torture, viz: To have their tongues cut out, their brains eaten, and their skulls converted into drinking-cups, while the bones of their bodies were to be made into ornaments to be worn by the vanquishers" (13). Unlike his earlier descriptions, here Crum attempts to establish some contextual explanation for such savagery. But the explanation pales in the shadow of the above-mentioned, hyperbolic descriptions: "However much we deprecate this cruel custom of the Fijian King, it must be remembered that in this treacherous act of his ancient enemy, a hundred of his bravest men had been killed, besides suffering the additional insult offered to his friends, the missionaries, whom he vowed to defend" (13). This admission seems at odds with Crum's earlier critical account of menace even more spectacular to Crum, Barnum et al. Undeniably, his "abnormality" is implicated as a cause of his immoral, barbarous behavior which of course coincides with classical theories of physical degeneracy not entirely disowned at this time (or, for that matter, even today). About, Ra Biau, Crum writes, "[T]here were none so imperious and scornful as the fearless little General . . . His walk and mien, although he is a little less than four feet high, would do credit to an Oriental Sultan, while his skill with the club, spear, bow and javelin, excites both the terror and admiration of all who behold him" (14). Even Gardenhire, whose account is less sensational seems to exaggerate when it comes to "the little man-eater" whose descriptions "of some of his feasts on humans are disgusting in the extreme; he says they chop off the arms, legs, hands and feet first, it being quite immaterial whether the victims are alive or not; they cook them and serve them up for eating; these are called the most savory bits to a cannibal epicure's palate; the trunk is not used except when Bakola is scarce" (frontispiece).
Thokambau's sly civility and his almost-the-same-but-not-whiteness. But, I would suggest that this brief moment of ambivalence is a feeble attempt to recuperate Thokambau and the entire missionary project; if Crum paints the King as unremittingly barbaric, he runs the risk of suggesting that attempts at civilization just won't stick among the Fijians, that revenge is still the most powerful motivation.

With this breach in the treaty, and finding that Thokambau would not relinquish his death sentence, "the missionaries, not wishing to see cannibalism revived, determined to interfere in behalf of the captives" (14). Crum contends the missionaries sought the aid of the U.S. Consul, Dr. J. W. Brauer, and appealed to him to take those captured by Thokambau out of the king's empire. Barnum's role in the international negotiation--and treaty-making--escalates at this point. Gardenhire, allegedly Barnum's agent in this document's account, proposed to the Consul that for the use of the Fijians, he would pay Thokambau a large sum and provide $15,000 in bonds for their return in three years. The missionaries, Crum writes, "had many reasons for encouraging this humane project, and through their influence, and that of the American Consul, the proposition was accepted, the necessary bonds given, and certified to by the American Consul, and the four Fijian specimens are already numbered among the living human curiosities of P.T. Barnum's show" (14). This clumsy sentence rushes us through what
might seem to be a complicated process; Crum obscures for us how the Fijians literally came into Barnum's possession. Barnum's monetary interest and the potential for economic gain gets recast as humanist project (something which the title of his show, "P.T. Barnum's Great Moral Exhibition," implies, as well).

Gardenhire's account, on the other hand, suggests that the arrival of the Fijians into his hands had much less to do with missionary work and the diplomatic spirit of international peace-making and much more to do with greenback. The frontispiece, entitled "Description of the Cannibals Now on Exhibition," asserts that General Ra Biau is a member of Lovoni's tribe; his two companions are actually members of Thokambau's: "Only twelve months ago, [Ko Ratu Masi Moa] was engaged fighting for Thakombau, an evident relish with which he describes beating out the disabled enemies that goes far towards proving the good seed sown by the missionaries has fallen on barren ground." Gardenhire's account never establishes how or why the three Fijians came to the United States. Whether or not his vague account is accurate, it certainly points to the biases of Crum's version.

In fact, later in the document, the single paragraph account of the June 16, 1871 skirmish between Thokambau and Lovoni's forces makes no reference to negotiation, treaty-making or a reversion to cannibalism by Thokambau's forces.
Thokambau's army did report that ten men and women numbered amongst Lovoni's followers had been killed, and they supported such claims by "brandishing a human arm and hand tied at the point of a bayonet" (an artifact subsequently added to Gardenhire's collection of Fijian curiosities) (21). Gardenhire set sail with his entourage two days later on the eighteenth (hardly time for much negotiation). Interestingly, retrospective histories of the region establish that Lovoni and Thokambau did skirmish, but the results and causes of this dispute are quite different from those suggested by Crum. Most accounts verify that in order to raise the necessary capital to launch his new government—the proclamation which Gardenhire reprints announced this undertaking—Thokambau sold members of Lovoni's tribe, for the most part resistant to the king's consolidation of power and conciliation with Western powers, into servitude: "[they] were sentenced to transportation to the plantations of European settlers. Thokambau confiscated their lands, and later mortgaged them to Europeans who advanced money to his Government. . . . from the sale of these unfortunate people he collected about 1,110 pounds Sterling."

What would prompt Barnum to diverge from historical accounts as well as the, perhaps fabricated, account given by Gardenhire? In Crum's pamphlet, the overtones of treaty-

making are not accidental. Barnum's goals--the ones spelled out by Crum, at least--involve bringing about a peaceable solution to affairs between rival factions so that missionaries might continue to convert (and pacify) bloodthirsty cannibals. In effect, the proffered solution also would expose the savages to civilization and civilized ways which in turn might bring civilization back to Fiji. Moreover, the plight of the Fijians, and especially, the plight of missionaries working in the darkest of regions, would be made known to civilized Americans which in turn would step up civilizing efforts both abroad and at home.

In part, this move allows Barnum to become international diplomat as he co-opts and adapts the rhetoric of diplomacy common between the U.S. Government and sovereign nations. Americans in this period were more than familiar with the treaty-making process. During the late 1860s, particularly, U.S. citizens became acquainted with the Ulysses S. Grant administration's Peace Policy, a network of treaties including the 1868 one cited earlier in the chapter. The policy of the Grant administration was to "conquest through kindness." This was facilitated by the participation of civilian church groups, in particular the Quakers, as well as other philanthropist bodies. These groups formed the Board of Indian Commissioners and were active in nominating Indian agents and superintendents as well as monitoring the disbursal of treaty appropriations. In addition to bringing
"civility" to the administration of Indian affairs, the policy also worked toward the elimination of the treaty system.

Treaties were complicated constitutional phenomena because they inherently recognized the sovereignty of an Indian nation while simultaneously attempting to undermine that sovereignty by stripping the Indians of land and monetary and cultural capital. Often negotiated to bring about peaceable relations, in reality, treaties with Indian nations ignored and destroyed Indian sovereignty. Most treaties, in working toward "peace," attempted to assimilate and civilize (without realistic and culturally sound plans to accomplish such ends). Such aims, of course, are contradictory--sovereign nations, thus recognized, cannot be programmatically civilized or assimilated--and help to explain the Grant administration's attempts to water down or eliminate the treaty process. By 1871, this sentiment took the form of legislation in the Appropriations Act of March 3, 1871, which stated:

That, hereafter no Indian nation or tribe within the territory of the United States shall be acknowledged or recognized as an independent nation, tribe or power with whom the United States may contract by treaty: Provided further, That nothing herein contained shall be construed to invalidate or impair the obligation of any treaty heretofore lawfully made and ratified with any such Indian nation or tribe.  

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*17* Quoted from Oren Lyons, et. al., Exiled in the Land of the Free: Democracy, Indian Nations, and the U.S. Constitution (Santa Fe: Clear Light, 1992) 293.
This legislation nominally claimed to have no effect on the treaties made before this point, although it obviously influenced the further dilution of Indian rights in the following decades and led to policies which clearly abrogated the terms of earlier treaties.31

The dissolution of the government's power to contract treaties with Native nations was, partially, the outcome of an internal struggle between the legislative branches for control over such powers (since they had been handed over to the 1867-8 Peace Commission). The House of Representatives, dissatisfied with the terms of treaties negotiated by the Peace Commission, attached a rider to the 1871 appropriations bill, which led, after negotiation in a conference committee to the eventual abrogation of further treaty-making. Those opposed to its passage cited its unconstitutionality, claiming the power of treaty-making rested with the Senate and the Executive branches. Others cited the unfairness to

31 Ward Churchill explains, "Without the willing consent of Indian nations to diminishment of their sovereign status, such maneuvers on the part of the federal government can be viewed only as abridgments (violations) of the treaties into which it entered with native people. The implications of this are readily apparent in Article VI of the U.S. Constitution, which states unequivocally that treaties represent the 'Supreme Law of the Land,' on par with the law embodied with the Constitution itself. The terms and provisions of a ratified and unabrogated treaty cannot be constitutionally contradicted or impugned by the passage of any subordinate legislation such as local ordinances, state laws or subsequent federal statutes. As with legislation, the same principles prevent regulations of governmental agencies from usurping the treaty agreements." Struggle for the Land: Indigenous Resistance to Genocide, Ecoricide and Expropriation in Contemporary North America (Monroe, ME: Common Courage P, 1993) 377-8.
"civil" Indian nations who are protected under the terms of the Constitution. But other dissenters were dismayed by the dissolution of one of the most efficient mechanism for maintaining some semblance of civility.74

Thus far, I have suggested that in deploying the rhetoric of treaty-making, Barnum appealed to the topical sensibilities of his viewers. I have also suggested that cohered within the rubric of treaty-making between the U.S. government and hostile, savage "nations," there existed contradictory impulses. It seems clear that Barnum capitalized upon this familiar narrative which concealed its own two-facedness. That is, like the Senator, he gained something from the story that savage "nations" could be controlled, Western missionary work could continue, and capital investment could be accelerated if treaties were contracted. If "nations" subject to the terms of the treaty breached its objectives, which Barnum's narrative asserts that they were bound to do, the U.S. government (or its equivalent) could aggressively take on the hostile element.

Thus, the story of treaty-making allowed Barnum to rehearse a story of Western control over a savage people, a people who quite likely could be civilized, but not completely, a people who were perhaps dishonest, lying, and immune to Westernized lawfulness, in need of constant

74 See Oral Lyons, 294.
surveillance. Although by 1871, U.S. official involvement in the region had come to an end, Barnum's readers might have been aware of U.S. involvement in Fiji during the several decades preceding this moment. Indeed, the history of interaction between the U.S. Consulate and Thokambau (not yet king) more than supports the narrative I have just summarized. Ironically, the celebration of America's independence inevitably brought about its loss of a foothold in the region. Gardenhire explains that in 1849 the American Consul "accidentally burnt down his house with wadding from cannons fired on the 4th of July, and the natives rescued some articles from the flames and stole them" (22). The Consul demanded that Thokambau's government repay him some five thousand dollars for his lost property. These reparations were never made, and in 1855 Commander Boutwell pressed the king with his military might, threatening that he be not compelled to "approach near Mbau, as my powder is quick and my balls are round" (22). When so pressured, the king agreed to pay a sum of forty-five thousand U.S. dollars; if he failed to honor such provisions in two year's time he

75 During the second season of his touring exhibition, the Solomon Islands came under the authority and possession of the United States. Consider this interesting report in the 6 June 1872 The New York Times: "The cession of these islands was the work of two rival chiefs . . . whose honor forbade a truce . . . and who gladly seized the opportunity of submitting themselves to the United States Government, whose duty it will be to compel them to keep the peace. The desire of these blood-thirsty chiefs that some one should restrain their angry passions, has thus resulted in giving us a considerable extension of territory."
would not only "resign his government [but would also] deliver himself up to the American government, and submit to any punishment the Commander might deem proper to inflict" (22).

Thokambau, in dire straits, chose to cede all of Fiji to England on the condition that they should pay the American claim and that he should retain 200,000 acres of land and the title of King of Fiji. But, because of British difficulties with the Maori in New Zealand, they were reluctant to take on such added responsibility; thus the American debt still hung over Thokambau until the Polynesia Company agreed to pay (if it received 200,000 acres in land, the pre-emptive right over any land that the king later ceded, and full right of banking, issuing notes, levying harbor dues, and full powers to make laws for the government of their settlements.) Pressure from the British Consul brought about drastic modifications in the agreement, but in July of 1868, it was signed by Thokambau, and shortly thereafter that debt to the United States was paid.¹ This sustained overview of U.S.-Fijian relations (in particular interactions with Thokambau) seems to support the narrative thread present in Barnum's account: alleged misbehavior (lying and thieving), negotiations to restore peaceable relations, broken promises.

threats to retaliate, and more promises, and so on. If it hadn't been for other Western interests (in this particular case, investors), it is likely that Thokambau would have failed to meet the terms of the treaty; similarly, if it hadn't been for the intervention of Gardenhire, Barnum's agent, it's suggested that war would have continued to rage and more missionaries would have been taken captive. Barnum continued to refine these notions in later promotional campaigns for the Fijians. In York, Pennsylvania, in 1872, for example, his advance advertisements billed the entourage as "The Four Wild Fiji Cannibals, Captives of War, lately ransomed from King Takembau [sic], by Mr. Barnum at a cost of $15,000." In this case Barnum not only made reference to a treaty-like transaction, but cast himself as the deal-maker, negotiator.

Ultimately, this rhetoric of treaty-making allows Barnum to sustain a narrative about Thokambau, untrustworthy savage, a cannibal who professes to having given up anthropophagy, but one who may, on a whim, slide back into such practices. According to these accounts, the emulation of Western

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"Quoted in James Shettel, "Death of Barnum's Cannibal." The Circus Scrapbook 1.4 (1929): 44. Shettel claims that such announcements, including references to a Live Digger Indian, monster sea lions, and the only giraffe in America, took precedence over the promotion of the circus performers.

Crum writes, for example: "Although nominally King Thokambau professes belief in Christianity, yet, on this occasion his actions were not in accord with his pretensions" (14)."
civility has its limits since, as Homi Bhabha theorizes, mimicry ultimately produces its slippage, and under colonialist pressure, gets reformulated as menace. But these accounts also make clear that the mimic man becomes menace, in part, because he cannot be trusted, cannot be relied upon to tell the truth, to fulfill promises contracted, for example, in treaty negotiations. Crum, for one, in remarking on treaty negotiations for the release of missionary captives, says, "All that etiquette and cordiality--which these brutalized beings know so well how to counterfeit--was practiced" (12). Any mark of civility and compliance is the double of barbarity and deceit.

Watch Out: Cannibals Tell Lies

Not surprisingly, each contemporary account thus far discussed pays particular attention to the propensity of Fijians for lying. Indeed, Gardenhire suggests that such two-facedness comes from their acute mental capacities: "[the Fijian's] mental character is far above what his general appearance would justify. Dullness or stupidity form no part of his character. . . . [He can] feign also with consummate skill. Tact has been called Ready Cash, and of this the Fijian has plenty. In social diplomacy, he is cautious and
Even though Gardenhire, in general, appears to be more understanding of the Fijians, his estimation of them still suggests that they may not be entirely trustworthy, particularly when protecting their own private interests in social negotiations. Gardenhire derives this comment—with significant changes—from Thomas Williams' *Fiji and the Fijians*, but he ignores other specific references to Fijian dishonesty:

Among the Fijians the propensity to lie is so strong that they seem to have no wish to deny its existence, or very little shame when convicted of a falsehood. Ordinary lies are told undisguised, but should it be necessary, a lie is presented with every appearance of truth. Adroitness in lying is attained by the constant use made of it to conceal the schemes and plots of the chiefs, to whom a ready and clever liar is a valuable acquisition. . . 'A Fijian truth' has been regarded as a synonym for a lie, and foreigners, wishing to be rightly informed, caution the native not to speak 'after the fashion of Fiji,' a reflection which he turns to his own advantage when brought before the stranger for some misdemeanour, by assuring him that his accusers speak 'after the fashion of Fijians'. . . The habitual concealment or disguise of the truth presents a great difficulty to the reforming labours of the missionary, causing him sometimes the bitterest disappointment. After the actual untruth of the lips is laid aside, the principle of misrepresentation survives in the heart, and often leads to prevarication, or such a modifying of the truth as to make it seem other than it is. (107-108)

"Gardenhire borrows this from Thomas Williams, *Fiji and the Fijians*, 94, and the meaning is greatly distorted by omission: Tact is ready cash because the Fijian finds tools, cord, packing materials directly, in nature. Tact has nothing to do with diplomacy in this particular instance."
The Fijians' lying ways thwart all attempts at negotiation, reform, civilizing. The above accounts suggest that only constant surveillance will keep them in check. Crum concurs when he says, "There is no doubt but his [Thokambau's] savage instincts are kept in abeyance through fear of incurring the displeasure of his foreign subjects, or diverting the channel of trade which has for a number of years been steadily flowing toward Na Viti Levu [one of the largest islands of Fiji] (14). Thus, the Fijian's instincts will never give way to civilization, no matter how persuaded "the mimic man" is by capital investment and its complicit partner, the Christian missionary.

These ideas were borne out, during the second year of his tour, by Barnum's promotional scheme. This scheme is interesting for it relies on the premise of Fijian disingenuousness, but it is fueled by Barnum's own lying humbuggery. During the exhibition's stay in York, Pennsylvania, Barnum's public relations machine ran a story to bolster crowd attendance. Since the Fijian cannibals were not to be found on the first day of the exhibition, the following day's York Daily explained the cause:

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By this time the advance promotions were referring to the Fijians as "The Four Wild Fiji Cannibals, Captives of War, lately ransomed from King Thakemabau [sic], by Mr. Barnum at a cost of $15,000." Quoted in James Shettel, "Death of Barnum's Cannibal," The Circus Scrapbook 1.4 (1929). Not surprisingly, all four Fijians are referred to as wild cannibals; all were captives of war ransomed by Mr. Barnum.
Barnum's Museum, menagerie and Hippodrome met with quite a loss yesterday in the death of the notorious cannibal dwarf, which occurred at the Pennsylvania hotel. The little Fiji exhibited symptoms of indisposition several days ago, and the manager, W. C. Coup, sent 'the General,' as he is called in New York, to be cared for by Mr. Barnum's family physician. But the little savage, becoming restless in the absence of his associates, he was returned to the company. Like all of his race, he had a native horror of shoes and clothing and even in the wet, cold days that came upon the company in New Jersey, the manager was unable to force shoes upon 'the General' and make him dress with sufficient warmth.

Yesterday, the man in charge noticed that his fingers were constantly in motion, while he muttered continuously, the only word he pronounced intelligently, 'Fiji.' He refused anything like food or nourishment and apparently thought of nothing but his native island. Dancing or violent gesturing of any kind was always a source of great merriment to 'the General,' but now the keeper could not provoke even a smile. The miniature being was dying and while the keeper was doing his best to cheer him up and make him take his medicine, he rose up in bed, muttered 'Fiji' in a whisper and fell back dead. His three native companions, who up to this time were wholly indifferent, now exhibited all the symptoms of genuine grief. They howled incessantly and such fearful physical contortions were probably never before witnessed in a civilized community.

The death of this dwarf savage was not an unexpected event. The scene subsequent, however, sent a thrill through the very few conversant with the facts. Shortly after the corpse was placed in the coffin last evening, S. S. Smith, the keeper, locked the door upon the three companions in an adjoining room and left the building for the purpose of consulting the manager at the National Hotel. He states that he was not absent 30 minutes, but that upon returning a scene presented itself too horrible to detail. The two male associates had gained access to the corpse and were biting and gnawing at the fleshy parts of the body with all the eagerness of their native cannibalism. The female stood aloof in one corner and by sign, word and gesture was entreating them to desist. It is understood the woman is a convert to the teachings of English missionaries and looks with
I've quoted this passage at length because it twines together
the various modes of discourse which have been thus far
analyzed: the Fijian/savage disregard of clothing which
ultimately leads to death; the capacity of Fijians for
feigning; the reemergence of cannibalistic menace when left
unchecked; the ineffectuality of Christianity in keeping such
behavior under control; the return of scenes "too horrible
to relate." Interestingly, it blurs together the specific
narratives of the Fijians, and includes Princess Otevah
amongst the rest of the Fijians, saying they're all members
of the same tribe. And, importantly, it does once again make
note of the importance of Western intervention in putting an
end to such abhorrent behavior; the "treaty" arrived at by
Barnum's keeper sends the guilty Fijians packing to their
apartment (reservation?). While my allusion to U.S.
Government Indian policy may be stretching it, it is
impossible to ignore the traces of Barnum's earlier rhetoric.
I would also suggest that this account makes allusions to
land rights--part of the complex of treaty discourse--through
reference to Ra Biau's melancholy. While the account of his
sadness admits some level of ambivalence, the consequences of

"1 The York Daily, 1872, May 15 (?), reprinted in James Shettel,
"assimilation" by Western culture, it also suggests that such an attachment to Fiji—more, generally, the land—is a product of feverish delusions, nervous and unhealthy agitation.

The effect that such a narrative would have on eager audiences is clear, but readers refusing to be hoodwinked and readers refusing to let Barnum hoodwink others wrote in to the York Daily's competition, The True Democrat, which stated,

A few days ago the York Daily had an article in its columns stating that the cannibal belonging to the Barnum show that died here last Tuesday, was partly eaten up by his companions, during the temporary absence of their keeper. We have since learned that there is not a word of truth in the story, that the Daily was liberally paid for the insertion and the whole thing was furnished to that paper, cut and dry, by the proprietor, as an advertising dodge.

Barnum, although confessedly a great showman, is determined not to be outdone in the work of humbugging, a reputation for which he has sustained through a long life of singular changes and fluctuations. It is now positively averred that the female member of the cannibal troupe was born in the state of Virginia and was at one time a domestic in the house of a gentleman at present residing in Baltimore. This, had it been known in York last Tuesday, we venture to say, would have raised a loud laugh, if not something worse, at Barnum's expense and his man-eating party."

It is not in the least remarkable that Barnum's display was manufactured through and through, nor is it surprising that crowds delighted in uncovering his humbuggery, a dialectic Neil Harris calls the "operational aesthetic." What should

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1 The Circus Scrapbook, 48-49.
be remarkable, though, is the ease with which Barnum was able to substitute an African American woman for a Fijian Princess. George Boyne, in hearing of Barnum's display, wrote to explain that his family had resided in the same locality in the Fiji Islands, that the Fijians had been under Christian training for a number of years, and, moreover, that in California Ra Biau went into the city "with my children to purchase articles of clothing and was always forced to wear them." Boyne's letter, while shedding light on the status of the Fijians, also muddies things by claiming, "I promised the poor woman to send for her when I got home, but I knew she is in too safe keeping to escape, especially as she is of a quiet disposition and lacks confidence among strangers. She could not get away without assistance. I am prepared to send her the means. I thank you for your expose of the late humbug."

Comments such as this one—whether or not it is "truthful" is irresolvable—point out that dissenting voices were raised against the thunder of Barnum and his approving masses. Certainly, such voices require me to acknowledge, as I hope would be implied already, that Barnum's narrative could not have been inculcated uniformly or out of obeisance by American audiences. But, I would be remiss in ignoring the still-subtle undercurrents of missionary and imperialist

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"The Circus Scrapbook, 49."
rhetoric within the discourse of dissent. An appeal to the reformatory power of Christianity is the foundation of the anti-cannibal, anti-savage claim. Boyne explains, "if the Fijians were not Christianized, very few [Western] types would like to reside within a quarter of a mile so near to such people described in The York Daily." Boyne also reiterates the effect of the Western missionary and capital presence (surveillance) in Fiji:

There are now 3,000 European residents in Fiji and the number is constantly increasing. They are principally engaged in cotton planting and trading with the natives. The Christian king, Thakombau, has formed a parliament. Two-thirds of the members are Europeans. The Methodists have published the following statement: 'There are 617 churches, 10 English missionaries, 40 native missionaries, who are trained at a native college, 23,233 members; 905 catechists, 10,666 Sabbath schools, 1,549 day schools and 105,000 attendants on public worship.'

Boyne seems to presume that the statistical weight of this evidence more than substantiates that Fijian barbarity has been erased and intimates that the Christian presence has infiltrated every strata of Fijian life, that such cannibalistic behavior could not continue under such widespread surveillance. Despite such claims, Boyne does insinuate the return of "menace" if Barnum fails to treat the Fijians well: "When the Fijians know how they have been placed in this show for years, they will soon despond and there will be another for the Daily to serve up. If they

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* The Circus Scrapbook, 50.
even received pay, it would make no difference, their love for their island home is so strong." Retribution will take the form of cannibalistic aggression, no matter the level to which the Fijians have been civilized.

**Conclusion: Telling America through the Story of Fiji**

The narrative of Fiji, as we have seen, has been one which served several purposes for post-Civil War Americans. Early in this chapter I suggested that it was worthwhile to consider the dialogic effect of the presence of cannibalism in Fiji. Moving beyond the notion that Western presence perhaps led to escalated incidences of cannibalism, I asked, what response did such a topic evoke in Americans, what sort of narrative was constructed out of such material? These questions are of more interest when one realizes how minimal official U.S. government was in the region, especially at this time. In part, I have already explored in detail the elaborate rhetorical maneuvers which constitute a dialogic response: among other things, the theory of collecting/museum-making, representation through portraiture, souvenir production, discourse on clothing, the construction of authenticity, the rhetoric of treaty-making. Through these various discourses, the extreme example of Fiji held a dark

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"The Circus Scrapbook. 50."
mirror up to American race-relations and to the nation itself.

Anthropologists such as Marshall Sahlins have explained that Fijian cannibalism is a complex response to both originary myths about "man-eating"--a foreign presence on Fijian shores imported the taboo practice--and to stepped-up foreign involvement. At the same time, I would argue, that Barnum's (and Gardenhire's) exhibition and production of "Fijian Cannibals" is a complex response to the coterminous forces of narratives about missionary and capitalist involvement in Fiji and the social milieu of the early 1870s in the United States. While it is certainly true the emotionally charged issue of cannibalism attracted and drew upon readers' and spectators' voyeuristic interests, more generally, the symbolic domain of the topic fed upon the particulars of the climate of race-relations during the period. That is, just as incidences of Fijian cannibalism were reactions to material conditions, so are American reactions through the discourse of cannibalism reactions to material, relational existence with regard to civilizing efforts, debates about assimilation, as well as formalized policy regarding Native Americans. The symbolic

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*I have found arguments which parallel mine in Richard Slotkin's "Buffalo Bill's 'Wild West' and the Mythologization of the American Empire," Cultures of United States Imperialism, eds. Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease (Durham: Duke UP, 1993) wherein he writes, "The categories of myth shape the terms in which the imperial project will be conceived, justified, and executed; and the imperial achievement is then
dreamscape/nightmare of cannibalism gave Americans a discourse which explored extreme barbarity and the need and the effort to civilize. That is, white America, in particular those flocking to see Barnum's exhibition, found a stand-in for its own race-relations in the aftermath of the Civil War and in light of on-going Indian Wars in the west. With regard to official policy toward its indigenous inhabitants, the assimilationist gesture of the civilizing mission gave Americans further justification to remake its own "savage" inhabitants, to gain leverage through land alienation and the process of reacculturation systematized through regulated farming, religious and educational practices.

Michael Rogin theorizes that such moves by nineteenth-century white Americans were attempts to subdue the primitive, oral and aggressive bad child. He explains that in the white fantasy, Indians—not unlike the Fiji cannibals—"were always "maddened,' and their aim was the total extermination of the whites. Indians tortured and dismembered their enemies; scalping of corpses and other mutilations received prominent attention. Indian rage was oral; the aborigines were cannibalistic and had a 'thirst for blood.'" But this unrestrained oral rage was unacceptable to the white fantasy which presumed that whites had progressed to the anal stage, to an ordered world of rules and

reabsorbed into the mythological system, which is itself modified by the incorporation of the new material" (176).
restraint. Since in the white fantasy Indians "remain[ed] in
the oral stage, sustained by and unseparated from mother
nature," Rogin says, [t]hey [we]re at once symbols of a lost
childhood bliss and, as bad children, repositories of
murderous negative projections. Adult independence wreak[ed]
vengeance upon its own nostalgia for infant dependence. The
Indian's tie with nature [needed to] be broken, literally by
uprooting him, figuratively by civilizing him, finally by
killing him."

But white fantasy occludes its own ideological
practices, failing to see that its moves are simply in the
name of order, and, in actuality, are competitive,
aggressive, and oral counter-actions. Such practices, I would
argue, are a ritualized and bureaucratic means of
incorporating the Other into a national and homogenous
national body. Just as the practice of cannibalism among
Fijians enacted a discourse that helped to establish and
demarcate the borders of foreign/indigenous, in-group/out-
group, so did the discourse in America about Fijian
cannibalism. It operated coterminously with official

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"Liberal Society and the Indian Question." Ronald Reagan, the
Movie and Other Episodes in Political Demonology, 148, 138. The
genocide of Native Americans is beyond comprehension. Ward Churchill
says that at the turn of the century, only "237,196 native people were
recorded by census as still being alive within the United States,
perhaps 2 percent of the total indigenous population of the U.S. portion
of North America at the point of first contact with Europeans.
Correlating rather precisely with this genocidal reduction in land
holdings to approximately 2.5 percent of the 'lower 48' states" Struggle
for the Land, 47.
government policy toward indigenous people--recognized by law as members of sovereign nations--and participated in the already existing myth of Manifest Destiny. For fifty cents admission to Barnum's production of "Fiji Cannibals," the democratic masses could have this version of Manifest Destiny bestowed directly upon them: the threat of the "cannibalistic" savage, the uncontrollable non-white must be contained and forced to comply at any cost, whether it be the loss of self-sovereignty, the loss of land, the loss of culture, or, the loss, inevitably, of life.

This message would be driven into attendees' minds as they continued to stroll down the concourse of Barnum's Traveling Museum and Menagerie. As they paused in front of the exhibition of "Live Digger Indians" also on display--sent to him, no less, by the son of Brigham Young--viewers, most likely, would have been struck by sizable parallels to the Fijian cannibals. The use of the adjective "live" is interesting: would Barnum display dead Indians? Does it simply suggest such people are dying and the ones on display are anomalies? The account of the "Live Digger Indians" in the pamphlet Barnum's Living Wonders: Brief Biographical Sketch of the Living Curiosities explains, "They are but the wreck of a noble and generous ancestry."** Like the Fijians,

another lost tribe of Israel, these indigenous Americans need to be brought back to the fold of righteousness by the redeeming grace of civility. Indeed, they may have been on their way, since Barnum makes it known that they were. The pamphlet explains, "no class or race of men on the continent needs more sympathy from Christians and philanthropists than these aborigines of North America" (21). In order to justify the cooperation of capital and missionary investment in the cause, Barnum takes pains to explain just how serious their degradation is:

the most remarkable of this strange and degraded race of wild savage men anywhere to be found on this continent . . . . For more than half a century Christian men and missionaries have been laboring to civilize and christianize the savage races of America, but have met with little encouragement, except in rare instances. The Digger Indians is of that class of red men who are considered hopelessly and irredeemably degraded beyond all influences hitherto brought to bear to civilize them. They dig in the earth for their food, living for the most part on wild roots and herbs, of which they are very fond. They are too lazy and indolent to labor, compelling the women to do all the drudgery. (20-21)

Without skill, these Indians are neither hunters nor agrarians, rooting like animals for whatever they can find. They are in dire need of training as farmers, but, even with such programs, it seems, worst of all, they lack the necessary American work ethic. Without such, can they ever be redeemed?

While Barnum's descriptions discuss the Digger Indians in plural terms, there was only one on display. Again, the
synecdochal strategy of collecting is clear: in this case, one person can stand in for an entire people. But this substitution synecdochally expands beyond the mere substitution of one individual for one Indian nation since American sensibilities, even today, fail to differentiate between the very distinct ethnicities of each distinct Indian nation. Thus, the narrative of the Digger Indians—enacted by the display of one lone Indian—propped up in part by a coterminous rhetoric about Fiji cannibalism, gets refigured in the popular imaginary as an authoritative portrait of indigenous peoples." The forked-tongue of Barnum suggests viewers should extend their sympathy to the Digger Indian, but it is a sympathy for his degraded state, for his irredeemability, for his imminent demise.

Gardenhire in similar ways, after touting the settlement throughout Fiji and Central Polynesia by "the Anglo-Saxon and Germanic race," "the same all-absorbing people, impelled toward the young nations of the south by the restless spirit of democracy," alludes to the fate of both the indigenous inhabitants of North America and native Fijians at the end of his document:

The aborigines of North America, Australia, and New Zealand, obedient to a mysterious law, have

''By 1874-5 Barnum added a "scene" to his traveling show called "Indian Life on the Plains. In a letter to Mark Twain, he explains that at the end of the scene "The Indian camp is surprised by Mexicans, and then ensues such a scene of savage strife and warfare as is never seen except upon our wild Western borders." P.T. Barnum: The Legend, 251."
perished on first contact with that race to whom is
cnfided the great colonizing mission . . . In the
salubrious climate of Fiji European children thrive
well, and the native population is doomed to the
melancholy fate of the aboriginal inhabitants of
those countries where the sons of Japhet have
settled, without having to encounter the heat of
the tropics, or the ancient races of the old world.
(31)

Given the unfortunate odds of surviving a colonial incursion,
as he admits has been evidenced in the Americas, the Fijians
are on a downward spiral. Moreover, Gardenhire suggests,
given the opportune climate of the islands and the hardy
stock of European children who will prosper and multiply, the
Fijian have been handed a death warrant. With the prospect of
genocide on the horizon, Gardenhire writes, "There is
something grand in the contemplation of the progress of the
Anglo-Saxon race in the United States and Australasia [sic]"
(31). He continues this apostrophe to white supremacy by
wrongly speculating that Fiji would soon break away from its
ties to England and "would take a proud position among the
nations of the world as a republic second only to the United
States--which is now acknowledged to be the model of
nations--with her long railroads, big steamships and broad
prairies" (31). Of interest, of course, is the doubling-
effect of substituting one country for another. This
narrative also sheds some interesting light on the American
nation. If there are parallels between the two, then he is
similarly suggesting its flipside, that its prosperity is due
to the great colonizing mission of the Anglo-Saxon and
Germanic races and, according to a mysterious natural law, the demise of its aboriginal inhabitants.

What has become clear in the various sections of this chapter and the last, I would hope, is that great pains were taken to construct "authentic" notions of extreme barbarity. In these various accounts, Christianity and Western, capitalist involvement/investment in the region were offered as means by which to civilize the savage, but ultimately, according to these accounts, the cannibal impulse--cast as extreme savagery or more mundanely in terms of deceit--could never fully be eradicated. This narrative of Fiji served several important functions for post-Civil War Americans, and continued to do so beyond this era. As I alluded to earlier, Barnum continued to display the "Fiji Cannibals" through the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in the "Congress of Nations" and well into the 1890s' reincarnation of Barnum (Barnum died in 1891) under the auspices of Barnum and Bailey's "Ethnological Congress," which took the impulse to collect representative "human types" to new extremes. But Barnum was not alone in these endeavors. Attempting to capitalize on Barnum's brand of success, dime museums began to appear on every street corner of large urban centers. Robert Bogdan establishes that "starting in the 1870s dime

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museums proliferated, reaching their peak in the 1880s and 1890s. They operated from coast to coast, and any decent-sized city had one. New York City was the dime museum capital, however. One New York "museum," the American Dime Museum, in 1885 displayed Fiji Jim and his wife. Writing about the phenomenon of dime museums for *The Atlantic Monthly*, J. G. Wood, a self-described Englishman, focuses on the couple's stately, well-formed visages and figures; describes, not surprisingly, the Fijians' strange hair; and then characteristically segues into a discussion of the tainted history of their people and their impending extinction:

> It seems a pity that this fine race should perish, but it has been gradually dwindling away ever since the white man set foot upon the island group of Viti, and before many years have elapsed the Fijians will have passed from the earth as completely as the Tasmanians. . . . It is a benevolent dream to think that education can elevate any savage race to the level of the white man, and the Fijians must yield to the beneficently inexorable law which compels a lower race to give way to a higher. So, having this fact in my mind, I was very glad to see examples of this splendid but doomed race, and felt that I owed an obligation to the Dime Museum.

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91 Bogdan, 35

92 Bogdan says that Fiji Jim and his wife, in reality, Ruto and Annie Semm, were brought in 1877 to the U.S. by a circus agent who promised them tremendous earning potential, and after being abandoned by him, joined Barnum's circus before eventually working the network of dime museums and amusement parks (183).

When these seemingly heterogeneous issues—among, other things, cannibalism, Fiji, museums and collections, U.S. government Indian policy, missionaries, assimilation, civility, emergence of interstitial political subjects—are examined alongside one another, a fairly homogeneous and hegemonic discourse emerges. Having examined the construction of discourse in detail, it seems important to recognize subcutaneous aftershocks which find their kinship with or origin in moments such as the epiphenomenon this chapter has attempted to sift through.

Such processes increased efforts mandating Indian "cooperation" in the guise of assimilation/civilization so as to incorporate as much Indian land as possible. This most famously culminated in the narrow-minded haughtiness of Custer's Last Stand during the centennial year of 1876. But generalized hubris gave way to formal legislation in 1887 through the Dawes Act which across the board eliminated tribal entitlement to land and which allotted sections of land to individual Indians; a systematic means of stripping Indians of land and livelihood, the act required that the balance of land be put to auction so as to feed the voracious land hunger of white Americans.4 By the time such policies were reversed in the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, Janet

4 Such legislation relied on narrow definitions of "Indian." and definitional narrowing over the years further winnowed the number of Native Americans eligible for such allotments.
McDonnell calculates, "the Indian estate dwindled form 138 to 52 million acres," and "the government had allotted 118 our of 213 reservations and brought over three-fourths of the Indians under the provisions of the Dawes Act." Fascinated by the "American War for the West," in the 1880s and 1890s, Americans flocked to Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West shows in which Native Americans, veterans of battles with U.S. Cavalry reenacted a simulacrum of such battles. It come as no surprise that Barnum wanted a cut of the action and in 1888 made efforts to acquire Sitting Bull's "services" to tour with his exhibition (see appendix).

But this battle to delineate the borders between white and non-white, and the refusal to incorporate non-white peoples, had its parallel in the South under Reconstruction. Before the formal end of Reconstruction in 1877, there existed an unlegislated, yet systematic means of alienating or attempting to alienate African-Americans from land, capital, culture and the Constitutional right to full citizenship. This took the most visible form in the lynching campaigns against black men who were accused of raping white women. Trudier Harris calculates that in the space of 1882 to 1927, there occurred 4951 lynchings in the U.S. About this

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reign of terror, Robyn Wiegman suggests that it "provided the means for defining and securing the continuity of white supremacy. The rise of black lynchings in the years following the war is indicative of a broader U.S. attitude toward African-American entrance into the political order: greeted by a few as the manifestation of a liberal ideal, 'freedom,' even for those literally enfranchised, was far from the reigning social reality." Abandoned by Republicans after the dismantling of Reconstruction, and left adrift by Supreme Court rulings, African-Americans were both literally and economically disenfranchised by the lack of constitutional rights and the limited access to capital.

It has been the story of the "Fiji Cannibals" which has carried us thus far. Like this narrative, the story of both Native Americans and African-Americans in post-Civil War America was one concerned with the inscription of boundaries and the constriction of borders. According to the constructed fictions I've analyzed, and according to the notions held by American culture, each group, to varying degrees was represented as unassimilable, an uncontrollable threat." Yet, ironically, in the very attempt to civilize

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97 Wiegman, 91.

99 Priscilla Wald's ideas have been useful to me. She writes, "Rhetorically, indigenous tribespeople and descendants of Africans are fashioned into monsters that fit Frantz Fanon's description of 'the real Other' whom the 'white man . . . perceive[s] on the level of the body image, absolutely as the non-sel£--that is, the unidentifiable, the unassimilable.' But the exclusion intended to foster a sense of
the unassimilable cannibal, white Americans were engaged in
an equally voracious and cannibalistic act of their own
fashioning—the pursuit of destroying their uncanny doubles
to fulfill the Colombian project of eating up as much
territory as possible, eliminating any force which might
stand in the way.

Just as the reign of lynching continued to terrorize
Blacks in the South, so did cannibal fictions—in the
tradition of Barnum—continue to map out for white Americans
a reigning sense of superiority with profound ideological
effects. In the next chapter I examine the tremendously
popular Tarzan of the Apes by Edgar Rice Burroughs, paying
particular attention to the specific means that seminal novel
imagines the cannibal through the scene of writing. Through
his reimagining of the genre of the captivity narrative in
the tradition of Typee, Burroughs tells the tale of Tarzan
who survives incorporation into an alien culture and who
succeeds, once he has found the written word, in finding his
way back to "civilization." Preoccupied with the processes

homogeneity among white Americans ironically raises the more dramatic
specter of the status of any "American" self without the already tenuous
cultural identity. White America could see its own alterity, or
alienation, reflected in the fate, and often quite literally in the
face, of the racialized other." "Terms of Assimilation: Legislating
Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease (Durham: Duke UP, 1993) 65; Frantz Fanon
in Black Skins, White Masks, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York:
of civilizing, like those detailed in this chapter, the novel also heroicizes the exploits of this powerful white man, who, at one point, spectacularly thwarts the practices of cannibalistic Black Africans by lynching them.
Squatting upon his haunches on the table top in the cabin his father had built—his smooth, brown, naked little body bent over the book which rested in his strong slender hands, and his great shock of long, black hair falling about his well shaped head and bright, intelligent eyes—Tarzan of the apes, little primitive man, presented a picture filled, at once, with pathos and with promise—an allegorical figure of the primordial groping through the black night of ignorance toward the light of learning.

---Tarzan of the Apes

[A scene repeated over and over in nineteenth century literature—a scene that inaugurates a literature of empire]: in "the wild and wordless wastes of colonial India, Africa, the Caribbean, the sudden, fortuitous discovery of the English book. It is, like all myths of origin, memorable for its balance between epiphany and enunciation. The discovery of the book is, at once, a moment of originality and authority. It is, as well, a process of displacement that, paradoxically, makes the presence of the book wondrous to the extent to which it is repeated, translated, misread, displaced.

---Homi K. Bhabha, "Signs Taken for Wonders"

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2 The Location of Culture (New York: Routledge, 1994) 102.
Again Clayton essayed speech with the ape man; but the replies, now vocal, were in a strange tongue, which resembled the chattering of monkeys mingled with the growling of some wild beast. No, this could not be Tarzan of the Apes, for it was very evident that he was an utter stranger to English.

--- Tarzan of the Apes

The first epigraph, desperately breathless, comes from the seventh chapter of Burroughs' 1914 American classic. Titled "The Light of Knowledge," this chapter marks the moment when Tarzan returns to the cabin which, unbeknownst to him, had once belonged to his parents. During an earlier visit he had discovered a store of mysterious, wondrous books, but was unable to fathom their purpose. After successfully fighting the bull-gorilla Bolgani, using a knife he had earlier pilfered from his parents' belongings, Tarzan returns to the wondrous sight/site for more. It is no accident that the violent weapon and the discovered English books—both found, as Homi Bhabha would point out, in the wordless, textless, heart of dark Africa, or in the black night of ignorance, as Burroughs himself puts it—are conjoined. The weapon, itself a sign of civilization, of human order, succinctly and efficiently shifts the balance of jungle power, destabilizing jungle hierarchies. That the weakest of the jungle Apes—just a lowly English boy—could fell the unconquered bully gorilla is wondrous after all. But as much as Burroughs is preoccupied with Tarzan's apprenticeship with weaponry—

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3 TA 127.
particularly spears, nooses and bows and arrow—he seems more concerned with arming his character with literacy, the skills of reading, writing, and inevitably, speaking first French and then English. Just as the pilfered weapon dismantles the intact hierarchies of the jungle, so does the secret--uncovered/recovered?--knowledge of the written word. Unlike the knife, though, this knowledge both literally and figuratively returns Tarzan to his origins, to civilization and to the errand of the white man's burden.

In the epigraph which opens this chapter, Burroughs begs his readers to view Tarzan's act of reading allegorically: the primitive, uncultured being, raised among beasts, yearns for knowledge, emblematized as the light of day. It's no coincidence that the author reminds his reader that this scene takes place in the cabin built by the boy's father. Tarzan is being exposed to the canon--the house of literature--of western learning. In this mise-en-scene, that he doesn't yet know how to properly use a table and chair, and, hence, lacks culture, is duly noted. Noteworthy, too, in this scene is his uncivilized and disheveled appearance: naked little body, great shock of long, black hair, his brown (un-white) skin. Not the everyday appearance of the proper English heir. What saves Tarzan from the meaningless, purposeless grasping of his primordial surrogate Ape family, though, is "his well shaped head and bright, intelligent eyes." Burroughs physiognomically asserts Tarzan's racial
superiority. Equally undeniable is his gender—perhaps not entirely “a man” in western terms, a homunculous, of sorts—signaled by the phrase, “little primitive man.” The repetition of the pronoun “his” six times in the first clause, before the subject of the very long sentence is named, also reiterates how his masculinity is bound up with the quest for knowledge. It is a potentially pathetic scene, for in Burroughs’ logic it is sad to see someone, whose heredity should expose him to the book, forever blocked from discovering its wonders. But, for the narrator, the moment is full of promise, too, for someone of Tarzan’s superior stock might overcome any obstacle, even the stumbling block of illiteracy and lack of teachers. Tarzan experiences the epiphanic moments referred to by Bhabha in the second epigraph quoted at the chapter’s opening. More than simply learning to piece together the ordered randomness of the letters—“bugs” in his lexicon—and match up words to concepts and things, Tarzan eventually comes face to face with the ideologies of white masculinity and the European brand of civilization supported by it. The appearance of the book and the subsequent scenes of reading and writing—all absurd and tellingly unrealistic—ultimately assert the dominating authority of western order, of Empire.

In a book written in English by an American in 1912 about an era twenty-odd years before its publication, during the height of British Imperialism and during the escalation
of the United States' own empire-building, it is not surprising that the appearance of the English book would simply reestablish the authority of Imperial power. Indeed, Bhabha points out that

The immediate vision of the book figures those ideological correlative of the Western sign--empiricism, idealism, mimeticism, monoculturalism (to use Edward Said's term) --that sustain a tradition of English 'cultural' authority. They create a revisionary narrative that sustains the discipline of Commonwealth history and its epignone, Commonwealth literature. The conflictual moment of colonialist intervention is turned into that constitutive discourse of exemplum and imitation, that Friedrich Nietzsche describes as the monumental of 'gifted egoists and visionary scoundrels'.

What Bhabha describes is true to a large extent in *Tarzan of the Apes* and will be a useful frame of reference for understanding the reasons why Burroughs may have relied--perhaps unconsciously or uncritically--on plotting devices as mechanical and absurd as they appear to current audiences.

The implied focus of this chapter is to trace the means by which the topic of cannibalism continues to operate in and upon the popular imagination forty years after Barnum toured his Fiji cannibals. If Melville's *Typee* and Rowlandson's narrative both instantiate an anxious, yet bifurcated

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4 Indeed, as Anders Stephanson points out, between 1875 and 1914, one-fourth of the world was claimed as colonies. *Manifest Destiny* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995) 72. That Americans would be interested in such phenomena is made more immediate when one considers that during roughly the same period twenty million immigrants arrived in the U.S. (Stephanson 74).

5 *Location of Culture* 105.
discourse about cannibalism and captivity, Burroughs' novel offers both an extension and refocusing of these traditions. "Tarzan" is fundamentally about the nurturing captivity of a human child by a fantastic species of primates and about this white boy's incorporation into the undeniable Otherness of a society of wild animals. Unlike the terror that visited both Rowlandson and, at times, Tommo, Tarzan is comfortable with the world that has incorporated him. Yet even this assimilation begins to undergo a crisis when he sees himself reflected in the found books in the pivotal scene already alluded to. Burroughs, particularly in his rendering of Tarzan's surrogate family, advances what appears to be a nuanced reading of culturally supported and endorsed behaviors. But in terms of cannibalistic acts of aggression, the novel for the most part lacks any explanation which relies on cultural relativism. In fact, as we will later see, nothing resembling cultural relativism is even advanced in terms of non-white human cultures; in this regard, Burroughs' employment of cannibal characters simply allows him to establish an enemy tribe, the Mbongans, as ultimate barbarians. Thus, Burroughs the author is not all that different from Melville's Happars and Typees or from Gardenhire, and Barnum. While the rendering of the sole Black African characters as cannibalistic savages is problematic and of interest, particularly in light of
Tarzan's and *Tarzan of the Apes'* tremendous popularity in the last seventy-two years, such a discussion would not carry us very far beyond the principles laid out in the first chapter.

Instead, this chapter applies pressure to the scenes of reading and writing since they set in motion several crises of identity and account for the split between textuality/literacy/civilization and orality/illiteracy/barbarity. I argue that beyond this set of parallels, Tarzan's knowledge about the morality of cannibalism comes to him via the found books. Furthermore, Tarzan's inability to merge his written and oral identities, his seeming inability to communicate like other whites, allies him with the cannibal tribe. This makes sense, since as Maggie Kilgour points out, "the image of cannibalism is frequently connected with the failure of words as a medium, suggesting that people who cannot talk to each other bite each other." Because Tarzan's physical presence and his at first unrecognizable oral expression are unconnected to the notes he has composed, Tarzan is categorized as a member of the cannibal tribe. By extrapolation, one could conclude that the absence of identifiable authorship fails to denote his

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"From Communion to Cannibalism: An Anatomy of Metaphors of Incorporation* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990) 16. Herman Melville's conception of Queequeg would also corroborate Kilgour's premise. In an early chapter of *Moby-Dick*, "The Chapel," Queequeg is the only character not absorbed in reading: "The savage was the only one who could not read and, therefore, was not reading those frigid inscriptions on the wall." *Moby-Dick* (New York: Norton, 1967) 40.
ties to western civilization and connotes his imbrication within the most barbaric of savages, the cannibals. This chapter, then, in tracing the dynamic circuit of literacy, authorship, the English book and its oppositional relationship with cannibalism, orality and illiteracy, simultaneously explores an anxiousness about the eruption of foreign elements into the homogeneous spheres of whiteness, manliness, and economic plenitude.

Since Tarzan has infiltrated our cultural consciousness in an amorphous manner, due in part to the myriad incarnations in print, film and merchandising, I will initially survey the essential elements of the narrative of Tarzan of the Apes. Next, I will briefly visit the body of critical attention given to this text (in particular Marianna Torgovnick, Eric Cheyfitz and Gail Bederman). Having

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7 I am limiting my consideration to this first novel, the originary incarnation of Tarzan for several reasons. First, the twenty-six sequel novels, the numerous adaptations in film, television, comics, radio and other merchandising campaigns make the task of analysis practically impossible. Second, while some of the later novels deal with the issue of cannibalism, in none of them does it become so clearly enmeshed within a discourse about orality and literacy. This originary moment is also important because it unsurfaces Burroughs' own anxieties about writing. Written early in his career before he was assured of economic stability, Burroughs was unsure about his status as an author. These moments in the novel reveal much about the anxieties of authorship and suggest possibilities for understanding the anxiousness attending the boundaries of low and high art. The scenes of reading and writing, furthermore, so emphasized in the first novel, are de-emphasized in later incarnations, particularly in later film adaptations which emphasize Tarzan's heroic physicality at the expense of his intellectuality (not a surprising phenomenon given the visual medium of film and given the fact that the scene of writing lacks the dramatic drive necessary to propel an action-adventure film).
established the context for my argument, I will scrutinize the presentation of cannibalism and then circle back to the discovery of the English book, the scenes of reading and writing, before finally focusing on the oral-textual split which emerges in the hybrid figure of Tarzan. Thus, I argue that the English book, supposedly an authorizing scene of western culture, initially splits under the uncanny pressures of hybridity, but ultimately is imaginatively reintegrated by Burroughs through the tenacious bonds of inherited civility. In my conclusion I will visit the scene of Burroughs' own writing to discuss the implications of the pressures of production and his consciousness about the continuum of highbrow and lowbrow literariness."

"So I give you the story": of plots and critics

Just as the figure of Tarzan struggles to reintegrate the oral and the textual, so does the narrative strategy of the

* The dichotomy of highbrow and lowbrow finds its corollary in the civilization-cannibal dichotomy. By some accounts, particularly in Burroughs' era, the lowbrow represents that which is both voraciously and irrationally produced and consumed. Lawrence Levine's illustration of the origin of the terms highbrow and lowbrow is particularly revealing. Such terms emanate from the study of phrenology and assign intellectual prowess according to the placement of the frontal brow. Not all too surprisingly—and perhaps a bit too neatly for my arguments—Levine's choice of a contemporaneous engraving (from Coombes' Popular Phrenology, 1865) to illustrate the concept features a bust portrait of the highbrow William Shakespeare and his lowbrow companion, the skull of a New Zealand cannibal chief, "deficient in [apparently a significant cranial feature] and all Intellectual Origins." Highbrow/Lowbrow: the Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1988) 222.
novel. Indeed, the novel's opening itself underscores and highlights this split. Burroughs adopts a narrative frame similar to Conrad's in *The Heart of Darkness*. For the veracity of the tale to be admitted to, the narrator claims that the tale that had been narrated to him orally necessitated textual corroboration: "the yellow, mildewed pages of the diary of a man long dead, and the records of the Colonial office dovetail perfectly with the narrative of my convivial host, and so I give you the story as I painstaking pieced it out from these several various agencies" (1). Although Burroughs manages this strategy to little effect—the narrator effectively drops out after this initial explanation—it does foreground the novel's search for self-integration and for origins of the self."

As other critics have noted, readers' delight in Tarzan stems, in part, from our always knowing who and what Tarzan is despite his and others' lack of awareness. We know from the beginning that his parents Lady and Lord Greystoke found themselves abandoned in the dark reaches of Africa after a

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For this reason Eric Cheyfitz concludes that the novel is "a romance of identity, identical in structure, significantly... to Cooper's *The Pioneers*. . . [both of which] act to literalize absolutely racial and class hierarchies (and, typically, race and class are confounded in these romances) at times when these hierarchies and their political agendas are needed to rationalize this dispossession with varying degrees of doubt. [In their naturalization of the literal] "these romances of identity seek to erase the cultural or ideological basis of racial and class identity." *Tarzan of the Apes*, American Literary History 1 (1989) 350. Unless otherwise noted, all Cheyfitz citations are from this source.

219
mutiny on ship forced them ashore. Lord Greystoke, dispatched by the British government to a colonial outpost to investigate abuses of Black British subjects by another European power, relies on his ingenuity to build a home for his wife, who, it turns out, is pregnant. She gives birth to a son, heir to the Greystoke legacy, but within a year, she succumbs to a lingering illness and Lord Greystoke soon thereafter is murdered by Kerchak, king of a tribe of apes, more advanced than gorillas and other known primates. Having just lost her own infant, Kala, a female ape, takes the baby Greystoke as her own despite her husband Tublat's objections. Her adopted child comes to be known in ape-ease as "Tarzan," meaning white skin.10 Tarzan's development is slower than that of the other young apes, and he comes to see both his skills and appearance as inferior to the apes. But as he advances in years, his inherited intellectual superiority comes to the fore and he is able to effect feats never before imagined by his ape society.

10 This fact alone heightens the importance of this novel; its enunciation of whiteness as ethnicity is remarkable given the fact that whiteness so often is constructed as the normative and natural and that all non-white Others are deviations from this norm. Tarzan, for example, does not adhere to Richard Dyer's important and interesting claim that "white power secures its dominance by seeming not to be anything in particular, but also because, when whiteness qua whiteness does come into focus, it is often revealed as emptiness, absence, denial or even a kind of death." "White," Screen 29.4 (1988): 44. This is not the case in terms of Burroughs' novel and suggests that it deserves important critical attention. See Gail Bederman below for one recent analysis which has paid particular attention to the conjunction of whiteness, masculinity and civilization.
In his early teens he encounters the cabin which once belonged to his human parents—although, of course, he never considers that Kala is not his mother—and discovers the English book and the possibilities and pleasures of reading and writing. Not long after he learns to wield a knife and to employ a noose, Tarzan vanquishes Kala's murder by lynching the murderer, the first human he encounters, a Black African, a member of the Mbongan tribe. Tarzan further advances his hunting skills by studying this human society; although intuiting a clear difference between himself and the Mbongans, he steers clear of any interaction and through subterfuge and murder steals poison-tipped arrowheads and other weaponry from them. Longing for clothing of his own after reading that clothes make a man, Tarzan steals the loincloth of one of the Mbongans whom he lynched. Furthermore, he abdicates his position as king of the apes because of his desire to find those like himself and to be once and for all free of the limiting cultural and intellectual sphere of the apes.

Once he has secreted the white phallus, Burroughs can bring other white people onto the scene. We find that a group of whites has been stranded, uncannily enough, in the same location as the Lord and Lady Greystoke, because of a mutiny on ship. Even more uncanny, the present Lord Greystoke, Cecil Clayton, Tarzan's cousin, accompanies a group of Americans including Jane Porter, her father Professor
Archimedes Q. Porter, his secretary and assistant Samuel T. Philander and Jane's servant, Esmeralda. Tarzan attempts to communicate with them, but to no avail. Nonetheless he protects them from danger, falls in love with Jane, and, in a thinly disguised allegory about miscegenation, rescues her from Terkoz and returns her to Professor Porter. Later he delivers from the cannibal fires the French lieutenant D'arnot who dispatched his forces to find the still presumed to be missing Jane; while Tarzan is gone, the Porter party returns to America despite Jane's hope that he will return before their departure. Dismayed to find them gone, he becomes the student of D'Arnot who teaches him to speak French and eventually English. It is from D'Arnot's reading of Lord Greystoke's diaries, penned in French, that Tarzan learns of his true origins. Still unsure of his origins, and desiring to find Jane in America, he first makes his way with D'Arnot to France and then to Wisconsin where Jane had retreated with her father. Once again putting into play his white masculine prowess, Tarzan, dressed in the clothes of civilization, rescues Jane from a burning forest fire and then in doubly heroic fashion—if not in a disappointing fashion for readers—relinquishes her to the one to whom she had promised herself, Cecil Clayton, the same man to whom Tarzan has secretly relinquished his birthright. If fans for some seventy-odd years have been disappointed by this ending, they were sure to find satisfaction in Tarzan of the Apes'
eventual union with Jane Porter as well as his numerous
exploits later chronicled in twenty-seven sequels.11

Despite Burroughs' death in 1950, it is unlikely that
worldwide interest in Tarzan will decline anytime soon. In
the early sixties Gore Vidal attempted to explain the renewed
interest in Tarzan: "Tarzan is a classic dream-self, able to
give the dreamer a spacious sense of mastery over a world
that, more and more, diminishes the individual. Tarzan
lives! even if we do not."12 And in the seventies a laudatory
biography by Irwin Porges painted in broad strokes a
Burroughs who was as heroic and daring as his creation,
Tarzan. Additional insight into the purpose of such a project
is made clear by two prefatory comments, one by Ray Bradbury
which outlines Burroughs' wide-reaching influence, and the
other by the author's son, Hulbert, who writes, "I never
cease to wonder at the number and diversity of minds that
have been and are still being influenced by the imagination
of Edgar Rice Burroughs. Most important, [Burroughs] is
gradually receiving the critical acclaim he was denied in his

11 Readers of the original All-Story version vigorously made
known their dissatisfaction with Burroughs' ending. In the two courses
in which I have taught this novel, students quickly turn their attention
to the disappointing ending; no matter how unbelievable the rest of the
novel may be, no matter how central are some of the other
representational issues, the romantic, heterosexual coupling plot
becomes the central issue. Inevitably, after discussion, my students
agree that despite their dissatisfaction, Burroughs hit on a successful
formula, and that Tarzan, the incarnation of manly heroicism could do no
less than adhere to the chivalric code.

lifetime. No longer is *Tarzan of the Apes* considered mere entertainment--for Tarzan is the "Naked Ape," the tribal ancestor of Marshall McLuhan."11 Recently Burroughs' seminal text has received renewed attention but not because it is considered aesthetically interesting or more than entertainment. Its phenomenal success, the means and methods by which it functioned as entertainment qua entertainment, and its prescience in binding together the issues of imperialism, gender, class and race have interested cultural, historical and literary critics.

Marianna Torgovnick's *Gone Primitive* (1990) devotes a chapter entitled "Taking Tarzan Seriously" to the phenomenon. She suggests that the sequence of Burroughs novels is one of the best places to begin to understand what modernity has at stake in its encounters with the primitive. This chapter provides a wide overview of the novels and does make mention of both Burroughs' depiction of cannibalistic Mbongans and

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11 Irwin Porges, *Edgar Rice Burroughs: the Man Who Created Tarzan* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young UP, 1975) x. Doubling of author and character are quite common in other reviews and biographies, as well. Nowhere is this more pronounced than in Robert W. Fenton's *The Big Swingers* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967). On its frontispiece is a portrait of Burroughs and Tarzan, presumably the two "big swingers." In *Tarzan and Tradition: Classical Myth in Popular Literature* (Westport, CT: Greenwood P, 1981), still clinging to the bifurcated logic of high and low, Erling B. Holtsmark works hard to recuperate Burroughs and suggests that his artistry has roots in classical art. He focuses on language, technique, animals, the hero and themes. He summarily says about language, "[I]t will become obvious that [Burroughs] is not the careless writer of popular critical fancy but rather has a remarkably accurate sense of how language can underscore or undercut the psychology of characters or add to the internal drive of the narrative" (21).
Tarzan's literacy, but Torgovnick does not link the two within the circuitry I am laying out. Her argument catalogues some of the potentially utopian moments in the first two novels which give way in later novels to the more or less hegemonic structures of masculinity, whiteness and civilization. For example, Torgovnick claims that *Tarzan of the Apes* "features scenes that dramatize confusion and contradiction about Black-white relations, about maleness, men's treatment of women."¹⁴ Torgovnick's analysis seems all too optimistic about such moments of quandary; to be sure, Burroughs does demonstrate that such behaviors and attitudes about racial and gender difference are culturally conditioned, but Tarzan's recapitulation to dominating modes of behavior suggests that he is relying on some innate, hereditary instinct about such issues.

Eric Cheyfitz's article "Tarzan of the Apes: U.S. Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century," later incorporated as a chapter in his book *The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from The Tempest to Tarzan* (1991), is one of the more interesting and complicated readings of the novel. Like Torgovnick, he pronounces Burroughs' novel and character as American through and through. He suggests that both Tarzan and the circumstances of the novel's narrative mystify and bury concerns about the

dispossession of "either colonial subjects or the working
class by the wealth-holding class--the kind of dispossession
that America's domestic and foreign policy was involved in at
the time, and is still involved in today." One of the means
by which the novel buries these concerns is through the
translating mechanism of displacement. Cheyfitz argues that
the primary cultural function of the novel is to "radically
reduce or homogenize domestic political complexities by
displacing them onto a foreign scene." In order to uncover
the buried meanings of such a novel, Cheyfitz argues for a
reading of both the repressed problem of translation and the
foreign policy of forgetfulness. In the Introduction to his
book, Cheyfitz clarifies what he means by translation:

\[
\text{We must be in translation between cultures and between groups within our own culture if we are to understand the dynamics of our imperialism. For our imperialism historically has functioned (and continues to function) by substituting for the difficult politics of translation another politics of translation that represses these difficulties.}\]

^ Cheyfitz, 349. Cheyfitz further suggests, "it is not surprising, however ironic, that a new American superhero, heir to the frontier individualism of Natty Bumppo, should be an English nobleman, epitome of the Anglo-Saxon race, John Clayton the second, Lord Greystoke, alias Tarzan of the Apes. Nor is it surprising in an age when the United States was beginning to realize the possibility of new frontiers in expansionist adventures abroad that the scene of action for this Anglo-Saxon hero would be an American wilderness displaced to a fantasized European colonial Africa. In this way Americans could savor, in the act of denying them, their own imperial ventures" (340).

^ Cheyfitz, 350

Not surprisingly, given his overarching argument, Cheyfitz focuses on the confounded identities of the oral and textual Tarzan. But, significantly, as with Torgovnick, Cheyfitz fails to connect the representation of cannibalism within his discussion of literacy, thus ignoring how the translation of the white figure of Tarzan from savage to civilized man translates an Africanist presence as illiterate and cannibal. Cheyfitz's theoretical apparatus duly supports my reading. Indeed, he writes: "this alienation of the oral from the written, an alienation in the West that becomes one rationalization of violent class and cultural hierarchies, is presented in Burroughs' romance of identity as a crux of the plot: the apparition of two Tarzans--one purely textual, the other purely physical--and their resolution into one."¹

Most recently Gail Bederman's *Manliness and Civilization* (1995) devotes a substantial section of its afterword to Burroughs' novel. Touching on many points germane to my analysis, Bederman connects the racist and misogynistic overtones of the novel to the project of civilized white masculinity:

> Combining the ultimate in Anglo-Saxon manliness with the most primal masculinity, Tarzan is violent yet chivalrous; moral yet passionate. Above all, he has a superb body. If manhood is a historical process that constructs the male body as metonym for power and identity, Tarzan's cultural work was to proclaim that 'the white man's' potential for

¹ Cheyfitz, 352.
power and mastery was as limitless as the masculine perfection of Tarzan's body.¹⁹

Thus the perfected body of Tarzan the character became the perfect vehicle through which the "ideologies of powerful manhood" might be remade. While Bederman's interests are much different from mine, she pauses on Tarzan's campaign of lynching Black African men, something other critics have been negligent in pointing out. Bederman also points out Burroughs' anthropologically erroneous attribution of Africanist cannibalism, more erroneous than his much-noted mistaken inclusion of a tiger in the jungles of Africa in the original editions. Moreover, she connects Tarzan's impulse to kill Black men with the impulse to avoid cannibalism, suggesting that according to the novel's cultural script, both were allied with "a racially superior man's inherent masculine instinct."²⁰

¹⁹ Manliness and Civilization 221. In an interesting treatment of this novel, Bederman situates it within the popular science of G. Stanley Hall's concept of racial recapitulation.

²⁰ Manliness and Civilization 225. Bederman's, Cheyfitz's and Torgovnick's arguments are the most sustained and analytically compelling of recent work on Burroughs' first Tarzan novel. Anthony Easthope in Literary into Cultural Studies (London: Routledge, 1991) devotes part of one chapter to it in his comparison of Conrad's Heart of Darkness and Tarzan. Easthope uses both texts to flesh out three main arguments for the high/low culture split; in the end, predictably, he concludes there is no more reason to study Conrad than Burroughs. David Leverenz pauses on Tarzan and places him on a continuum of endangered masculine heroes in "The Last Real Man in America: From Natty Bumppo to Batman," American Literary History 3 (1991): 753-781. Walt Morton traces the shifting nature of Tarzan through both print and media. One noticeable difference, he finds, is Tarzan's language use. In films he is mute, a dramatic deviation from the character of the novels. In sum, Morton says, "The films borrow from the conventions of theatre melodrama to present a mute Tarzan, offering the audience the wish-fulfillment of
While Bederman, Cheyfitz and Torgovnick have made important analyses of Burroughs' seminal twentieth century novel, the management of the issue of cannibalism has only been peripherally addressed. It needs to be addressed, most basically, because it is operating in dialogue with other U.S. texts about such issues; but, even more importantly, this complexly coded and highly symbolic issue substantively reveals previously unrelated connections between the processes of writing and reading, technologies which both administered and menaced the scenes of Imperialism.

The Rites of the Dum-Dum, Man-Eating and Hereditary Instinct

Great fangs sunk into the carcass tearing away huge hunks, the mightiest of the apes obtaining the choicest morsels, while the weaker circled the outer edge of the fighting, snarling pack awaiting their chance to dodge in and snatch a dropped tit-bit [sic] or filch a remaining bone before all was gone. Tarzan, more than the apes, craved and needed flesh. Descended from a race of meat eaters, never in his life, he thought, had he once satisfied his appetite for animal food, and so now his agile little body wormed its way far into the mass of struggling, rending apes in an endeavor to obtain a share which his strength would have been unequal to the task of winning for him.

---Tarzan of the Apes

"You all doan mean to tell me dat youse a-goin' to stay right yere in dis yere lan' of carnivable animals when

an idyllic return to nature and the chance to abandon the civilization of writing; to see the naked ape, Tarzan revealed." "Tracking the Sign of Tarzan: Trans-Media Representation of a Pop-Culture Icon," You Tarzan: Masculinity, Movies and Men, eds. Pat Kirkham and Janet Thumin (New York: St. Martin's P, 1993) 121.

21 TA 61.
you all done got de oppahunity to escapade on dat crosier? Doan yo' tell me dat, honey."
---Esmeralda to Jane Porter,
*Tarzan of the Apes*

"What do you mean? They are not--? They are not--?"
She was thinking of what Clayton had said of the forest man's probable relationship to this tribe and she could not frame the awful word.
---Jane, pondering Tarzan's identity *Tarzan of the Apes*

I am afraid that I must definitely taboo your suggestion concerning the cannibalism of the people in the boat where Jane and Clayton are. Really, now, that is going a little bit too far.
---Burroughs' editor Thomas Metcalf in a 1912 letter

The comment of Burroughs' editor in one of the above epigraphs is telling, for it brings into clear relief the pressures of racial politics on the scene of production. It was acceptable for Burroughs to describe in glaring detail the cannibalistic rituals of the savage Mbongan tribe, yet the author was lacking all restraint if he extended such prospects to the horizon of Jane Porter's white femininity.

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\(^{22}\) TA 226.

\(^{21}\) TA 210.

\(^{4}\) November 9, 1912. This letter concerns the conceived outline of Burroughs' first sequel *The Return of Tarzan*. Quoted in Porges, 148.

\(^{25}\) In this account Burroughs does avoid the actual act of cannibalism on board Jane's ship, but tension and suspense is built up by the possibility that cannibalism may well be the last resort. Metcalf's avoidance of such issues is interesting given the widespread knowledge of infamous cases of ship-bound survival cannibalism such as that of the *Medusa* immortalized in Gericault's 1819 painting, or that of the *Mignonette* in 1884, around the same period the beginning of the
To protect the integrity of white civilization—epitomized by Jane who cannot even bring herself to utter the name of such an abominable practice—such transgressive behavior had to be displaced onto a foreign entity, either an animal society or the savage Mbongan tribe. Tarzan, the perfect specimen of white masculinity—a testament to the viability of white civilization—does become acquainted with cannibalism, although he only figuratively practices it since he is distinctly different from the enemy apes which his tribe ritually consumes in revenge. Nonetheless, Tarzan does become accustomed to the cultural rituals of anthropophagy at an early age through the ritual of the Dum-Dum, wherein great earthen drums are ceremonially beaten in preparation for the feast of slain enemies from other tribes. It isn't until he has matured and come upon his biological father's weapons that he in earnest gains egress to the cannibal feast. Interestingly, his participation infuriates Tublat, leader of the apes; eventually, in protection of his mother, Tarzan kills the ape leader. If we consider that this regicide is an extension of the act of cannibalism, this scenario is reminiscent of Freud's founding moment of civilization when the father's body is cannibalized by his sons.26


26 See Totem and Taboo and Moses and Monotheism.

231
Significantly, despite his advanced intellectual capabilities, his ability to reason far beyond the logic of his ape tribe, Tarzan does not question his adopted society's ritual of incorporation.

It isn't until he is eighteen, has gained some book learning—a topic to which we'll more specifically turn our attention later in the chapter—and has come face to face with a human for the first time that Tarzan questions the received notions of his culture. Kulongo, who murdered his mother Kala, is lynched and then stabbed by Tarzan. He appropriates his enemy's feathered head-dress, copper anklet, knife and belt and then examines Kulongo's tattooing and his "sharp filed teeth," surely a pronounced sign of his voracious orality. Hungry, with the "meat of the kill, which jungle ethics permitted him to eat" before him, Tarzan is about to get down to business, when the narrator interjects, "How may we judge him, by what standards, this ape-man with the heart and head and body of an English gentleman, and the training of a wild beast?" (80). At first it seems as if the narrator will justify Tarzan's cannibalistic passion since jungle law sanctions it and since it is not all that different from the ruling passion of the

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"In an earlier scene, the narrator similarly notes, "Their yellow teeth were filed to sharp points, and their great protruding lips added still further to the low and bestial brutishness of their appearance" (71). Tarzan's co-optation of the Mbongan dress has later repercussions, of course, when he is mistaken for one of the cannibals. As is the case with Barnum's cannibals in chapter four, clothes (or lack thereof) make the savage."
Dum-Dum ritual. Burroughs' narrator, though, soon explains that Tarzan had been acculturated to believe that it is acceptable to eat his enemy, that which preyed upon him as he upon it, but that he had not been taught to believe that eating one's own kind was morally appropriate. In fact, if the thought of eating the hated Tublat had ever entered his mind, "it would have been as revolting to him as is cannibalism to us" (80). What laws ruled the hybrid subject of Tarzan, a man of good stock reared by the jungle? Do civilization's rules apply to this bifurcated subject?"

Significantly, and in accordance with my overarching argument, to bring quick closure to this issue, Burroughs invokes the authority of the English book: "Of a sudden, a strange doubt stayed his hand. Had not his books taught him that he was a man? And was not The Archer a man, also?" (80). His reading has given him a name for himself and this classificatory scheme allows him to recognize the similarity of himself and Kulonga, the Mbongan (despite his ongoing recognition of their one noticeable difference: skin color). While even this comparison does not clear up the muddied ethical waters, Burroughs is suggesting that it does insert

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Burroughs' narrator later comments, "Tarzan of the Apes was no sentimentalist. He knew nothing of the brotherhood of man. All things outside his own tribe were his deadly enemies... And he realized all this without malice or hatred. To kill was the law of the wild world he knew. Few were his primitive pleasures, but the greatest of these was to hunt and kill, and so he accorded to others the right to cherish the same desires as he, even though he himself might be the object of their hunt" (81).
such a question into Tarzan's mind for the first time. He ponders,

Did men eat men? Alas, he did not know. Why, then, this hesitancy? Once more he essayed the effort, but of a sudden a qualm of nausea overwhelmed him. He did not understand. All he knew was that he could not eat the flesh of this Black man, and thus hereditary instinct, ages old, usurped the functions of his untaught mind and saved him from transgressing a worldwide law of whose very existence he was ignorant. (80)

Tarzan's intuition is keyed into the concepts he has gleaned from the books in his parents' cabin, yet complete comprehension of such issues is still beyond him. What impels him at this point, more than anything, Burroughs' narrator makes clear, is his inherited instinct for right and wrong. His advanced Anglo-Saxon stock, that which still courses through his arteries despite close to twenty years of jungle education, encodes for him a superior morality. This Darwinian survival of the most moral is continually repeated throughout the later parts of the novel, particularly when Tarzan is faced with the rescue and protection of others like himself.

At this point, though, his abstention from anthropophagy is the culminating moment of the triumph of a civil morality. Readers are encouraged to look upon him as heroic, manly and civilized, in marked contrast to the animalistic and barbaric acts of cannibalistic revenge enacted by the apes, the Mbongans and the Black conscripts of the Belgian government. Before Tarzan's moral quandary, readers are made quite
familiar with cannibalistic humans. In addition to their dark skin color, readers are continuously reminded of the Mbongans sharp, filed teeth, further connoting their devouring passions. Before Tarzan ever encounters Kulonga or his tribe, the omniscient voice of the narrator informs readers that the Mbongans are fleeing the wanton violence of the Belgian colonial administration, the "thankless taskmasters" who forced them to gather rubber and ivory (72). During this flight, tired of the harassment by the white man's soldiers, they massacred a white officer and a detachment of Black troupes and "for many days they had gorged themselves on meat" until another regiment of Black troupes arrived to revenge their comrades. That night, "the Black soldiers of the white man had had meat a-plenty" (72). Thus, Burroughs attempts to demonstrate some semblance of motivation for such savage behavior. It is noteworthy that he ascribes retaliatory cannibalism against a colonial force interested in figuratively cannibalizing African people and land in the colonial project. Nevertheless, this inching toward some sort of cultural relativism stops short of any sustained explanation and fails to explain why the Mbongan continue to practice cannibalism once they are long out of the reach of the colonial power. Indeed, Burroughs does later suggest that what adds "to the fiendishness of their cruel savagery was the poignant memory of still crueler barbarities practiced upon them and theirs by the white officers of that
arch hypocrite, Leopold II of Belgium, because of whose atrocities they had fled the Congo Free State" (197-8) but he never delves into the symbolic or cultural motivations for exacting this particular form of revenge. Such limited explanations and the fact that Burroughs resorts to this method of characterization--one which ignores the historical anthropological reality--demonstrate how entrenched his narrative is in dominant mythologies of Africa. Indeed, in an attempt to diffuse charges of racism, his laudatory biographer Porges explains,

The obvious criticisms can be made; it is no longer possible to accept the false picture of the Negro as servile, treacherous, fiendishly sadistic, cowardly, and without loyalty or honor. But viewing him understandingly in modern times and depicting him according to assumptions, distorted and prejudiced, of earlier periods are two different matters. Burroughs, forced to devise African jungle settings continuously, accepted the popular concept of the Black native, considering him as a customary stage prop to accompany a jungle drama.  

But it is not my purpose here to label Burroughs a racist; in fact, his rather positive personal record of intercultural/racial relations might suggest otherwise. I

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Porges, 265-6.

Porges cites Burroughs' lampoon of Kipling's "White Man's Burden" written well before his publication of Tarzan: "The white man's culture brings you/The white man's God, and rum.//Take up the white man's burden; Take it because you must;//Burden of making money;/Burden of greed and lust" (72). Porges also reminds his readers of the author's time spent as a member of the 24th Infantry in Arizona: Burroughs said the Black soldiers "were wonderful soldiers and hard as nails"; about working under a Black sergeant, he said, "without exception they were excellent men who took no advantage of their authority over us and on the whole were better to work under than our
am interested, though, in analyzing the choices Burroughs made in writing the story of Tarzan. Even if we accept Porges' claim, it is weakened when we set the depiction in contrast to the portrayal of Tarzan and his extreme repudiation of cannibalism, his refusal to rescue any Black victims of cannibalism and his ready willingness to aid white victims. Such spin-doctoring also ignores the cultural work of such representations; after all, how does it counteract the imagined reality inserted into millions of imaginations? Significantly, the one African American character in the novel similarly occupies such a stage prop role, but in Esmeralda's case it is as a buffoonish, hysterical mammy, the foil to Jane's slender, beautiful and proper white womanhood. As one of the previous epigraphs suggests, like Jane, Esmeralda is unable to utter the word cannibalism, but Burroughs' version of dialect suggests that it is not propriety that keeps her from such utterances, but lack of intelligence.31

own white sergeants" (60). In writing a later non-Tarzan novel called The War Chief (1926), Burroughs claimed, "I endeavored to write the story from the viewpoint of an Apache; in fact, as though I were an Apache, and without permitting racial prejudices to influence me." Letter to General Charles King, 27 Oct. 1927, Qtd. in Porges, 427. Interestingly, Burroughs was angered when sections of this novel were cut by editors, predominantly sections which attempted to support the Indian side and which denigrated whites. He had hoped that "everything connected with their life and activity on the war trail was in the nature of religious rites, which puts a very different aspect upon their characters than if it were assumed that they were merely black hearted murderers." Letter to Joseph Bray, 1 July 1927, Qtd. in Porges, 426.

\footnote{Bederman, in stressing Jane Porter's Maryland roots, says that "as the quintessence of pure white Southern womanhood, Jane Porter is a}
But let us turn our attention to chapter twenty-one, "The Village of Torture," where the cannibal portrait is most clearly drawn during D'Arnot's captivity by the Mbongans. Maggie Kilgour's presupposition, mentioned earlier, that cannibalism exists where words are less effective than the mouth, is nowhere made more explicit than in this chapter. By this point, Tarzan has become a regular visitor to the Mbongan's village, steals their weaponry, plays pranks to instill fear and awe, continues to lynch Black men whenever necessary and passively watches when other captive Blacks are cannibalized. Just as he makes no effort to intervene, he makes no effort to communicate verbally or in writing despite his by-now advanced literacy skills. If the Africans speak at all, neither Burroughs' narrator nor Tarzan makes specific note of it: instead, we see them wailing, screaming, or waving their arms or spears. Why doesn't Tarzan write to the Mbongans? This point may seem ludicrous given the dichotomous nature of the worlds that Burroughs has constructed, but this question becomes a serious one (and underlines the author's racist, imperialist project) when one realizes that Tarzan doesn't hesitate for one second before

perfect mate for a one-man lynch mob like Tarzan" (227). Esmeralda is given such ridiculous dialogue throughout the entire novel. If her character is redeemed in any way it's that the hyper-intellectual speak of Professor Porter and his assistant Philander is more gibberish than her malapropisms. Interestingly, in teaching this novel, several students have brought to my attention that certain reprints of the novel feature bowdlerized dialogue, consistent with the other characters' speech.
scrawling a message to the whites who have ransacked his house. If he intuits that language/writing is a product of humans, why does he refrain from using it with other humans? If the binary opposite of textuality is orality, then the Africans of Mbonga's tribe in their extreme orality--cannibalism--are alienated from the English book, from all that it connotes, the power that it bestows. Burroughs seems to be suggesting that \text{WRITE} = \text{WHITE} = \text{CIVILIZATION}.

Moreover, he suggests that Tarzan senses an inherent connection between the written word, the self-created English book and whiteness; he intuits that writing is a means of communication between white humans, not just between paper and reader.

What brings D'Arnot to the village of torture? On their search for the missing Jane, D'Arnot's party is ambushed by a group of Black warriors, D'Arnot is taken captive, and soon thereafter begins for the French officer what Burroughs describes as "the most terrifying experience which man can encounter upon Earth--the reception of a white prisoner into a village of African cannibals" (197). He is tied to the great post, his clothing is ripped from him, and women and men beat at him with sticks and tear at his flesh "with claw-like hands" (198). The village women are dispatched to gather up water and cooking pots, and others start lines of fires as "the balance would be slowly dried in strips for future use, as they expected the other warriors to return
with many prisoners" (198). Quite clearly the Mbongans straddle the boundary between nature and culture, clawing animal-like, but processing and storing foodstuffs in an organized manner. Burroughs, in his fabrication of cannibal Africans, has fused sustenance cannibalism with ritual cannibalism, a dubious combination by most, if not all, anthropological accounts. In delirium, D'Arnot watches their activities as they begin to encircle him in their dance of death—not too unlike the dance of the apes during the Dum-Dum ritual: "The bestial faces, daubed with color—the huge mouths and flabby hanging lips—the yellow teeth, sharp filed—the rolling, demon eyes—the shining naked bodies—the cruel spears. Surely no such creatures really existed upon earth—he must indeed be dreaming" (198). As before, the readers' attention is drawn to their gaping, threatening mouths.

Not too surprisingly, just as our attention has been sharply focused on impending, horrifying violence, Tarzan saves D'Arnot from the brink of death. He races through the jungle toward the Mbongan village, having deduced that they had been the cause of the distant shots he had heard. He knew also that their captives could be found by the great post:

Many times had Tarzan seen Mbonga's Black raiding parties return from the northward with prisoners, and always were the same scenes enacted about that grim stake, beneath the flaring light of many fires... [but] Tarzan had looked with complacency upon their former orgies, only occasionally
interfering for the pleasure of baiting the Blacks; but heretofore their victims had been men of their own color. Tonight it was different--white men, men of Tarzan's own race--might be even now suffering the agonies of torture in that grim, jungle fortress. (199)

Tarzan reaches the clearing of the Mbongan's village in the nick of time. "Tarzan knew their customs. The death blow had not been struck. He could tell almost to a minute how far the dance had gone" (200). Thus, there has been reason for his close scrutiny in the past; his previous inaction is now authorized by his present know-how. Tarzan effects his rescue, of course, through the spectacle of lynching. Burroughs' sustained, page-long description fetishizes and glorifies Tarzan's triumphant rescue of D'Arnot: "As the writhing body of the Black soared, as though by unearthly power, into the dense foliage of the forest, D'Arnot felt an icy shiver run along his spine, as though death had risen from a dark grave" (201). Soon after, the Black man's body comes crashing to earth and immediately after him "came a white body, but this one alighted erect" (201). This description aptly and accurately sums up the racial politics of Burroughs' novel: before the white man can succeed in a foreign land, firmly planting his feet and making life safe for other white women and children, he must supersede the non-white Other.

During the time when Tarzan is rescuing and nursing D'Arnot back to health, the remainder of the French
lieutenant's troops and several of the men from the Porter party, including Clayton, attempt to find the missing man. Finding several Mbongans wearing remnants of his clothes, they fear the worst, and assume his cannibalization. When Jane wonders about the continuing absence of her forest god (Tarzan to the readers, but "the forest god" to all of the characters who cannot resolve his identity with the Tarzan who composes the written notes), it is suggested to her by others that perhaps he is a member of the cannibal tribe. But, before the confusion of this confounding moment can be fully understood, it is necessary to first return to the scenes of reading, writing and the English book.

The English Book: Learning to Read the World

What the English book means to western civilization can be understood in the early chapters of the novel when Alice and John Clayton, Lady and Lord Greystoke, are first stranded. It is clear that the Greystokes have brought their own corner of England with them, and in no case is this more true than in regards to their library and study. To pass the time, In leisure Clayton read, often aloud to his wife, from the store of books he had brought for their new home. Among these were many for little children--picture books, primers, readers--for they had known that their little child would be old enough for such before they might hope to return to England. (28)
This passage makes clear the way that the book brings England to the wilderness, the essential uses to which it can be put in raising a proper English family, and, moreover, the essential connections between the acts of writing, reading, and speaking/orality. It is those who possess the wonderfully magical texts—and engage in the seemingly indecipherable act of reading—who maintain power and control in the inky darkness of the illiterate wilds (or such is the nightmare vision of Burroughs, a vision of his own personal heart of darkness).

Burroughs uses Tarzan's discovery of his parents' cabin as a means of distinguishing him from the other members of his ape tribe. The other apes are not as intrigued by the abandoned cabin as is Tarzan; it is his hereditary instinct which fuels his desire. To him, "the closed and silent cabin by the little land-locked harbor" was "always a source of never-ending mystery and pleasure" (45). Here Burroughs corroborates Bhabha's remarks that the English book is emblematic of "signs taken for wonders."

It's more than possible, of course, to see the cabin itself as a metaphor for the English book—locked, silent, closed, containing mysteries, possible pleasures. Indeed,

He would peek into the curtained windows, or climbing upon the roof, peer down the Black depths of the chimney in vain endeavor to solve the unknown wonders that lay within those strong walls.

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"Signs" 102.
His little childish imagination pictured wonderful creatures within, and the very impossibility of forcing entrance added a thousandfold to his desire to do so. (45)

Burroughs seems to suggest that Tarzan is genetically predisposed to desire entry into this western-style abode, and that he possesses the remotest of ideas, an ancestral yearning to read, to see other worlds through the wonders of the English book. Books are meant for him, are something for him alone to decipher. When his ape tribe moves further from his ancestral cabin, Tarzan periodically returns to read his books:

He longed for the little cabin and the sun-kissed sea--for the cool interior of the well built house, and for the never-ending wonders of the many books. . . [His surrogate Ape family could not] understand aught of the many strange and wonderful dreams that passed through the active brain of their human kind. So limited was their vocabulary that Tarzan could not even talk with them of the many new truths, and the great fields of thought that his reading had opened before his longing eyes, or make known ambitions which stirred his soul. (101)

Advanced beyond the intellectual capabilities of his Ape tribe, Tarzan seeks kinship and a sense of common ground with the written word in a room of his own.

Beyond his own personal interest in reading, and after he pens his initial notes to the Porter party, Tarzan also comes to see that other white people share the pleasure of reading and writing: Clayton is "engrossed in reading one of Tarzan's books," and Jane is "writing at Tarzan's own table" (157). If this is the way of white civilization, on his own,
Tarzan has arrived at his birthright. Indeed, while Tarzan contemplates the writing Jane, he thinks, "There was the girl. How beautiful her features! How delicate her snowy skin!" (158). He later steals what she has written—Burroughs once again reminds us that it was "the beautiful white girl" who wrote it—reads it, and appends his name. Through the circuitry of the English book, Tarzan has inherited the instinctive desire for Jane.

How he acquired this and other notions in reading the English book bears some looking into. In his parents' cabin, Tarzan comes upon a cupboard filled with brightly colored pictures, a child's illustrated alphabet:

- A is for Archer.
- Who Shoots with a bow.
- B is for Boy.
- His first name is Joe.

At ten years old the pictures intrigue him, but as Burroughs explains, the little letters of the alphabet, "he knew not what they might be, nor had he any words to describe them" (47), and "Of course he had never before seen print, or never had spoken with any living thing which had the remotest idea that such a thing as a written language existed, nor ever had he seen anyone reading. So what wonder that the little boy was quite at a loss to guess the meaning of these strange figures" (48).

But he does discover in the pages familiar images. He sees a snake and his enemy the lioness; he sees little
monkeys, although he never sees members of his own Ape tribe. Over the following weeks, months and years, Tarzan returns to a room of his own and teaches himself to read since the books "seemed to exert a strange and powerful influence over him, so that he could scarce attend to aught else for the lure of the wondrous puzzle which their purpose presented to him" (53). It is during one of these moments of reading that he first encounters his own image, another small white ape like himself, although one wearing strange colored fur (clothes). The same three bugs, B-O-Y, appeared each time he saw the picture of himself, and slowly he "learned to read without having the slightest knowledge of letters or written language" (54). Thus, reading becomes a seminal site of identification in the domain of the novel, a means of sorting through and defining who Tarzan, the adolescent boy-ape, thinks he is. Tarzan comes to understand that he is like the boy in the picture book, that white hairless apes like himself are called "B-O-Y." He discovers other humans in his books before he ever encounters one in the jungle. For example, his picture book brings him face to face with an African archer, and although he recognizes him as man, he notes their profound difference. When he does first see Kulonga, his mother's assassin, he has this reaction: "His books had portrayed the negro but how different had been the dull, dead print to this sleek and hideous thing of ebony,
pulsing with life" (76). Print may not accurately portray reality; nevertheless, it extends to him a taxonomy that demarcates difference.  

In addition to expanding his lexicon, reading acculturates Tarzan and brings him closer to the ways of western civilization and to his rightful inheritance. Reading sparks Tarzan's hereditary instinct, thereby enabling him to overcome the limitations of his upbringing and environment.  

Furthermore, to use the theoretical language of Pierre

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' If one were to apply logic to this illogical situation, quite likely skin color would not be the most immediate marker of difference; more likely it would be the relative absence of hair, about which Tarzan had great anxiety, and something which would closely align Tarzan and Kulonga. Robyn Wiegman's chapter, "Visual Modernity," in American Anatomies, traces the long-entrenched cultural history of color as the reigning signifier of race, an element that now appears to naturally enunciate racial difference.

' In an essay, "The Tarzan Theme," Burroughs explains that he was interested "in playing with the idea of a contest between heredity and environment . . . [I threw an infant child] into an environment as diametrically opposite that to which he had been born as I might well conceive . . . As I got into the story I realized that the logical result of this experiment must have been a creature that would have failed to inspire the sympathy of the ordinary reader, and that for fictional purposes I must give heredity some breaks . . . I do not believe that any human infant or child could survive a fortnight in such an African environment as I described in the Tarzan stories, and if he did, he would develop into a cunning, cowardly beast, as he would have to spend most of his waking hours fleeing for his life. He would be under-developed from lack of proper and sufficient nourishment, from exposure to the inclemencies of the weather, and from lack of sufficient restful sleep." The Writer's Digest June 1932, Qtd. in Porges, 135. More humorously, Burroughs also said, "When I first conceived the story, that is what he started out to be [a modern person of high birth raised by apes]; but the more I thought about it, the more convinced I became that the resultant adult would be a most disagreeable person to have about the house. He would probably have B.O., pink toothbrush, halitosis and athlete's foot, plus a most abominable disposition; so I decided not to be honest, but to draw a character most people could admire." Interview (Nickerson). Radio Station KFMB, 3 Sept 1940, Qtd. in Porges, 135-6.
Bourdieu, it gives him a reinvigorated sense of western habitus, a set of dispositions to act, live, believe in a particular way.15

Through reading, Tarzan inculcates the dispositions of western regimes of knowledge. This has already been demonstrated in an earlier section when he is visited by an overwhelming sense that eating other men is wrong, an ethics he has intuited from his readings. Moreover, he learns that nakedness should be clothed. At first this desire emanates from his long-standing desire for hair, having grown up hairless among an ape tribe where hirsuteness was the standard of beauty. But he also learns from reading that clothing could be a marker of superiority:

At the bottom of his little English heart beat the great desire to cover his nakedness with clothes for he had learned from his picture books that all men were so covered, while monkeys and apes and every other living thing went naked. Clothes, therefore, must be truly a badge of greatness; the insignia of the superiority of man over all other animals, for surely there could be no other reason for wearing such hideous things. (65)

This yearning actually promotes his need to hunt the lioness to procure her hide so that he may fashion some clothing. Since he is unsuccessful in processing the hide, Tarzan must resort to pilfering the loincloth of a Black man he kills. To be sure, a fashion lesson in race-relations. Of course the

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orchestration of Tarzan's dress primarily assuages the fears of a prudish readership (and perhaps a prudish author). Within hours of stealing this loincloth, he comes upon the Porters stranded on the beach. With Tarzan matured, the white phallus needs to be secreted in order to maintain its authority, and what would be more appropriate than stealing this screen (loincloth) from the Black man?

Later, when Tarzan is demonstrating his powerful masculinity in rescuing Jane from the ape Terkoz, he once again relies on his book learning to establish the grounds for appropriate behavior. When Jane seems repulsed by Tarzan's rude advances--grabbing and smothering her with kisses—he recognizes that though this may be the way of the jungle, it is not the way of men. Speaking gets them nowhere since Tarzan cannot speak English, but upon reflection he "recollect[ed] all that he had read of the ways of men and women in the books at the cabin. He would act as he imagined the men in the books would have acted were they in his place" (186). For Tarzan to act like a proper man, he has to adhere to the proscriptions of masculinity enunciated by the book. After spending the remainder of the day with Jane, "in every fiber of his being, heredity spoke louder than training . . . He had not in one swift transition become a polished gentleman from a savage ape-man, but at last the instincts of the former predominated, and over all was the desire to please the woman he loved, and to appear well in her eyes"
(190). The book may not have instantly created a self-fashioned courtier, but it serves as the catalyst which propels Tarzan beyond his jungle-upbringing.16

What has become clear in Burroughs' absurd rendition of Tarzan's learning to read--and which will become equally manifest in the next section on writing--is that the skills of literacy operate to instantiate cultural regimes of knowledge. Literacy is not a set of neutral skills devoid of ideological underpinnings. As Brian Street explains, "Literacy, of course, is more than just the 'technology' in which it is manifest... It is a social process, in which particular socially constructed technologies are used within particular institutional frameworks for specific social purposes."17

Writing Tarzan

THIS IS THE HOUSE OF TARZAN, THE KILLER OF BEASTS AND MANY BLACK MEN. DO NOT HARM THE THINGS WHICH ARE TARZAN'S. TARZAN WATCHES. TARZAN OF THE APES.
---Note posted to cabin door, Tarzan

After acquainting himself with the belongings of his parents' cabin, one day Tarzan comes upon a wealth of strange items,

16 Indeed, by the end of the novel Tarzan is elegantly dressed, speaking fluent French and English, and driving an automobile.


18 TA 115.
a number of lead pencils in a hitherto undiscovered drawer beneath the table, and in scratching upon the table top with one of them he was delighted to discover the Black line it left behind it.

He worked so assiduously with this new toy that the table top was soon a mass of scrawly loops and irregular lines and his pencil-point worn down to the wood. Then he took another pencil, but this time he had a definite object in view.

He would attempt to reproduce some of the little bugs that scrambled over the pages of his books.

It was a difficult task, for he held the pencil as one would grasp the hilt of a dagger, which does not add greatly to ease in writing nor to the legibility of the results. (55)"

In true hero fashion, Tarzan intuits that he can reproduce and produce his own words. Burroughs bewitches his readers into assuming that it's entirely natural for his character to be delighted by the magical marks he has left. Remember, of course, this is before he understands the significance of such diacritical marks. Tarzan's desire to reproduce the text is peculiar, particularly since the production of the book is entirely concealed from him—after all, how could Tarzan ever guess how books were produced? With the books' miraculous appearance in the mysterious cabin, how could

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"In another figurative example of doubling character and author, Porges describes Burroughs' first venture into writing: "What else was there to do? He began to write, the pen seeming oddly small in his heavy fingers. He bore little resemblance to the image of a writer, but there was even less in his appearance to suggest the typical businessman... Now his instincts turned him to the freedom of imagination. His pen swept across the only paper available--orange, blue and yellow sheets were mixed with white. The blue and yellow ones were old letterheads. He used the backs, shaping words hastily so that they emerged with distinctive flattened or unfinished letters. The u's, r's, m's and n's rose in vague curves above the line, the i's were barely visible, and the crossbars of the t's were dabbed in late beyond the line, out of place, like an afterthought" (1-2)."
Tarzan ever come to the conclusion that he could make his own books? Why would a "definite object" with regards to writing "come into view"? Why should he advance beyond the randomness of the scrawly loops and irregular lines? How does he know that writing comes from pencils alone, that the pencils he has found are devices for writing? Does he yet know that writing will be possible once the pencils are irreparably worn-down? Moreover, does he yet understand that writing can give expression to his own unique thoughts? Does he yet know that writing can be used to communicate, to negotiate, to perform, to control? While Burroughs brushes over such particulars, it does seem clear that writing is a pleasing, private engagement.

By the time Tarzan is seventeen, "he had fully realized the true and wonderful purpose of the little bugs. [And] no longer did he feel shame for his hairless body or his human features, for now his reason told him that he was of a different race from his wild and hairy companions. He was M-A-N, they were A-P-E-S" (56). The process of discovery includes the realization that Tarzan, himself, could recreate the series of little bugs below the figures.

4 By his own admission, Burroughs admitted his own naiveté about the publishing industry. If he had known what it entailed, he might never have sent off his manuscript.

4 Writing, in Tarzan's hands, is also a manly engagement: he grabs the pencil as he would a dagger, after all. Burroughs, anxious about his own professional authorship, is invested in masculinizing writing as much as possible.
Just as he is empowered by the information transmitted to him by the printed word, moments after Tarzan sees other white people for the first time, he demonstrates that he can empower himself by becoming the transmitter of information. When Tarzan returns to find his cabin ransacked and a large group of white people—the first he’s ever seen—disembarking from a ship anchored in the bay, he hastily composes the note included as an epigraph at the beginning of this section. He is angered that “his books and pencils strewed the floor” (113). The act of writing this note, of course, claims territory for Tarzan, a concept he obviously understands given his perfect use of the mark of possession, the apostrophe. More than this it proclaims his brute authority. Tarzan’s parenthetical description of himself is noteworthy, particularly if we remember that “Tarzan” means “white skin”: white skin is a killer of Blacks. When the group returns to the cabin they had previously ransacked, they’re puzzled by the uncanny appearance of the note. But, not too surprisingly, no one in the militant group of seamen—the men whom Tarzan intuits are despicable—is able to read the note.

42 Tarzan believes that they more or less match the descriptions he’s seen in his books, yet he also recognizes—and this is usually as close as Burroughs comes to extended cultural relativism—that they’re not all good. His first instinct is to rush forward to greet them, but their angered arguing—they’re in the midst of a mutiny—tells Tarzan “they were evidently no different from the Black men—no more civilized than the apes—no less cruel than Sabor” (112). Further allying them with the Mbongans, the narrator also notes that the “villainous appearing seamen . . . were, forsooth, a most filthy and bloodthirsty looking aggregation” (114).
This fact once again delineates how illiteracy and the lack of facility with textuality connotes barbarism.\(^4\) The ideology inherent in Burroughs' treatment of this issue, though, is deeply entrenched within American culture and literature. Dana Nelson explains,

> Early Americans constructed a view of literacy and education as powerfully enabling—literacy as currency in the New World. The Puritans had constituted literacy as a sort of moral specie, a means to proper virtue and knowledge. . . . [by the nineteenth century] Literacy continued in a tradition of evangelical Protestantism, combining notions of proper allegiance to American ideals with the inculcation of piety and virtue.\(^4\)

As I will argue in the last section of this chapter, Burroughs has personal as well as ideological reasons for inscribing the scene of writing as demarcating cultural boundaries. Our culture tends to believe that there is a clear cause-effect relationship between literacy and social class and power, as Burroughs is suggesting; but as Nelson implies, it is wise to avoid such hasty correlations, and wiser, still, to examine the socially enacted institutions of literacy. Similarly, it is wise to avoid the conclusion that the lack of print textuality or technology necessarily limits

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\(^4\) In this case, the class standing, rather than the race, of the seamen signifies their barbarity. Instead of complicating the notion of good and evil through an appeal to cultural relativity Burroughs relies on deeply entrenched stereotypes that overlook the complicated ideological reasons for their illiteracy.

\(^4\) "The Word in Black and White: Ideologies of Race and Literacy," Reading in America: Literature and Social History, ed. Cathy N. Davidson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1989) 144-145. Nelson sums up: "American beliefs about literacy have historically been about the interplay of power and knowledge, deified, reified" (153).
access to power and/or analytical reasoning." In fact, as we more specifically turn our discussion to Tarzan's split-identity in the following section, it will be clear that print technology, the apparatus of writing, does not so efficiently act as a source of authority--and this is particularly the case when pressure is applied by the uncanny force(s) of hybridity in a colonial encounter.

**Split-Subject**

Although Tarzan is unable to pronounce or speak English, he is miraculously able to transform the sound of his name in the oral ape language into the written language of the whites who descend on his encampment. His name is an important exception; in this novel, there are few instances where he is capable of such acts of translation. Early on, when he discovered new information while reading, he is frustrated by

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"See Donald Lazere, "Literacy and Mass Media: The Political Implications," Reading in America: Literature and Social History, ed. Cathy N. Davidson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1989). He briefly touches on the existence of rich, highly analytical and alternative modes of discourse available in primarily oral cultures, modes which are capable of subverting the hegemonic print mode. This is true both inter- and intra-culturally. Eric Cheyfitz also cautions against seeing writing as anything other than a cultural force and in his critique of Todorov warns against naturalizing it by "placing it in an evolutionary scheme where it is an advance over the oral tradition" (Poetics xviii). Cheyritz also discusses the opposition between metaphoric and literal in terms of the politics of intercultural communication/translation. He suggests that the literal "no doubt entails an ideology that privileges writing over the oral tradition of kinship cultures, while its figurative use for the notion of the proper has historically taken on a metaphysical force that naturalizes writing, concealing it as a technology--that is, a form of politics" (Poetics xviii).
his inability to share his knowledge with other apes because of the limitations of that language. Before he finally closes the gap between his written and spoken (or unspoken) identities, except for his name, Tarzan does not record the oral ape language in English characters. His very name, then, the meaning of which is interesting in and of itself, signals the inherent discordance between the written/textual and the spoken/oral. But just as his name loses its connotation in translation, it similarly loses its denotative capacity on the written page, further alienating Tarzan from himself. On the one hand, once he learns to read, his definition of himself is indelibly linked to the English book, which, according to Burroughs, serves as a stand-in for heredity. On the other hand, Tarzan's identity is also linked to his name. In a sense, his name is a synecdoche for his early acculturation as well as for his oral ape language, of which he has no equivalent in English until the very end of the novel.46

In this penultimate section I argue that Tarzan's estrangement from himself emanates from the written text/English book, that which was originally presumed to authorize, to mandate, to make the strange familiar. Homi

46 This split identity is mapped out on another more obvious and macro level as well. Tarzan, of course, is the true Lord Greystoke, but his assimilation into the ways of the jungle obscures this identity from him and from others. This dramatic irony fuels the narrative, to be sure, just as much as the ironic confusion surrounding the forest god and Tarzan.

256
Bhabha explains, though, the signification of the English book operates differently under the pressure of the colonial setting. Thus, the English book must be read as

a production of colonial hybridity, [and, understood as such, it] no longer commands authority. It gives rise to a series of questions of authority, [all things which] mark the disturbance of [the English book's] authoritative representations by the uncanny forces of race, sexuality, violence, cultural and even climatic differences which emerge in the colonial discourse as the mixed and split texts of hybridity.4

When the reader is a split, hybrid subject, a not-man, not-ape, a jungle denizen who is really a lord, the English book becomes hybridized, and as the "displacement of value from symbol to sign [occurs]... the dominant discourse split[s] along the axis of its power to be representative, authoritative."4 More specifically, the English language loses its power to represent, to signify, in the hands of the split-subject, causing a crisis of identification, rather than initially bringing about a discovery of origins--which, in the highly romanticized dreamworld of Burroughs, does, inevitably, occur.

At first, Tarzan doesn't write in anyone else's presence; as a result, the words he writes bear no trace of his bodily identity. This is further compounded by his inability to speak the written English words he knows. As I have previously mentioned, the Porter party thinks the person

4 "Signs" 113.
4 "Signs" 113.
who left the note--"Tarzan"--is a different man from the one who has been saving them from danger. After seeing the note for the first time, one member says, "Who the devil is Tarzan?" to which someone else replies, "Evidently he speaks English" (115). This assumption is responsible for the ensuing confusion. It's operative when Tarzan rescues Clayton:

Presently there dawned upon [Clayton] the conviction that this was Tarzan of the Apes, whose notice he had seen posted upon the cabin door that morning.

If so, he must speak English.

Again Clayton essayed speech with the ape man; but the replies, now vocal, were in a strange tongue, which resembled the chattering of monkeys mingled with the growling of some wild beast.

No, this could not be Tarzan of the Apes, for it was very evident that he was an utter stranger to English. (127)

Instead of familiarizing Tarzan, the act of writing has estranged him, made him uncanny--uncanny because he cannot speak the English he knows how to write. 49

One night Tarzan is mesmerized by the beautiful sight of Jane writing. After she falls asleep at the desk, he absconds with her letter. The following day he rises early to read the letter written by the beautiful white girl. At first he struggles to decipher the strange system of bugs, but realizes that they are "his old friends, but badly

49 Although I don't intend to make matters more complicated, in the novel the non-speaking Tarzan, the forest god, is the physically present, more familiar being. Jane refers to the hidden, writing Tarzan as uncanny. I invert this doubling because I'm using the written page/the writing Tarzan as the orienting principle, the familiar.

258
crippled" (160). The letter, long on exposition, recalls what brought Jane Porter and her party to their present residence. In reading her writing Tarzan is faced with the duality of his own identity. She writes of a "god-like white man," a "wonderful creature who rescued" them in addition to "another weird neighbor, who printed a beautiful sign in English and . . . sign[ed] himself 'Tarzan of the Apes' [but] we have never seen him, though we think he is about" (164).

Recognizing her confusion about his identity, beneath her signature he writes, "I am Tarzan of the Apes" (165) further confusing the issue of his identity since he does not recognize that his disembodied writing fails to signify his bodily reality. Enamored of her, all

his thoughts were of the beautiful white girl. They were always of her now . . . He took infinite pleasure in seeing his thoughts expressed in print-in which he was not so uncivilized after all. He wrote: "I am Tarzan of the Apes. I want you. I am yours. You are mine. We will live here together always in my house. I will bring you the best fruits, the tenderest deer, the finest meats that roam the jungle. I will hunt for you. I am the greatest of the jungle hunters. I will fight for you. I am the mightiest of the jungle fighters. You are Jane Porter, I saw it in your letter. When you see this you will know what it is for you and that Tarzan of the Apes loves you. (167)

Having established Tarzan's white manhood, Burroughs soon dispatches him to rescue Jane who is abducted by Terkoz.

While readers are certain of Tarzan's identity and can be assured of his oppositional status to the Mbongans, because of the confusion over the written notes ascribed to
"Tarzan" and the absence of clear understanding of who the forest god is (how can he be Tarzan if he cannot speak English?), the characters in the novel are not so sure. When Tarzan disappears after returning Jane, who had been previously abducted by an ape, to her father, the jealous Clayton plants a seed of doubt in the mind of his intended by suggesting that perhaps Tarzan might be a member of a Black African tribe. "'No!' she exclaimed vehemently . . . 'It could not be. They were negroes--he is a white man--and a gentleman'" (205). Presumably not bothered by her brand of racism, but obviously a bit irked by her vehemence, Clayton counters, "There are no other human beings than savages within hundreds of miles, Miss Porter. He must belong to the tribes which attacked us, or to some other equally savage--he may even be a cannibal" (205). Jane blanches at the thought and proclaims that were she a man she could genuinely tell him her opinion of his accusation.

As is the case with most things in this novel of redoubling, we return to this debate a second time, but before I turn to it, it's important to stress that questions about Tarzan's confounding identity exist because of the strange circumstances of his education. His method of learning gave rise to a bifurcated identity, a hybrid subjectivity split along the axis of textuality and orality. Were it not for this split--the written Tarzan unconnected to
the physically present forest god—these debates about
Tarzan's cannibal status would not even occur.

After Tarzan rescues D'Arnot, and during the time he
nurses him back to health, the remainder of D'Arnot's men and
Cecil Clayton set out to find the lieutenant. Believing him
to be cannibalized, they decimate the Mbongans and return to
the Porter's encampment at the Greystoke's former residence.
Clayton hints to Jane how D'Arnot met his demise: "'We do not
know what they did to him before they killed him,' he
answered, his face drawn with fatigue and the sorrow he felt
for poor D'Arnot—and he emphasized the word before" (210).
She responds, "'Before they killed him! What do you mean?
They are not--? They are not--?' She was thinking of
what Clayton had said of the forest man's probable
relationship to this tribe and she could not frame the awful
word" (210). By this point even Jane has begun to wonder
about Tarzan's attachment to the Mbongan tribe, and this
evidence is a bit too much for her. Clayton is once again
made jealous by her nervous sentimentality: "'Yes, Miss
Porter, they were--cannibals,' he said, almost bitterly, for
to him too had suddenly come the thought of the forest man.

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50 The forest god's (Tarzan's) continued absence seems to
strengthen Clayton's case against his cousin, yet the characters
absurdly ignore that "Tarzan" has not left any notes, a fact which
should more closely align him with "the forest god." This illogicality
is not noteworthy in this novel of extremes and is necessary for
Burroughs to maneuver the circuitous plot. Nevertheless, if they had
noted that "Tarzan" was one and the same with "the forest god," they
might not have debated his cannibal propensity.
and the strange, unaccountable jealousy he had felt two days before swept over him once more . . . 'When your forest god left you he was doubtless hurrying to the feast'" (210). Such comments leave Jane to ruminate; not only is her unknown forest god a member of the cannibal tribe, but his bloodlust impels him to leave all else behind, even his beloved.

In an attempt to redress his rude remarks, Clayton resorts to the civilized technology of writing: "My Dear Miss Porter: I had no reason to insinuate what I did. My only excuse is that my nerves must be unstrung--which is no excuse at all. Please try and think that I did not say it. I am very sorry. I would not have hurt you, above all others in the world. Say that you forgive me" (211). But this apology does not last for long. When the issue is later raised, Clayton employs logic to ascertain the forest god's (Tarzan's) connection to the cannibals:

[Y]et we must not overlook the fact that except for himself the only human beings within hundreds of miles are savage cannibals. He was armed precisely as are they, which indicates that he has maintained relations of some nature with them, and the fact that he is but one against possibly thousands suggests that these relations could scarcely have been other than friendly. (225)

Assuming that Tarzan's dress and equipage denote his affiliation, Clayton is blind to the fact that Tarzan may be

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51 As if these twice iterated comments were not enough, in the following chapter, D'Arnot's surviving assistant Lieutenant Charpentier ventures, "It has been suggested that the wild man may have been a member of the tribe of Blacks who attacked our party--that he was hastening to aid them--his own people" (225).
enacting his own brand of imperial politics by ransacking and killing these cannibals.

Moments before the Porter party is to set sail, Jane is still attempting to fathom the true identity of her forest god, and the reasons for his prolonged absence. Instead of seeing him as a cannibal or a member of such a tribe, and instead of imagining that he had died, she prefers to think that he is an adopted member of some other unknown savage tribe. Yet this concession summons new anxieties when she realizes that this forest god might have "a savage wife--a dozen of them perhaps--and wild, half-caste children" (230). Jane shudders at the thought of miscegenation, but hastily pens a love letter to her forest god, hoping "Tarzan" will forward it to him: "Had you come back for me, and there had been no other way, I would have gone into the jungle with you--forever" (230). While just moments before she had balked at the thought of his savage existence, through writing she can write away any cannibalistic threat. This

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52 Interestingly, as Marianna Torgovnick points out, in none of the Tarzan sequels does Tarzan ever consider marrying/coupling with a Black woman, a fact as conspicuous as his failure to write to the Mbongans or his passive observation of violent cannibalistic feasts of Black prisoners. On the other hand, in Burroughs' treatment of Jane--as in this particular novel--the threat of miscegenation is continually realized and then thwarted: often abducted by non-White men, Tarzan triumphs by protecting her white femininity.
letter makes Tarzan distraught, for he fears she loves another.51

It's important to recognize some of the implications of the circuitry which connects Tarzan's elusive identity and perceived savagery with cannibalism. Initially split by his inability to fuse his written and oral identities, Tarzan is assumed to be entirely outside of the bounds of civilization. How is this most easily figured but through the conceptualization as cannibal? White civilization's worst fears, of white men and women incorporated by an alien race, are hyperbolically reconfigured as the act of incorporation par excellence, cannibalism. This confusion emanates, as I've repeatedly shown, from Tarzan's estrangement vis-à-vis the written word. The cultural privileging of the technologies of written literacy, without consideration of the uncanny forces of the hybrid scene of reading and reception, leads to greater confusion, rather than clarity.

Unfortunately for Tarzan and Jane, the split identity of Tarzan--promulgated by the pressures heaped upon the hybrid text of the English book--is never reconciled before the Porter party sets sail. It takes D'Arnot, the lieutenant Tarzan rescues, to suture the gap between the textual and the oral. He finds Tarzan can read and write but not speak in English. When D'Arnot's attempts to speak with him fail,

51 After he had nursed her back to health, Jane whispered to him, "I love you, I love you," but her forest god did not understand English (192).
Tarzan hastens to his shelter and returns with a lead pencil and bark. He declares his identity in writing, asking whether D'Arnot can read English. Immediately D'Arnot begins speaking again, but Tarzan writes back: "I speak only the language of my tribe—the great apes who were Kerchak's... With a human being I have never spoken, except once with Jane Porter, by signs. This is the first time I have spoken with another of my kind through written words" (216). In reply to D'Arnot's query about repaying him for saving his life, Tarzan writes, "Teach me to speak the language of men" (218).

And thus, in the illogical logic of Burroughs' dreamscape, D'Arnot teaches Tarzan to speak French. Absurdly, he learns to pronounce each French word by reading it first in English, once again estranging the written from the oral. Tarzan's superior intelligence allows him to quickly, in a matter of a few days, pick up proficiency in spoken French, although he is illiterate in written French. It so happens that Tarzan's father kept a diary in French, a fact made known to readers earlier in the novel. Before meeting D'Arnot, Tarzan found that much to his sorrow and perplexity [the English dictionary] proved of no avail to him in this emergency. Not a word of all that was writ in the book could he find, and so he put it back in the metal box, but with a determination to work out the mysteries of it later on.

Poor little ape-man! Had he but known it that tiny, baffling mystery held between its seal covers the key to his origin; the answer to the strange riddle of his strange life. (88)
The plot device of having D'Arnot teach his pupil spoken French allows, of course, the author to have Tarzan's origins narrated to him, translated from the textual into the oral (since Tarzan can't read French). It is in the act of moving between the oral and textual that Tarzan discovers he is Lord Greystoke. So estranged from his origins, Tarzan doesn't at first see the connections between the Greystokes and himself. But D'Arnot notices in the margins "tiny ink-begrimed fingerprints" and that a child had "placed the seal of his tiny fingerprints upon the page of his father's diary" (239). Thus, Tarzan's legitimacy to the Greystoke legacy is proclaimed by the written word (what I have rather loosely called the English book). Through a complex circuitry of reading, writing and speaking, Tarzan fulfills the prophecy of the English book, and in the imperialist agenda of Burroughs--one ignoring the reality of a "real" hybrid text, a real English book in the wilderness--guarantees that Tarzan's birthright is revealed to him, and lays to rest any doubts about his association with the barbaric cannibal tribe.
Writing Tarzan (Revisited)

"Were I literary and afflicted with temperament I should have a devil of a time writing stories"

---Edgar Rice Burroughs54

The highbrowed gent, it seems to me, . . . Can learn a lesson from the dope/ Of lowbrow's game, of 'white man's hope'

---Normal Bean, AKA Edgar Rice Burroughs55

Let me thank you once again for your many courtesies during the period of my incursion into litrachoor.

---Disenchanted Burroughs only a year after his successful Tarzan serialization56

Earlier I suggested that Burroughs had personal motivation--in addition to the pressures of culturally entrenched ideologies--for arming Tarzan with the skills of literacy. His lack of faith in his writing abilities, the economic uncertainties of professional authorship, and a more general anxiousness about literariness quite likely influenced his decision to make the hyper-masculine Tarzan a writer. The sentiments expressed in the above epigraph are quite consistent with public statements he made about his abilities throughout his writing career. That he wrote at least

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54 This statement was made in a biography requested by William Chapman on April 13, 1914, and published in Book News Monthly, August 1918. Qtd. in Porges, 191.

55 "Look on this Picture," a humorous poem comparing the highbrow sport of auto racing and the lowbrow sport of boxing. Porges points out, importantly, that Burroughs initial choice of a pen name certainly identifies him with the common man or the masses.

56 24 Jan. 1913 letter to Metcalf. Qtd. in Porges, 150

267
seventy-five novels (including the twenty-seven about Tarzan), not to mention the hundreds of miscellaneous stories and essays he also published, didn’t put to rest these anxieties. Before he had abandoned his miserably unsuccessful career in business and during the writing of his first novel, A Princess of Mars (1912) just ahead of Tarzan of the Apes, he said he worked secretively because “I was very much ashamed of my new vocation and until the story was nearly half completed I told no one about it, and then only my wife. It seemed a foolish thing for a full grown man to be doing--much on par with dressing myself in a boy scout suit and running away from home to fight Indians.” He adopted a pen name initially for fear of being thought unprofessional when he returned to the business world. During communication with an editor who agreed to publish this work, he made it perfectly--if not a bit neurotically--clear that “I wrote

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"Edgar Rice Burroughs, "How I Became an Author," Fine Arts Supplement of the Chicago Examiner 4 Apr. 1918. During the decade leading up to the publication of Tarzan, Burroughs was engaged in several miserable business enterprises, the last of which were the Stace-Burroughs company which tried to develop a scientific method of salesmanship and then System, "The Magazine for Efficiency." For a dollar any business person could request detailed advice about business matters. Burroughs says, "I knew little or nothing about business, had failed in every enterprise I had ever attempted and could not have given valuable advice to a peanut vendor; yet I was supposed to solve the problems of our subscribers, among which were some very big concerns." During the tense years of such tenuous employment, he writes in his autobiography, "I worked steadily for six years without vacation and fully half of my working hours of that time I had suffered tortures from headaches. Economize as we could, the expenses of our little family were far beyond my income. . . Three cents of ginger snaps constituted my daily lunches for months." Qtd. in Porges, 106. Eventually, he too would say in grand American literary tradition, "I prefer not to."
this story because I needed the money it might bring, and not
from motives of sentiment although I became very much
interested in it while writing." 58

Although he much preferred imaginative writing to the
difficult world of business, Burroughs had doubts about his
abilities. The year after he published *Tarzan* in serial form
he wrote to his editor, Metcalf, "That reminds me of
something that I have wanted to ask you about a number of
times--I refer to my English. I imagine it is pretty rotten,
and I wish that you would tell me frankly if you agree with
me." Later, in the same letter he reviews his limited
education in English and composition: "I never studied
English grammar but a month in my life--while I was cramming
at West Point. I was taken out of public school before I got
that far. . . then I was sent to Andover, where I was
supposed to have had English before I came, and started in on
Greek and Latin again." 59

Eager to repeat his early success, yet anxious about his
skill as a writer, Burroughs grew frustrated with editors'
dissatisfaction with drafts of his first *Tarzan* sequel:

*There is so much uncertainty about the writing
game--the constant feeling, for me at least, that I*


59 9 Jan. 1913 letter to Metcalf. Qtd. in Porges, 149. In the
same letter he says that most people assume their English to be good,
but "my trouble is that I don't know." All told, he had studied Latin
for eight years and "had never learned English." Such comments easily
recall Tarzan's circuitous path English education.
don't know how my stuff is going to hit you that I am entirely discouraged. I certainly cannot afford to put months of work into a story thinking it the best work that I had ever done only to find that it doesn't connect . . . That's the trouble, I can't tell that what I'm writing is what the other fellow wants. I probably lack balance myself--a well balanced mind would not turn out my kind of stuff. As long as I can't market it as it comes out it is altogether to much of a gamble, so I think I'll chuck it . . . Let me thank you once again for your many courtesies during the period of my incursion into litrachoour.  

Of course, Burroughs did not give up his career, but throughout his life he consistently denigrated his abilities and categorized himself as an entertainer (someone who wrote litrachoor as opposed to literature). When speaking of the storyline which came to constitute Tarzan, he explained, "I seem especially adapted to the building of this 'damphool' species of narrative."  

The public denigration of his own skills, as noted in the first epigraph likely functioned also as a defense mechanism, protecting him from criticism--if he criticized himself first, others wouldn't need to--as well as an implicit endorsement of a popular mode of literariness, at odds with the reigning aesthetic standards for high art.  

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" 24 Jan. 1913 letter to Metcalf. Qtd. in Porges, 150.

" 6 March 1912 letter to Metcalf. Qtd. in Porges, 124.

" 2 Edward A. Porges, Tarzan and the Power of Tarzan, 541. Early on in his writing career, Burroughs attempted humorous writing for the Chicago Tribune. He and other columnists/correspondents were described in the following manner: "We
That is, in refusing to be judged by the standards of artistic merit, in claiming popular novels as his domain, Burroughs eased the tension which necessarily attends the writer of literature which aspires to be great, the tension which determines the status of highbrow or lowbrow. One example: significantly, Burroughs ignored comparative debates about his Tarzan novel and Kipling's Jungle Book, debates which implied that his novel was both poorly written and baldly derivative. Notably, Kipling, in his autobiographical Something of Myself, calls Burroughs' imitation of his novel the "genius of all genii. . . He had jazzed the motif of the Jungle Books, and I imagine had thoroughly enjoyed himself." He concludes his discussion of Tarzan by erroneously claiming that Burroughs was reported to have said, "[H]e wanted to find out how bad a book he could write and 'get away with.'" The reasons Burroughs ignored such comments are not completely known. What is known, though, is his total embrace of a popular or what he might call lowbrow literature and his dismissal of the canonical: according to his biographer, Burroughs disliked Kipling's stories, detested Dickens and developed a disdain in his early years for

have gathered and enshrined under this roundup the greatest collection of literary pinch hitters unpinched and the finest bunch of mot makers that ever fed sweetmeats to a gaping populace." Original date unknown, Qtd. in Porges, 202.

Qtd. in Porges, 132. Kipling boasts--perhaps somewhat truthfully--that his work generated "zoos of imitators."
Shakespeare which he never overcame; on the other hand, he included among his favorites, Jack London and Zane Grey, as well as lesser known writers, George Barr McCutcheon and Anthony Hope.  

Burroughs has said his Tarzan novels, like those of his favorite authors, were meant to entertain, but he also hoped that *Tarzan of the Apes* might "carry the beneficial suggestion of the value of physical perfection and morality." This comment explains much about Burroughs' reasons for arming Tarzan with the skills of literacy. His character Tarzan could demonstrate that writing was a manly pursuit, that intellectual engagement could and had to be balanced by physical improvement. And, if an upright, heroic character such as Tarzan was a writer, by extension, writing was a respectable, if not a moral, undertaking. Writing, in the world of *Tarzan*, becomes a heroic endeavor, on par with other magnificent feats. It's impossible to ignore the uncanny, suggestive parallels between Burroughs' education in

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64 Porges, 194. Burroughs believes, though, that books should command one's ultimate respect, and elevates them to an almost spiritual level in this commentary: "I like to handle them and to own them. I hate to see them abused. I sometimes fancy that an adult who habitually marks his place in a volume by turning down the corner of a leaf would kick a dog or strike a horse without even provocation of anger." *The American News Trade Journal* Apr. 1921. Qtd. Porges, 363.

65 Porges, 212.

66 Professor Porter's and his assistant Philander's complete ignorance in the Jungle despite their advanced erudition and intelligence suggests that such a balance is necessary, that profundity and know-how does not simply rest in erudition.
English and that of his character. In this respect, too, Tarzan functions as a screen for the author's anxiety about his abilities. Writing for Tarzan is painstaking work, but something he can accomplish through hard effort and inherited intellect.

Tarzan follows clearly in the tradition of the self-made man. In pursuing this line of reasoning, it's impossible to ignore the parallels between Tarzan's scenes of education and those depicted by Benjamin Franklin in his Autobiography. Tarzan is an American Adam, fulfilling the prophecy of a new beginning in the wilderness. In making him the scion of English stock, Burroughs recasts the American myth of origins. Moreover, in fashioning a character of aristocratic heritage who lives his life mistaken for someone of low birth, so far beyond the reaches of civilization that he is mistaken for a cannibal, Burroughs was able to figuratively dramatize his sensibilities about the split between highbrow and lowbrow. Judged by literary aesthetes to be vulgar—and imitatively cannibalistic—Burroughs heroicized the lowbrow and demonstrated that one could never correctly judge the savage(d) book by the cover.

In this chapter I have attempted through Burroughs' deployment of rhetoric about cannibalism and in his representation of non-literate peoples as cannibalistic, to demonstrate the way that such an issue cuts to the heart of
the writing project, particularly how it becomes enmeshed within the contest between high and low, literacy and illiteracy. This contest, as we have seen, operates on multiple levels in Tarzan. The project of writing, in part due to cultural pressures, but also due to authorial anxieties, is gendered as masculine, civilizing and white. On the surface it appears that Burroughs has used the topic of cannibalism to stereotypical effect. As I have shown, though, Burroughs uses the cannibal to configure the ultimate version of orality, of rapacious a-textuality. In the liminal figure of Tarzan, not-man, not-ape, maybe-cannibal, Burroughs can imaginatively explore the oral-textual split which emerges when the English book/the written word is under the pressure of a colonial setting. But just as he can explore this dynamic through displacement to a fictive world, he can easily resurrect colonial authority in a manner perhaps not possible in the tangible world of contingencies.

In the last chapter we move ahead to the closing decade of the twentieth century to analyze the processes of production in another highly popular film and novel, Fried Green Tomatoes. Unlike the teeth-gnashing Mbongans, the figurative cannibals in this text are genteel southern women and their loyal Black employees. As with Tarzan of the Apes, gender inflects the narrative. What complicates Fannie Flagg's and Jon Avnet's productions, though, is the
recuperative use of cannibalism and the secreting of racist and heterosexist ideologies.
CHAPTER 5

THE CANNIBAL AT HOME: THE SECRET OF FRIED GREEN TOMATOES

"I'm sure you'll acquire a taste for it, your mother did."

---Father to son in Parents 1

"My family has always been in meat."

---character in The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2

[T]here were utterly neutral things, suddenly made sinister: three black-handled forks, two butcher knives, a pair of chemical-resistant gloves, a handsaw with five detachable blades, and a three-quarter-inch drill. There were ordinary things, suddenly made unspeakably perverse: barbecue sauce and meat tenderizer.

---Lionel Dahmer, A Father's Story 3

"My mother just ate my father. She's never done anything like this before!"

---character in Flesh-Eating Mothers 4

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1 A film directed by Bob Balaban, 1989.

2 A film directed by Tobe Hooper, 1974. The cannibalistic Sawyer family uses human flesh to make their famous sausage; many members of the family were once successful employees of the local slaughterhouse, but were displaced by technological advancements.

3 A Father's Story (New York: William Morrow, 1994) 247-8. He calls this the "residue of his son's life." As I write this chapter, business leaders in Milwaukee are vying to buy Dahmer's belongings in order to stave off the auction family members of victims are planning, potentially the macabre flipside to Sotheby's auction of Jacqueline Kennedy's belongings.

4 A film directed by James Aviles Martin, 1988. Mistreated and abused housewives turn cannibalistic after their philandering husbands infect them with a virus. Thus, the women's cannibal behavior can be traced to men: women are transformed into cannibal monsters to battle
"Girls, it doesn't look like we're going to have enough [meat] fillings for the pies we have on order. [They whine]. Remember, this is a family business!"

---Auntie Lee in Auntie Lee's Meat Pies

Evelyn Couch: "Did Idgie really barbecue Frank Bennett? Oh--you're pulling my leg!"
Ninny Threadgoode: "Secret's in the sauce . . . or, so, I'm told!"

---The film Fried Green Tomatoes

In the previous chapters, we have seen that in earlier American accounts the cannibal lurked in the remote wilderness. It was the heroic task of the white (man) to fend off man-eaters and to protect (white) civilization. But such a narrative was often bifurcated by an appeal to the civilizing mission, the errand of bringing civility to the heathen. Thus emerged a deeply ambivalent discourse, simultaneously estranging and familiarizing the barbaric cannibal. When the cannibal threat did emanate from a more even-more-monstrous. Tellingly, for this chapter, the song during the closing credits includes this memorable line: "Monsters live in people's houses/ Monsters, I love monsters."

' A film directed by George Steiner, 1990. On her southern California desert ranch, Auntie Lee and her coterie of "nieces" lure monstrous men--rapists, harassers--to their deaths in order to use their carcasses to bake meat pies, bestsellers at the local restaurants. This film, as well as Flesh Eating Mothers and Eating Raoul, falls into the horror category of female revenge films. Cecelia Condit's 1983 experimental video Possibly in Michigan also conjoins female revenge, murder and cannibalism. It is not without precedent, then, that Fried Green Tomatoes deploys this very same unholy trinity.

"familiar" venue, as in the case of Barnum's exhibition, the estranged foreign territory was recreated vis-à-vis backdrops, collections of artifacts, or through elaborate narratives which purported to tell the story of cannibalism. What I hope has thus far been revealed is that such stories, not surprisingly, tell us much about the storyteller and those who received such stories and the political and ideological pressures which attend the scenes of artistic productions and consumption. For Americans, the figure of the cannibal literally embodied the ongoing negotiation of difference, in primarily racial and ethnic terms, but also in terms of cultural and national differences.

The consolidation of the negotiation of difference in the cannibal body, or through the imagined cannibal body, is deeply rooted in the American Imaginary, in both the Columbian and the U.S. national projects. Indeed, as evidenced by the case of Columbus and the Arawaks, who came to be known according to the explorer's pen as canibales, the cannibal is a figure constructed on the frontier, at the far reaches of empire, at the edges of the world. While only a "frontier" to the western explorer, this zone becomes a site of negotiation, a borderland where boundaries are drawn and erased, a place of contestation and resistance. But the terrain of these zones changes in American culture and fiction, and thus over time, the cannibal has migrated to
locales not normally considered frontiers, but sites, nonetheless, where difference continues to be negotiated. Indeed, the presence of the cannibal, or its figuration, reveals the relocation of these frontier zones. It may sound as if I'm ascribing agency to a free-floating master trope; I want to suggest, rather, that for authors, artists, reporters, filmmakers, audiences, readers, citizens, the figure of the cannibal offers a historically, symbolically, philosophically, psychologically and politically charged means to articulate the "struggle" with difference.

Recently, as many of the above epigraphs suggest, the cannibal figure has become comfortably ensconced in the homeyness of the suburbs, or if not in the suburbs, then in the homey region of the domestic sphere. If not explicitly a family concern, cannibalism has been incorporated by the American Imaginary into the domestic (melo)drama. To be fair, the cannibal has been "domesticated," made familiar in earlier accounts, but this has occurred in both American and European texts through the fashioning of familiarity through cultural relativism: Montaigne, Melville, as we have seen in our discussion of Typee, even the pro-slavery advocate, George Fitzhugh, to cite three examples. This "domestication" also evolved from the bond of buddy pairings
such as Ishmael and Queequeg, Robinson Crusoe and Friday, and, more recently, Clarice Starling and Hannibal Lecter.

This chapter moves the focus of our discussion from the "frontier-out-there" to the "frontier-within" by examining the tremendously popular film and novel Fried Green Tomatoes, one example among many popularly consumed texts, which deploys the figure of "domesticated" cannibal. In the United

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This last pairing is a dynamic worth exploring in more detail; I touch on it in the epilog. By the end of the film The Silence of the Lambs, based on Thomas Harris' novel, Hannibal "The Cannibal" Lecter the cruel serial murderer, is both reviled and valorized. Since the time of the film's release, Anthony Hopkin's rendition of Lecter has gained iconic status. The film Silence also enters into the domain of this chapter in a discursive manner. It was nominated for numerous Academy awards the same winter Fried was released. During this period, Jodie Foster, the female lead of Silence, was being "outed," or was being pressured to out herself; moreover, a debate continued to rage about the politics of representation concerning the Jame Gumb character, whom many feared depicted gayness as pathological and demonized (the director and author claim he was not gay); Basic Instinct, which earned $15 million its first week, with its ice-wielding les(bi)ans and JFK, with its vilified gay male characters further impressed this view upon audiences. Michael Rogin has noted that three of the five best picture nominations in 1992 were homophobic at their core, citing JFK, Silence as well as Prince of Tides' "buried trauma of homosexual rape." Michael Rogin, "Body and Soul Murder: JFK." Media Spectacles, eds. Marjorie Garber, Jann Matlock and Rebecca L. Walkowitz (New York: Routledge, 1993) 5. For some, Fried marked a refreshing departure from these other representational modes, but for others, Fried was also a victim of Hollywood homo(phobia)geneity. If nothing else, these debates certainly complicate the reception and interpretation of a film like Fried. Moreover, it must be remembered the debate about Silence and Fried occurred in the context of film narratives which featured cannibalism. And, if this were not enough, outside of movie theaters and book stores. Americans were faced with the macabre and fascinating case of Jeffrey Dahmer, the pathological cannibal-homosexual par-excellence.

Although the film opened nationally on only five screens, within the second month of the film's release it had already netted an estimated $25.4 million (it cost $11 million to produce). This success was part of a wave of interest in so-called "women's films." One theater chain executive noted, "At least half the movies in the current top ten are those that hold a special appeal to women." David J. Fox,
States, this narrative maneuver is increasingly commonplace in campy horror films such as *Flesh Eating Mothers*, *Parents*, *Auntie Lee's Meat Pies*; in avant-garde, art-films such as *Eating Raoul* and *Desperate Living*; and, in so-called slasher or splatter movies such as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Hunter's Blood*, and *Motel Hell*, to name only a few. Although


While it cannot be disputed that P.T. Barnum and Tarzan have had, for a much longer period of time, major impact on Americans, I would argue that the epiphenomenon of *Fried Green Tomatoes* is an important consolidation of significant social and political trends which thus magnifies its relevance. As will be seen later, it coalesces debates about the following: same-sex relationships; same-sex marriage and families; domestic abuse; the victim's defense; "women's films"; whiteness; blackness; politics of representation; racism; class inequity; recovering the past; Hollywood homo(phobia)geniety; thousand-points-of-light social sweetness/imagined social and political harmony. Moreover, *Fried* marks the most "mainstream" example of texts which associate women and cannibalism, a nuanced test case for a reading of this issue. I choose it for its obliqueness with regard to this issue, but also in light of the lively and impassioned debates which circulated during its initial reception. Its repressed and suppressed content—which I argue emerges in several ways--more than necessitates an understanding of its deployment of cannibalism and an analysis of its generic exchange.

"John Waters' *Desperate Living* (1977), in the words of the director, is a lesbian melodrama about revolution: in the end the renegades seize power, cook and eat the Queen. Interestingly, in the beginning of the film a white housewife enlists the help of her Black maid Griselda to help her kill her husband before coming to live in Mortville with the soon-to-be revolutionaries. Paul Bartel's 1982 *Eating Raoul* and Bob Balaban's *Parents* wage a capitalist critique similar to the one played out in Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and its sequels. About this latter film, film critic Robin Wood has said, "The [Sawyer] family, after all, only carried to its logical conclusion the basic (though unstated) tenet of capitalism, the people have the right
quite different from each other, in each the familiar is estranged, the heimlich/canny made unheimlich/uncanny. The cannibal erupts/interrupts the mythologized tranquillity of the domestic sphere, transforming the family home into a frightening frontier.

The producers, many critics and a large number of fans of the enormously successful film Fried Green Tomatoes would be hard-pressed to understand how a similar claim could be made about this "feel-good" movie. It must be said that none of the primary characters is ever seen consuming human flesh, nor is the word "cannibal" ever uttered; nonetheless, as will become clear, what I call the "figure of the cannibal" twice haunts the film. To be fair, the settings of the film and

to live off other people." "An Introduction to the American Horror Film," Movies and Methods, vol. 2, ed. Bill Nichols (Los Angeles and Berkeley: U of California P, 1985) 214. This critique is played out across the binaries of urban and rural both in Hunter's Blood (dir. Robert C. Hughes, 1986), in which rural hunters poach city-dwellers for a living, selling the meat to the city market, as well as in Motel Hell (dir. Kevin Conner, 1980), in which Farmer Vincent sells smoked meats. The polarization of city and desert is also manifested in Wes Craven's The Hills Have Eyes (1977) when a vacationing Ohio family is stranded in the Nevada desert and attacked by cannibal hill people, nuclear-test mutants. Although no sustained analysis of these cannibal tales has been undertaken, Texas has been recently discussed in the context of the following extremely interesting feminist and queer readings of the horror genre: Carol Clover, Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992), Barbara Creed, The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis, (New York: Routledge, 1993), and Judith Halberstrom, Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters (Durham: Duke UP, 1995). Halberstrom in fact enacts a sustained reading of Texas 2 and more generally speaks to the cannibalistic nature of the gothic genre. One mainstream press account highlights the relative frequency of the filmic appearance of cannibalism and notes in particular its surfacing in Fried Green Tomatoes: Steven Rosen, "Let's Eat: Cannibal Movies a Staple in Hollywood's Repertoire," Denver Post 30 Jan 1993: 1E.
novel are quite distinct from the horrifying terrain of the classic horror film—with its blood, filth and gore-filled dungeons and basements. Instead, we find ourselves in the seemingly sweet and tranquil world of Whistle Stop, Alabama, from the 1920s through the late 1950s and in present day (the mid-1980s in the novel) suburban Birmingham. Both versions follow the story of four white women in two parallel yet separate storylines. In the outer narrative Evelyn Couch (Kathy Bates in the film), a middle-aged housewife, befriends Ninny Threadgoode (Jessica Tandy), an octogenarian nursing home resident. The elder woman spins tales of days gone by about the occupants of her home town of Whistle Stop, now a victim of Birmingham's urban sprawl. Her tales dissolve into the inner narrative which focuses, in the film version at least, primarily on Ruth Jamison (Mary-Louise Parker) and Idgie Threadgoode (Mary Stuart Masterson). They are two independent women friends/"friends" who live together, raise a child, own and run a cafe, and battle against the sexist, misogynist, racist and economic oppression of their culture.

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Because debates about the film continue to wrestle with the definition of Idgie and Ruth's relationship I employ this slash and bracket notation in order to signify my awareness of the contested terminology and the double meaning of such terms. As will be seen below, the author and filmmaker insistently define their characters' relationship as friendship (without the quotes). By using this double-method of naming I don't intend to distinguish between denotation and connotation as might be implied. In this regard, I strive to follow Alexander Doty's suggestion that claims to connotation be resisted when reading queerly since connotative meaning may be dismissed as not altogether there or a product of delusion: "In this way the closet of connotation could be dismantled, rejected for the oppressive practice that it is. After all, the queerness I point out in mass culture

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283
Chris Holmund, who has written an astute analysis of this film, summarily calls it "a female buddy movie cum melodrama cum mystery cum romance." The questions surrounding the disappearance of Ruth Jamison's estranged husband, Bennett, lend an element of gothic mystery to a film which otherwise subscribes to the generic conventions of comic-drama and melodrama. It is the circuitous path of Holmund's generic paraphrase which I attempt to traverse: how does the mystery of Frank Bennett reveal the operational structure of this film's handling of the conventions of romance and buddy genres when the protagonists are both women and how does the film manage the melodrama of race relations when the film is blinded by the mask of whiteness?

Jeffrey Lyons, a film reviewer known for his saccharine reviews, claims "Fried Green Tomatoes makes you feel good

representation and reading in this book is only 'connotative,' and therefore deniable or 'insubstantial' as long as we keep thinking within conventional heterocentrist paradigms, which always already have decided that expressions of queerness are sub-textual, sub-cultural, alternative readings, or pathetic and delusional attempts to see something that isn't there--after all, mass culture texts are made for the 'average' (straight, white, middle-class, usually male) person, aren't they? I've got news for straight culture: your readings of texts are usually 'alternative' ones for me, and they often seem like desperate attempts to deny the queerness that is so clearly a part of mass culture."


about life. It will warm your heart." Indeed, viewed through the lenses of like-minded critics who favored it, the film was about spunky women overcoming obstacles; the unruly woman being reigned in; the empowerment of women; the abuse of women; the vindication of the abused; the evils of racism; racial harmony; the rich giving to the poor; the able helping the disabled; respect for the elderly; understanding the worth of others despite their actions; the advantaged helping the disadvantaged; the search for a simpler life; seeing the humor and joy of life; the painful tragedies which cause us to grow but that never leave us. Critics displeased with the film, such as James Bowman of The American Spectator, similarly focused on these qualities:

Pick your feel-good image and, chances are, Fried Green Tomatoes has got it. You want tough and funny women? You want the good people feeding the hungry poor and helping the disabled while they have a wonderful time fighting off racism, sexism, ageism, sizeism, ableism, menopause, false charges of murder, and, at last and unsuccessfully, cancer? You want the bad guy to be a wife-beater? What the hell, make him a Ku Klux Klansman as well, just so that you can be sure that he's really bad. Add lots of submissive 1930s-style Black folks and cute children and lovable village eccentrics to give you that warm feeling of folksy Southern authenticity and you've got the Acapulco gold of sentimentality.¹²

Readers of the novel, Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe, from which the film was adapted, would be perhaps

even more hard pressed to acknowledge the uncanny/unheimlich aura of the fried green world. But, the world of the film takes on an entirely different air, when read against the novel, as I intend to do, in terms of the politics of representation and in terms of the negotiation of difference which I see as being pivotally mapped out and consolidated within the figuration of cannibalism.

This chapter, then, also undertakes an analysis of adaptation, concentrating primarily on representational practices and the noticeable absences in the film version. That is, I ground my analysis less in how the film fails or succeeds aesthetically in its adaptation of the novel and focus more on the forces which may have given shape to such shifts and the implications of what emerges. In this regard, then, I do not hold the novel as a pure origin which manages representational issues adeptly, but view it also as a production that similarly reveals the terms of its own making. Such an analysis is effected by comparison

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1 Critics, by the score, have had fun with this phrase, deploying it in multivalent ways. I want to use it as a term substitutable with uncanny or unheimlich. But, as with the terms, canny/uncanny, as many critics including Freud have pointed out, the meaning of the term fried green collapses into its ostensible opposite and can equally signify "down-home," "homey," or "quaint."

14 In this regard I follow Dudley Andrew in his discussion of principles of filmic adaptation: "Adaptation is a peculiar form of discourse but not an unthinkable one. Let us use it not to fight battles over the essence of the media or the inviolability of individual art works. Let us use it as we use all cultural practices, to understand the world from which it comes and the one toward which it points... We need to be sensitive to that discourse and to the forces
alongside a 1990 version of the film script sent to prospective actors and studios (screenplay attributed nominally to Flagg) as well as the abridgment of the audio version of the novel read by the author. Additionally, I pause on footage added to the first televised version of the film which set record ratings on Sunday, May 2, 1993. Since the mirrored hallways of representation are endless, I cannot begin to determine whether or not the filmic or novelistic versions of the lives of individuals are presented "realistically." Nor is it my interest to explain why or why


Fannie Flagg, Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe (screenplay), 27 April 1990, Producers Jon Avnet and Jordan Kerner. Director Jon Avnet, The Eileen Heckart Collection, Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute Library of The Ohio State University. Heckert was sent the script by the William Morris agency in August 1990 to consider the role of Ninny Threadgoode. Credit for the screenplay was under dispute even in February 1992. The late Carol Sobieski began work on the screenplay in 1988 and completed numerous drafts before 1989 when Flagg was brought in to redraft it. After Sobieski's death in 1989, Jon Avnet began working on the project as a writer. In many reviews, billboards and posters, the producer-director is listed with Flagg's. "Confusion over Tomatoes, Screenplay Credit," The San Francisco Chronicle (4 Feb 1992): E4. The audio version was released simultaneously with the opening of the movie on the cusp of 1991/2 and, although it contains elements from the novel not included in the film, it quite likely used the screenplay as a guide. Adaptation by Trebbe Johnson, produced by Sherry Huber and John Runnette (New York: Random House Audiobooks, 1991).

For the week of 26 April-2 May 1993, it topped the A.C. Nielson Ratings with a 23.8 share. (Each point represents 931,000 homes or 1% of the 93.1 million U.S. households that have TV. NBC said it was the best performance by a theatrical film on one of the networks since the CBS telecast of Star Wars in February 1984. Even more impressive, the film was up against Arnold Schwarzenegger's Total Recall and an original TV movie. Lee Margulies, "NBC Sizzles with Fried Green Tomatoes," The Los Angeles Times, 5 May 1993, F9.
not *Fried* is a queer text (or lesbian or bi depending on the reader's subject position according to Alexander Doty's scheme). Simply put, as problematic as this film is in its handling of representational issues, I believe it is fundamentally a queer text. But, where does this leave us? Director Jon Avnet, as will become more clear below, felt that audiences were free to make what they wanted of Idgie and Ruth's relationship; in effect, he authorized queer readings without admitting to the lesbian sexuality of two of its central characters. Assessing the director's summation, K. Anthony Appiah says, this "was a case where the real achievement was to make a movie that allowed of gay interpretation. [Although it] may make us feel good, [it] won't change any homophobic minds, since the movie is designed to allow also the 'straight' reading that will

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17 In resisting the discussion of "realism" I am mindful of the on-going dialogue about "positive images." See Douglas Crimp, "Portraits of People with AIDS," *Cultural Studies*, eds. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler, (New York: Routledge, 1992) or Marlon Riggs's documentary *Color Adjustment* about the changing depiction of African Americans on television. He suggests, in one regard, that so-called "positive" images contain inherent contradictions and that they can be equally confining and debilitating, even erasing the reality of the ongoing social struggle.

In the preface to his book, Doty sets forward this classificatory schema: "Therefore, 'queer' is used to describe the non-straight work, positions, pleasures, and readings of people who either don't share the same 'sexual orientation' as that articulated in the texts they are producing or responding to (the gay man who takes queer pleasure in a lesbian sitcom narrative, for example), or who don't define themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual (or straight, for that matter)." *Making Things Perfectly Queer: Interpreting Mass Culture* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1993) xviii.

288
suggest itself to homophobes. 

"bell hooks similarly appeals for intervention into the field of representation when she says, "What can the future hold if our present entertainment is the spectacle of contemporary colonization, dehumanization, and disempowerment where the image serves as a murder weapon."

Although I cannot sharpen the clarity of this out-of-focus film, it is necessary to move beyond the sort of critical impasse which Appiah and hooks quite rightly point to--the fact of poor or mis-representation. In exploring the cannibal presence, this chapter lays bare the process and effects of adaptation and accommodation in the production of Avnet's film of Flagg's novel.

The way into this critical problem rests in the film's recapitulation of the cannibalism of Frank Bennett, Ruth's estranged husband. I consider the uncanny moment when the cannibal cover-up is first revealed to the audience in the internal storyline (without voice-over exegesis by the

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19 "'No Bad Nigger': Blacks as the Ethical Principle in the Movies," Media Spectacles, eds. Marjorie Garber, Jann Matlock and Rebecca L. Walkowitz (New York: Routledge, 1993) 84-5. Unfortunately Appiah only makes passing reference to Fried. At present Lu Vicker's reading of the film is, for the most part, one of the few critical assessments of such issues. "Fried Green Tomatoes: Excuse Me, Did We See the Same Movie?" Jump Cut 39 (1994). See below for further reference to her analysis. David Ehrenstein, movie critic for The Advocate, coined the term "delesbianization" to describe what he called also a deep-sixing of lesbian themes. He writes, Avnet viewed lesbianism as an "optional extra, like bucket seats in a sports coupe." "Delesbianizing Fried Green Tomatoes." The San Francisco Chronicle (14 March 1992).

narrator Ninny) and the equally uncanny return to this moment in an expanded sequence near the end of the film (which includes Ninny's voice-over and some implied explication). This narrative strand emerges when the outer narrative enacts a search for the absent cause of the murder of Ruth's estranged husband, Frank Bennett. When Ninny Threadgoode first remarks upon the strange disappearance of Frank Bennett and allegations that Idgie Threadgoode had killed him, she positions as detectives both Evelyn Couch and the extra-diegetic audience. Each is poised to examine the clues in order to crack the case. Tzvetan Todorov has explained that detective fiction is a doubling of narratives, the story of the crime and the story of the investigation. The first ends where the second begins. For the two to be "present" in the same book, though, the first must really be absent; that is, it must be a "story of absence," not "immediately present in the book." In the film, the absent cause is revealed within the figuration of cannibalism, and, like the detective's solution, is freighted with signification. This figuration, like any crime scene, holds the secret of its own making. I argue that these iterated sequences of film reveal important clues about the negotiation of difference, particularly the

negotiation of difference manifested in the politics of representation (what bell hooks might call the image-as-murder-weapon). Slavoj Zizek has further articulated the role of the detective/analyst (and I would add cultural critic) who is confronted by "a false image put together by the murderer [author/director/producer?] in order to efface the traces of his [sic] act. The scene's organic natural quality is a lure, and the detective's task is to denature it by first discovering the inconspicuous details that stick out, that do not fit into the frame of the surface image." This cover-up functions as myth does to reality. Not too surprisingly, in several interviews the director, Jon Avnet, suggests that he is much more interested in a transcendental myth-making and the mesmerizing power of stories to instantiate realities:

I wanted to do a story that was about storytelling, how it can affect someone. It reminded me of when as a kid my mother would read to me and things got blurred between what was real and what wasn't and it didn't matter because the story was the real thing

... It was my intent to create an original myth. 

... I studied with Joseph Campbell, who's the single most knowledgeable person I ever met on myths. When I first read this book, I felt Idgie was a mythical character. I wanted to create the sense that the character transcends her time and place.  

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21 Zizek, 53.

But, as we've seen in my discussion of P.T. Barnum, myths function as cover-up since in using a stable story again and again--heroicism or Manifest Destiny, for example--to explain untold stories, uniqueness is necessarily evacuated, the particulars are reduced to generic formulas. For Avnet's mythically transcendent vision of Idgie to be whole, particulars about her must be secreted, jettisoned or submerged; this normative/normalized world of myth depends on a hole at its center, on the existence of secrets.21

To find this hole at the center, in the following pages I trace the varied ways the film enacts a discourse of secrets. Throughout a close reading of the twice revisited scene of cannibalism, I turn my attention to the film's management of race, sex, gender. In keeping with the limits of my project, I turn my attention to the shifts in representation from novel to screenplay to film and audio recording to examine another form of secrecy articulated as textual omission. To compound our understanding of these manifold translations, I examine reactions to such representational issues by those intimately involved in the

21 See Philip Fisher. In the introduction to The New American Studies, he points out that "Myth is a fixed, satisfying, and stable story used again and again to normalize our account of social life. By means of myth, novelty is tamed by being seen as the repetition, or, at most, the variation, of a known and valued pattern. Even where actual historical situations are found to fall short of myth or to lie in its aftermath, the myth tames the variety of historical experience, giving it familiarity while using it to reaffirm the culture's long-standing interpretation of itself." "Introduction, "The New American Studies: Essays from Representations" (Berkeley: U of California P, 1991) vii.
production process; specifically, I probe the proliferating discussion of friendship, a concept used by both producers and critics to mask difference.

The Secret's in the Sauce

"Just think, Ruth, I never did that for anybody else before. Now nobody in the whole world knows I can do that but you. I just wanted for us to have a secret together, that's all."

---Idgie in the novel's bee charmer scene.  

At seven-thirty, Big George had already started slaughtering the hogs and started the water boiling in the black iron pot . . . Later that afternoon, when Grady and the two detectives from Georgia were questioning his daddy about the missing white man, Artis had nearly fainted when one of them came over and looked right in the pot. He was sure the man had seen Frank Bennett's arm bobbing up and down among the boiling hogs. But evidently, he hadn't, because two days later, the fat Georgia man told Big George that it was the best barbecue he had never eaten, and asked him what his secret was. Big George smiled and said, 'Thank you, suh, I'd hafto say the secret's in the sauce.'

---Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe

ED: "The Secret's in the sauce." (he laughs)
EVELYN: Yeah.
ED: I can't believe Sipsey did it.
EVELYN: Mrs. Threadgoode said that frying pan did more than fry chicken that night.
ED: (laughs) I'll remember that the next time you're in the kitchen.

---1990 screenplay of Fried Green Tomatoes

--- Flagg, 84-5.

--- Flagg, 367. You'll notice that this action also takes place on December 18, 1930, but is revealed 160 pages later in the novel, in some ways similar to the second revisiting of the event in the film.

--- Screenplay, 1990, 114. In the novel this conversation never occurs. Neither Evelyn nor Ed or Ninny Threadgoode seems to know
Advertisements for the film were framed by a slogan superimposed on a row of tomatoes: "The secret of life? The secret's in the sauce!" According to one account, Jon Avnet "came up with the line-as-slogan idea because he couldn't think of any other way to describe his small-budget movie with the aspiring epic sweep, a movie he says every studio in town, fearful of the female-driven subject matter, turned down." Lifted from its proper context, this enigmatic proverb strikes unfamiliar audiences as a quaint southernism. But those familiar with the film would most likely recognize the line as a clever and ironic retort, first uttered by Sipsey (Cicely Tyson), to those who were unknowingly relishing the taste of Frank Bennett's barbecued corpse. When we are returned to this sequence at the end of the film, anything of the cannibal cover-up. As evidenced by an epigraph at opening of the chapter, in the film this conversation occurs between Ninny Threadgoode and Evelyn. The end of the screenplay recuperates Evelyn's husband Ed and shows his understanding and caring side: I find his last comment more than interesting. Unlike the film and novel, this screenplay suggests the contemporary implications of the cannibal threat in a manner reminiscent of the horror films mentioned above. The screenplay, unlike the film, closely aligns Sipsey and her cooking know-how with the cannibalistic M.O. The novel does this to some extent, although, Big George and Artis, his son, are much more closely aligned with it.


In the film Sipsey is given the line, whereas in the novel, as indicated in the epigraph above, George is. Unlike the novel, the film resists maligning Black male characters through association with cannibalism and distributes the chain of responsibility among a coalition of individuals. Despite the varying translations of this text throughout the production process, this line remained (almost everyone got to utter it at some point). Certainly this offers interesting discursive support to my case about the inherent network of secrecy.
Evelyn is the privileged listener who incredulously asks whether Ninny's story of the cover-up of Bennett's death is true. Ninny playfully responds, "Secret's in the sauce--or, so I'm told. Now you know why Idgie had to go on trial" to protect Sipsey and Big George (Stan Shaw).

I've jumped out of sequence to highlight the most obvious ways the film participates in a discourse of secrets. While the original run-through of the sequence (to which I will eventually turn my attention) omits essential information, it secretly suggests in visual terms what has transpired. More up-front in the terms of the film's discourse of secrets and discursive secreting, the second run-through--with voice-over exegesis and a culminating discussion--articulates the existence of secrets and exposes previously secreted contents. More than a jokey retort, on a fundamental level the phrase "secret's in the sauce" is an admission of the unutterability of cannibal practice. The phrase marks the cannibal moment so that the practice can avoid any mention by name.²⁹

²⁹ The best two critical analyses of this film (Lu Vickers and Chris Holmud, see below) avoid any mention of the practice of cannibalism. Also revealing: this word is omitted in films such as Parents, Eating Raoul and Aunt Julie's Meat Pies. I wonder if the absence of such a term further domesticates the act. That is, cannibalism is something done "out there by them." In this context the presence of cannibalism and a concomitant refusal to name it bear uncanny parallels to the refusal to "name" lesbian desire, to "name" racism, to "name" putative heterosexuality or normative whiteness. In a not-so-dissimilar logical twist Dean McCannell in "Cannibalism Today" has suggested that putative heterosexuality is one of three forms of current political-economic modes which can be classified as neo-cannibalism (that which is "based upon and/or giving rise to, a
A secret is something concealed from view; to secret something is to hide or closet it. One interesting component of secrets is their pronounced status as absence: what is not known openly must signal its own concealment in order to publicly exist. It must be present as a marked absence. For most of us, this marking of absence is experienced in our frustration at being told "I've got a secret that you can't know." The following components of secrecy are operative in Fried: the existence of secrets is both announced and suggested, they are openly revealed and variously concealed by characters; secrets kept from other characters are revealed to the audience. Additionally, I want to suggest that noticeable absences, particularly omissions of elements of the novel, can be understood as secrets (as objects/content secreted from view). I see these differences, which can most often be regarded as absences, as pronouncements of secrets.

Understood in this way, the various secrets must be read along a circuit of meaning which finds its nexus in the figuration of cannibalism, in the barbecued body of Frank Bennett. But before turning to the two specific scenes which consciousness and world view that is not easily distinguishable from classic cannibalism*). Empty Meeting Grounds: The Tourist Papers (New York: Routledge, 1992) 57.

To reconcile the paradox of announcing secrecy, it is tempting to call on the authority of the opposite meanings of the word secreting, both to conceal and make a secret of (from Latin secretus), or to issue forth, to set aside (from Latin secernere). The separate Latin roots, though, warn against this.
play out this culinary conquest, it is important to examine other discursive articulations of secrecy.

The film opens with the announcement of a secret: a rusted truck is dredged from the bottom of the river. Accompanied by an extradiegetic blues song, the camera in extreme close-up lingers on the surface of the truck as if looking for some clues. At this point, of course, the meaning of the truck—Frank Bennett's truck concealed by Idgie and Big George in a cover-up of his accidental death—is unclear, but the camera movement and almost fetishistic interest in detail enacts in viewers a search for concealed meaning. This shot dissolves into a fast-paced tracking shot along the railroad as the credits begin to roll. In the

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\[\text{1}^{1}\] When I first saw this scene I was surprised by its reversal of one of the concluding scenes in Hitchcock's *Psycho* wherein Vivien Leigh's sunken car is pulled from the water. In that instance, the car marks the solution to the mystery, and puts an end to secrecy. While such is not immediately the case in Fried, the borrowed economy of this image sets in motion an awareness of the limits of understanding, of secrets, and our need for solutions (openness). Since I understood this image in this way, I was not at all surprised to later find that Avnet's favorite director is Hitchcock. See Bibby, *Premiere*, 34.

At other points in the film the camera similarly fetishizes, in extreme close-up, food, particularly in the "famous" food-fight scene and in the scene of barbecuing. It's impossible for me to ignore that the color and tone of Frank's muddied, rusted car is remarkably similar to the vat of barbecue sauce shown twice. In marked contrast, the food fight scene begins with extreme close-ups of berries, eggs and tomatoes. This scene is the closest thing to an all-out love scene. Classically—in terms of "lesbian porn for straight males"—the two women are rescued from the "mess" of their same-sex love by a man—in this instance, Grady, the sheriff. Throughout the film, such extreme close-ups of non-human objects draw important visual equations. Intercut images, not all of them close-ups similar draw important equations. In the scene that immediately follows this foodfight, the film cuts from a shot of Bennett watching, to George chopping wood with an ax, to Bennett, to George, to an extreme close-up of Bennett's license plate.
following sequence, parked in what remains of the little hamlet of Whistle Stop, Evelyn Couch hears the rush of a train. Leaves and dust blow and windows rattle as if it were passing by, but it can't be seen. The scene is meant, I believe, to evoke the spirit of the railroad and the people of Whistle Stop, but it undeniably reiterates the marked presentation of absences. The "mystery train" is absent, yet it announces itself.

Secrets first bond Idgie and Ruth. Before she fully gives way to Ruth's "civilizing" influence, Idgie brings her along on a secret railroad mission to distribute food to the needy, a secret which continues to be exploited by the film in the mini-"mystery" of Railroad Bill. Shortly after this initial episode on the train, Idgie treats Ruth to a picnic at a secret location; during this lunch Idgie retrieves honeycomb from a beehive in what has been widely understood in queer readings of the film as the first love scene of the film. In a secretive manner at the end of the film, this honey resurfaces immediately after Ninny has recounted the cannibalistic cover-up of Bennett, a story she found out about only when Sipsey revealed this secret on her deathbed. In addition to these more obvious articulations of secrecy in the outer narrative, the discourse of secrecy is also enacted through Evelyn's secret life: empowered by the stories of Idgie and Ruth, she imagines she is Towanda, righter of wrongs!
This circuitry of secrecy on a micro-level supports and/or reveals the functioning of secrets on a macro-level. The film relies on several absences to naturalize the terms of race and sexuality. This is a world that is normatively white—where blackness is seen as a divergent difference.² Blackness is articulated by the presence of overtly racist characters and a barrage of stereotypical subservient and reactive African American characters; whiteness, on the other hand, is unarticulated yet mapped consistently and in a pronounced fashion in the film's projection of vital and


Taking up Morrison's effort to unveil the Africanist presence at the heart of the white literary project in America, would require, in the case of the film Fried, a thorough analysis of the soundtrack. It submerges yet reveals the role of Black culture in supporting the mask of whiteness. Most of the songs are blues/jazz/gospel hybrids, sung primarily by African American performers. Through music we are continually returned to blackness. Interestingly, during the grand opening of their cafe—opened with money given to the couple by the Threadgoodes after Ruth gives birth—the extradiegetic soundtrack features Patti LaBelle singing Bessie Jackson's "Barbecue Bess," clearly linking the cafe (the site of their joint lives) and the later fetishized and overdetermined barbecuing of Frank Bennett. Music, of course, is also used to essentialize blackness; this is most evident in the televised version which restores footage of Evelyn and Ninny's visit to an all-Black church (a scene adapted but much revised from the novel).
proactive white middle-class—mainly women—characters. The fact of blackness—that is, the historical and social reality of blackness—remains invisible in the world of Fried. When compared against the novel this is even more true. The film fails to acknowledge that African American characters have lives apart from their white employers (significant, interesting chapters of the novel focus on the private lives of these characters). Fannie Flagg and a number of critics have commented on the film's utopian vision of race relations, yet such a view ignores the film's social matrix. This is a fictive world which can visualize blackness only in terms of Black characters working for and staying loyal to whites. Moreover, it is a fictive world that makes associations between blackness and what Fanon has labeled

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1) The film and, to a greater extent, the novel deal with class inequity through the character of Smokey and in the actions of Railroad Bill who distributes on freight trains food to the needy. Flagg, though, makes it quite clear that she wants to create a fictive world in which non-racist white middle-class characters are given full range. She says, "My whole reason for writing the book was to show a different side of the South because most literature and films about the South are either about poor white trash or faded southern aristocracy... Few are written about the middle class. I think these people were heroic. And I didn't want a film in which every Southerner was a racist. I don't believe that's the truth." Peter Keough, "Southern Fried Movie Flies Feminist Flag," Chicago Sun Times 5 Jan 1992: E3. Flagg accomplishes these goals in the novel, but she does so through a concerted effort to portray the interiority and vitality of African American characters Sipsey, George, Onzell, Naughty Bird, Artis and Jasper as well as the indigent man, Smokey. In the film these characterizations are enervated by the great white whale of the white middle class.
"Sho' good eatin'," an even more egregious concept when conflated with the cannibal-cover-up of Frank Bennett."  

Similarly, on a macro-level, the film hides the lesbian desire evoked in the novel featuring the very same characters. The movie resists exploring in much detail this component of Idgie and Ruth's relationship. Not suprisingly, such resistance carried into the publicity campaign when in interviews writer, director, producers and actors in some fashion continued to evacuate the two women's relationship of its lesbianism. In only one of two sustained published analyses of this film, Lu Vickers critiques the film's stereotypes, the limits of Hollywood production and the inability of mainstream, white "heterosexual" reviewers to understand the film's discourse of race and sex." She

\[14 \text{ Black Skins, White Masks, 112. See below for the full context of this phrase} \]


301
concludes that the film contributes to the invisibility of the lesbian as well as the African American. She cites the GLAAD award bestowed upon the film for being "lesbian-positive," but she comments that it's going to take much more for a film to be "'lesbian-positive' for everyone, not just those who know one when they see one." Chris Holmund, on the other hand, attempts to articulate the mechanism whereby the Hollywood machinery of "deadly doll films" admits of the presence of lesbianism in the "murmured fear of lesbianism lurk[ing] beneath the general discomfort with violent women." Holmund situates Fried and Basic Instinct at two

Although not completely relevant to this chapter, David Bergman picks up on the implied connection between male homosexuality and cannibalism, particularly in terms of literary tradition. Bergman says that cannibalism is not so much the eating of humans, but the eating of males: "Women are rarely eaters or the eaten in either homo- or heterosexual cannibal narratives." Gaiety Transfigured: Gay Self-Representation in American Literature, (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1991) 141. In light of the wave of films and novels in the eighties and nineties, Bergman needs to reconsider such claims, although the emphasis of his book is much more interested in examining instances of gay male self-fashioning.

"Fried Green Tomatoes: Excuse Me, Did We See the Same Movie?" Jump Cut 39 (1994): 30.

"Cruisin' for a Bruisin': Hollywood's Deadly (Lesbian) Dolls," Cinema Journal 34 (Fall 1994): 32. Holmund believes that Ninny and Idgie, finally are one in the same. I believe the film may encourage such a muddled reading, but it clearly marks divergent histories for the two. Moreover, the character Ninny is physically distinct--i.e., an entirely separate person—in a flashback scene. The last interchange between Evelyn and Ninny seems less a recognition that Idgie and Ninny are one in the same and more of a recognition of how the two can be empowered by the spirit of Idgie, and how this power rests to some degree in the performative. In this vein, though the uncanny reappearance of the honey resurrects an earlier discourse of secrets about sexuality, I don't believe that the film tries to secret Ninny's identity. I wonder if such misreading stems from the provocative

302
ends of a continuum of the deadly doll film cycle; she finds that in each, unlike other deadly doll films, woman's rage is caught up also in both race and age. In particular, she advances a three-part argument: 1) lesbians are troped as mirrors for each other, mothers for each other and as men for each other; 2) race and age affects the representation and interpretation of hetero- and homo- sexuality; and, 3) an obsession with death, dying and lethal lovelies masks a deep-seated denial of age and aging and associates sexual desirability with youthful femininity. Holmund concludes that for youth and whiteness to rule, they need their constituent opposites, death/aging and blackness. Holmund and Vickers have offered crucial interventions into the reception of this film, but neither, significantly, mentions the method of Frank's disposal--one significant way that the text links blackness, lesbianism, cannibalism and "down-home cookin'." It is a striking omission, in otherwise lucid arguments, since this figuration pivotally reveals the film's own uneasiness about its handling of race and sexuality.

Although I will return to the film's secreting of lesbian desire in substantive detail at the end of the chapter, I want here to briefly survey the operational structure of heterosexuality and its secret contents.

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exchange of looks between Ninny and her interlocutor, looks which evoke those exchanged between Idgie and Ruth, looks which function within the homophobic domain of the film as the privileged signal of same-sex desire.
Putative heterosexuality makes homosexuality a secret absence. In her thought-provoking study Fatal Women, Lynda Hart notes that lesbian sexuality entered into discourse as a secret (for white women, primarily) and continues to be circulated as a haunting secret:

The prominent manifestation of lesbian sexuality as a 'secret' derives not from some hidden, mysterious, or esoteric content, but is rather a discursive act performed by the hierarchical ideology that systematically reconstructs the hetero/homo binary . . . . [which] persistently and ostentatiously exhibits and produces its necessary other in order to keep it under erasure. 

This discursive secreting of lesbian desire/sexuality has a visual and filmic history as well. Andrea Weiss, for example, has noted "Lesbian images in the cinema have been and continue to be virtually invisible. Hollywood cinema, especially, needs to repress lesbianism in order to give free rein to its endless variations on heterosexual romance." 

16 Fatal Women: Lesbian Sexuality and the Mark of Aggression. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994) iv. More specially, she writes: "Desire between women was not merely repressed but foreclosed; it became that which must never appear in the light of the Symbolic. Withdrawn from the possibility of language, lesbianism indeed had no name/meaning. And what is precluded from symbolization, as Freud would say, 'returns from without'; that is, what is foreclosed from the Symbolic 'must logically appear in the Real' [quoting Zizek]. . . . Barred from the Symbolic, which was always only a masculine imaginary, lesbians became the never-spoken words that signified the hole in the signifier of this masculine imaginary. The lesbian who was derived from inversion theory was not an 'outlaw'; rather, she was void around which white Eurocentric phallocrats maintained their patriarchal system. She was outlawed from the Law of the Father" (13). More generally, Hart's book examines the one way lesbianism is publicly admitted into discourse: through the depictions of aggressive/violent women.

17 Andrea Weiss, Vampires and Violets: Lesbians in Film (New York: Penguin, 1992) 1. Weiss also says, "Each lesbian image that has managed
That nigger makes the best goddamned barbecue in the state. You've got get yourselves some of that, then you'll know what good barbecue is. I don't think you Georgia boys know what good barbecue is.'

---Grady Kilgore in Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe

I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave-ships, and above all else, above all: 'Sho' good eatin'.

---Frantz Fanon
Now that I’ve mapped out the film’s structure of secrets, we can turn our attention more specifically to the cannibal scene which discursively announces the presence of other secrets. After the night Frank threatened Ruth and his KKK cohorts whipped George, no one heard from Bennett again until the night of the Town Follies. According to Ninny, Ruth was away at one of Reverend Scroggins’ revivals. When Ninny’s voice-over dissolves we see Sheriff Grady Kilgore dressed up in bridal white and Idgie in a man’s tuxedo and top-hat. Significantly, Whistle Stop’s representative of the law—aligned through and through with the patriarchy and the reign of whiteness—is castrated, stripped of his phallus. This staged, and self-referential, scene of cross-dressing reports that marriage—and hence, putative heterosexuality—is pitiable, at best:

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42 In the novel this scene doesn’t occur. A similar one is recounted in a fictional newspaper account: “Grady Kilgore was cast as Shirley Temple who sang ‘On the Good Ship Lollipop.’ I wonder if everyone knew what pretty legs our sheriff has?... The most hilarious skit was a skit depicting Reverend Scroggins, played by Idgie Threadgoode, and Vesta Adcock, played by Pete Tidwell” (FGTWSC, 246). The latter’s drag confounds the town’s hierarchies by lampooning both the patriarch and matriarch. In another event reported by the paper Idgie plays the groom to Grady Kilgore’s bride in a “Womanless Wedding” (278). Surprisingly, the novel does not comment on this discrepancy in logic. This event, puny enough, is a Benefit for New Balls for the high school. The double-entendre is deliberate since the chapter just prior to this one has Evelyn Couch musing on “having balls” and “being ballsey.” wondering why power is talked about in such bodily specific terms: “Those two little balls opened the door to everything. They were the credit cards she needed to get ahead, to be listened to, to be taken seriously” (276). She privately muses that her ovaries should be just as empowering.

306
Grady (wife): One of the things I've learned about marriage is that a wife deserves sympathy from her husband.
Idgie (husband): Well, haven't you gotten that since you've been married to me?
Grady (wife): Yes, but from the whole town.

Of course this joking exchange resonates with Evelyn's experiences in the film's outer narrative, but even more so in terms of Ruth and Frank Bennett's relationship in the inner narrative. This critical cross-dressing comes at a highly charged juncture, the night of Frank Bennett's death. This comedic example of binary confusion prepares the way for the scene of cannibalism, another symbolic, yet bodily literal, ritual of confounding oppositions.

Marjorie Garber explains that the appearance of the transvestite in culture and in literature marks a "category crisis,"

> a failure of definitional distinction, a borderline that becomes permeable, that permits of border crossings from one (apparently distinct) category to another: black/white, Jew/Christian, noble/bourgeois, master/servant, master/slave. . . a transvestite figure, or a transvestite mode, will always function as a sign of overdetermination—a mechanism of displacement from one blurred boundary to another.4

This eruption of the tranvestitic category crisis can signal other kinds of a binary disruption elsewhere in the text since the transvestite figure, an inhabitant and incarnation of the margin, absorbs and takes on the "discomfort"

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resulting from such boundary confusion. In addition, drag can interrogate the notions of essence and construction, further disrupting ideologically entrenched polarities. Judith Butler, for one, says that drag is subversive "to the extent that it reflects on the imitative structure by which hegemonic gender is itself produced and disputes heterosexuality's claim on naturalness and originality." In this manner, then, drag and transvestiture of the sort Idgie and Grady practice exposes the fictional allegory of heterosexuality and its "mundane psychic and performative practices by which heterosexualized genders form themselves through the renunciation of the possibility of homosexuality." 

This moment, which is bound up with the literal undoing of Frank Bennett's gendered maleness and all of its privileged, phallic whiteness, then also reveals the mechanism of putative heterosexuality which possibly secrets the nature of Idgie and Ruth's relationship. This staged drag also gives some insight into the codes of dress which have come to distinctly mark each character thus far in the film. Such transvestiture magnifies that Ruth's looks are

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44 Garber, 16-17.

45 Judith Butler, Bodies that Matter: on the Discursive Limits of "Sex" (New York: Routledge, 1993) 125.

46 Butler, 235.

47 Interestingly both the novel and film highlight the moment when Idgie first dons this "masculine" clothing. Ninny Threadgoode, just
just as much a "masquerade" as Idgie's, that Ruth is not simply the undesiring object of butch Idgie's affection as some critics have suggested. In the economy of secrets I have outlined, the role of the butch in the butch-femme matrix is the mark announcing a secret, the secret of the lesbian femme. As Sue-Ellen Case has pointed out,

[...]he butch is the lesbian woman who proudly displays the possession of the penis, while the femme takes on the compensatory masquerade of womanliness. The femme, however, foregrounds her masquerade by playing to a butch, another woman in a role; likewise, the butch exhibits her penis to a woman who is playing the role of compensatory castration. . . . These women play on the phallic economy rather than to it.  

Grady's punchline, which closes the transvestitic mise-en-scene, is immediately followed by a rapid succession of

after mentioning to Evelyn that Idgie was suspected of murder, says, "[H]ow anybody ever could have thought that she killed that man is beyond me... Some people thought it started the day she met Ruth, but I think it started that Sunday dinner, April the first 1919, the same year Leona married John Justice" (FGTWSC, 12). At dinner the eleven-year-old Idgie yells out, "I'm never gonna wear another dress as long as I live" (13). Her refusal to wear dresses is linked to her alleged aggression. See Masterson's comment in the epigraph to the next section.  

Roger Ebert, for one, has made such observations: "It's pretty clear that Idgie is a lesbian, and fairly clear that she and Ruth are a couple, although given the mores of the South at the time a lot goes unspoken, and we are never quite sure how clear this is to Ruth." "Performers Outdo Script in Green Tomatoes," Denver Post (10 Jan 1992): D8.

"Towards a Butch-Femme Aesthetic," Discourse: Journal for Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture 11.1 (1988-89): 64. Case also explains that "these roles qua roles lend agency and self-determination to the historically passive subject, providing her with at least two options for gender identification and, with the aid of camp, an irony that allows her perception to be constructed from outside ideology, with a gender role that makes her appear as if she is inside of it" (65). For more on feminist camp, see Pamela Robertson, Guilty Pleasures: Feminist Camp from Mae West to Madonna (Durham: Duke UP, 1996).
intercut sequences all backgrounded by somber, blues-inflected extradiegetic score reminiscent of the opening of the film: 1) Frank Bennett driving up to the cafe in the very truck, that present absence, whose appearance opened the film; 2) Sipsey taking care of Ruth's child, Buddy, Jr.; 3) George, who had apparently already seen Bennett, calling on Idgie at the Follies, telling her, "You got to come quick, now, do you hear me?"; 4) Bennett bursting into the cafe, knocking Sipsey in the face with his rifle, and scooping up the baby's bassinet; 5) Idgie and George running as the insistent sound of a racing train gets louder; Frank knocking down Smokey who has tried to stop him followed by an indeterminate figure swinging an iron skillet, felling Bennett; 7) A long shot of the cafe, luminous in the darkness, interrupted by the blurred rushing of the previously only-heard train. The rushing train heightens the dramatic tension, but it also reminds us of Buddy Threadgoode's accidental death which, in the film, bonds Idgie and Ruth; moreover, it recalls Idgie and Ruth's first adult union--throwing canned goods to the poor from the train. It pretends to be a curtain, closeting the secret facts of the night of Bennett's fall. Moreover, in the scheme of the film, the train is a castrating force, killing Idgie's brother and amputating the limb of Buddy, Jr. In
this respect, then, the train variously signals a redrawing of reigning categorical binaries.\textsuperscript{50}

The music links this scene with the surfacing of the secret at the beginning of the film when Bennett's car is pulled from the river. While this scene begins to reveal one secret, it instantiates another by the sly juxtaposition of the following scene (a sequence, which not incidentally, also announces its status as secrecy only through revelation). The somber music of the night scene carries into the next sequence and the brightness of day. A tight close-up shows a black hand wielding a meat cleaver into a slab of rippled pink meat. The trajectory of the cleaver immediately recalls the movement of the frying pan in the penultimate sequence. This movement undeniably links the two images and suggests that it is Frank's flesh that lies beneath the sharp blade of George's knife. Next follows a reaction shot which establishes that Naughty Bird is watching the butchering from the back steps of the cafe. She is serious, somber, as if she knows something. An extreme close-up of George's face shows him sighing, perhaps grimacing followed by a tight close-up of his hand swinging the cleaver rapidly a few more times into the chunks of flesh. He looks, waves to her, half

\textsuperscript{50} In an earlier scene, on the night Bennett arrives with members of the Georgia KKK, Sipsey attempts to fend off Bennett with a broomstick and declares, "Get outta here, get out of here, I ain't scared of you." At the end of this scene, the train rushes by and the cafe is seen in the very same long shot. Undeniably, such filmic equations encourage viewers to make these connections.
smiles, and she waves back. While the camera focuses on her, he tosses a cut of meat onto the grill, and it can be heard sizzling. A long shot reestablishes the location as being behind the restaurant. This scene is remarkable in the way that it associates blackness both with cannibalism and with, as Fanon has termed, it "Sho' good eatin'." While at this point it may not be loudly enunciated, the knowing looks exchanged between the two characters announce the present absence of some sort of secret knowledge. When this cannibalistic scene originates, it is indelibly linked with blackness, a figuration I think which baldly announces the film's representation of African Americans. This linkage announces the film's secret of stereotyping and speaks against its overriding honey-colored view of race relations (and representation).

Interestingly, in the 1990 version of the screenplay this association--blackness and cannibalism--is even more pronounced. Indeed, in this treatment we do not see Frank Bennett at all, nor do we see Sipsey knocked down in an attempt to steal the baby. We only see George meeting Idgie at the stagedoor of the Town Follies. He says, "Miz Idgie, I need some money. I gotta buy some hogs tonight." Looking at him, puzzled, Idgie says, "What? But it ain't even hog killing time." Pointedly, he responds, "Yes'm it is. I've got to slaughter some hogs tonight." When she responds, "But it doesn't make sense. It's too cold. Wait until it warms
George sighs, frustrated, "You better come with me now, Miz Idgie." This exchange is followed by a scene with George "out back boiling hogs in a big black pot. His little daughter, Naughty Bird, 5, is standing with him as Grady Kilgore and two strangers walk up." They question him about having seen Bennett in the previous two days and then ask about the barbecue. Idgie watches the entire proceedings from the kitchen window. She has become involved, but it's clear such a plan originated with George. Later that night, she and George maintain a fire on the riverbank and drop a pair of men's boots—the ones noted as Frank's in an earlier close-up—into the flames. The watering down of this association in the released film suggests to me the need of the filmmakers to avoid such direct connections and thereby to sublimate racial politics.

In the novel's scene equivalent to this first run-through, a December 15th newspaper excerpt proclaiming Frank missing is immediately juxtaposed with George cooking

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2. My estimation is corroborated by the omission of an early scene in the film script (8 pages in) which depicts the day Idgie and George are arrested for their alleged involvement in the disappearance of Bennett. Grady attempts to get Idgie to flee town. Idgie protests and says, "What about Big George?" Grady responds, "The way I figure it, if they got Big George, they'd be satisfied. Nobody wants to hang a white woman." While Idgie considers the proposition and looks at George, Grady says, "Now I know how you feel about Big George—hell, we all do, but that's just the facts of life." Despite Idgie's refusal of Grady, this scene, eventually included in a later moment in the produced film, would have certainly framed the racial politics of the film in a different light.
barbecue on the 18th: "It was another ice-cold Alabama afternoon, and the hogs were boiling in the big iron pot out in back of the cafe. The pot was bubbling over the top, full of long-gone hogs that would soon be smothered with Big George's special barbecue sauce." When George is questioned, his son Artis sweats while stirring the pot of "pink and white hogs bobbing up and down like a carousel." The novel's association of cannibalism and blackness is certainly a reminder of the hidden racism of the novel, a reminder of what lies at the root of Flagg's entire project. Nevertheless, this association is balanced by other accounts of Black life throughout the novel, a balancing that is lost in the translation to film.4

4 Flagg, 207. Except for Naughty Bird, George's other children and his wife and are eliminated from the film. Significantly, Artis's skin color is deep black, unlike the skin color of George's other children. Flagg continually calls attention to this factor. That she made the blackest two African Americans in the novel the cannibal butchers is noteworthy.

5 In the abridgment in the audio version, African American characters and related plot-lines are jettisoned, seemingly to streamline the narrative. While they're extremely marginal in most cases, they're magnified in the reading of the cannibal scene (almost verbatim from the novel's version). Significantly, crucial and interesting chapters about African American characters are eliminated by the audio abridgment. Of course, the ramifications are enormous; in part it denies them agency, interiority and gives further credence to the reign of putative whiteness. While excerpts from Whistle Stop's Weem's Weekly are maintained, the Black newspaper, Slagtown News is not. Similarly and crucially absent is the novel's recognition of the multiple notions of blackness and the difference between the construction and essence of race. The character of Smokey is developed in much more detail in the novel as well; in the audio version "his" chapters are similarly jettisoned. See below for significant omissions of the lesbian romance plot. Since the practice of audio abridgment is undertheorized and depoliticized this is a rich research area; Fried would be a great case study for extended analysis.
Following the sequence of George and Naughty Bird, the camera turns to the interior of the cafe, where Grady and investigator Smoote from Georgia show Idgie and Ruth a photo of Frank Bennett. Idgie lies and says she's never seen him, while Ruth exclaims, "That's my husband," even though she hasn't seen him for quite some time. "Well," I heard, Idgie says, "he was run over by a Brink's armored truck." Smoote tells her that they had word Frank had come over to Whistle Stop to see his wife and son but he never returned home. Ruth looks down, as if she suspects something is awry. Smoote indicates the barbecue "sho smells good." Here the film returns us to the cannibalized body when the dyad of Ruth and Idgie is threatened by the Law. The interior sequence, interrupted momentarily by a close-up of George stirring the muddy-brown colored sauce, picks up again in tight focus on Smoote's plate of barbecue. He keeps an eye on Idgie in the kitchen. George can be seen through the screen door, stirring the pot of sauce. When Idgie brings him his fourth plate, she says, "I swear you're going to eat up all of my barbecue." To which he responds, "You ain't foolin' me girlie, girl. What we're talking about is murder here, runnin' afoul of the law and not nobody gets away with that. 'Cause I'm the law and you can't beat the law." The shot/reverse shot of this sequence shows a persistent, intense Smoote, and a poker-faced Idgie, who is trying her
best to remain calm. With an obvious look of consternation, Sipsey watches him from the kitchen.55

Following a scene where George is interrogated by Smoote, throughout which plays the extradiegetic blues that opened the movie, we see Idgie working out back in the shed. When she comes into the cafe dressed in work clothes, she tells Ruth she's been "taking care of business, having fun." Ruth looks distraught and tells Idgie that because of Frank's threats, she's thinking of moving far away. She says, "I don't want you to feel like you have to look out for us, maybe with us gone, you'll settle down." Idgie smoothes back a loose strand of Ruth's hair and replies, "I'm as settled as I'll ever be." Ruth tells her about a nightmare she had in which Frank abducted Buddy, Jr. and how she realized that if he ever tried to do that in real life, "I'll break his neck." Idgie responds, touchingly, "Ruth, you don't have to worry about Frank Bennett anymore." Ruth turns and looks at Idgie, who then says, "I'm only gonna tell you this once more: Frank Bennett won't be botherin' you again. You understand?"

Without hesitating, Ruth responds, "You killed him, didn't you?" Idgie protests, not entirely convincingly and says,

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55 Although it is not yet openly articulated, the joke is on Smoote since he eats up the evidence, secrets it. In the novel Smoote's dialogue is mostly the same, but he is made more sympathetic to Idgie's cause since Frank fathered the sheriff's eldest daughter's child. In the novel's version of this scene, Smoote picks at a piece of dark meat, lays it to the side, before saying, "Now, of course, just hypothetically speaking, of course, if it was me in your shoes, why I'd figure it would do me a whole lot of good if that body didn't show up at all... or if anything that belonged to him was [not] to be found" (214).
"Don't you believe me?" Ruth answers, "Right now I don't know what to believe." "Well," says Idgie firmly, "Believe me when I say I don't want you to move out." The camera focuses in tightly on Ruth's face. The significance of this scene is highlighted by its complete absence in the novel; it becomes, in this extended sequence of scenes surrounding Bennett's cannibalization, a murmured announcement of their secret bond. While the novel contains other moments when the characters profess their feelings toward each other in words—through dialogue and thoughts—in the film such verbalized moments are rare. Interestingly, the 1990 screenplay version

While I won't continue a reading of the following sequence in the outer narrative, its juxtaposition is interesting even though Evelyn Couch supposedly doesn't know yet what happened to Bennett. Ruth's face dissolves into the Winn Dixie Parking lot where Evelyn rams her car into the obnoxious teen girls' car. She fancies herself Towanda, the avenger. During this segment Aaron Hall sings, "If I can help somebody as I go/If I can show somebody, then...," which offers some interesting commentary on the relevance of the inner narrative's stories on her. Later, as she races down the hallway with Ninny she says, "I got mad and it felt terrific. After I take on the punks of this world, I'll take on the wife beaters, like Frank Bennett and I'll machine gun their genitals. I'll put tiny little bombs in Playboy and I'll ban all fashion models. Towanda--Righter of Wrongs!" In a Premiere interview Flagg speaks about this scene: "The fifty-year old writer is in the habit of giving hell to whoever's at the front desk of 'nice hotels' in which she finds pornographic movies. 'I think it's time that women have to stand up and say we do not want to be seen in a demeaning manner,' says Flagg, whose face is bursting with so much gusto that her left false eyelash is coming off." Bruce Bibbey, "'Tomatoes' with Oscars," Premiere (Feb 1992): 34. Either Bibbey's comment is thick irony which seems to suggest that Flagg's position is compromised by her own looks, or Bibbey's comment confirms Flagg's call to arms to resist demeaning depictions such as this one.

I will discuss several of the novel's verbalizations in the last section of this chapter. In the first six pages of the 1990 screenplay there appears a scene from the novel which did not get filmed: in it Ruth argues with Idgie about her drinking and running around (which in the novel reads as a play on the stereotypical
of the scene in the film does not include Idgie's comment about Ruth not moving out. She only tells Ruth she never has to worry again about Frank Bennett again. Thus, in the film the appearance of this sort of profession of fidelity/support/love is remarkable and appears only in the heterosexual man-won't-settle-down-narrative). As in a previous instance, the appearance of this sort of scene early in the film would encourage viewers to read romantic/erotic interest into their "friendship." Of course the visual economy of film offers another language. Other queer readings of this film have focused on the exchange of looks between the two characters, the moments of physical touching and the metaphorical love scenes such as the bee charmer episode and the food fight. See Vickers and Holmund. Ehrenstein (see above) by contrast thinks such eye contact is infrequent, "timed to the millisecond." For extended scenes and passages in the novel where such concerns are mapped out, see pages: 83-87; 88-91; 178; 191; 195. For open discourse about the couple, Idgie and Ruth, or the family of Buddy, Jr., Idgie and Ruth, see the following pages: 50; 77; 109-111; 115; 192; 199; 255; 258; 340. In several of these last instances, their relationship is recognized both in the courtroom and in the newspaper, as public of a verbal arena as you can get. In the novel it is clear that the two share a bedroom; in fact, it was built onto the back of the cafe by Idgie's brothers so the women would have a place to live (50). Of course this sharing only implies an erotic relationship. Clearly, though, this sort of coding is absent in the film. Once we do see Ruth and Idgie talking in a bedroom, although it's not entirely clear if they share it. It is clear, though, that their bedroom(s) are not at the cafe, an important association made in the novel. Avnet's claim of having "no interest of going into the bedroom," is clearly marked in the 1990 script he helped to shape. Directions and scene notes make clear that Ruth has her own bedroom (75). Where Idgie sleeps is not a concern, of course; it's only important where the ostensible straight woman goes to bed. 318

57 1990 screenplay, 6-7; 75. This screenplay also contains scenes omitted from the final film which attempt to inscribe Idgie's (and Ruth's) heterosexuality. I think these were most likely omitted because they brought attention to Idgie's sexuality instead of clearing up some obvious questions. In one, Ruth, of all people, asks her, "don't you ever think about having your own child?" And she responds, "Sometimes. I haven't found any guy who I could talk to the way I talk to you. Nor one who could out-shoot me, out-play me in poker, or..." (81). In another, after Ruth's death, Grady asks her to marry him (107). Still, in the film, when Idgie first talks to Ruth after she's been married awhile, Ruth asks her if "she's got a fella." Idgie replies, "A couple, I can't decide. Grady Kilgore's the most persistent."
moments when Bennett's cannibalization is first elliptically revealed.

As I have said, we revisit the action of this series of scenes in the final minutes of the film when Evelyn finds the now homeless Ninny Threadgoode sitting on her suitcase in the middle of Whistle Stop. The uncanny surfacing of the cannibal moment accompanies a return home/heimlich. But since her house had been torn down while she was at the nursing home, home has literally become unhomey/unheimlich. Considering this literalization of the circuitry of canny/uncanny, it's not surprising that within seconds of their coming together, Ninny's secret/closeted/hidden knowledge about Bennett's cannibalism is made known to Evelyn in an uncanny doubling of narratives. Ninny says, "Did I tell you Mrs. Otis was Sipsey's baby sister? Mrs. Otis was with me the night Sipsey died--Sipsey told me something I've never told a living soul--the story of what really happened to Frank Bennett the night he disappeared." The sequence of

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59 Ninny claimed to only be at the nursing home to ease the transition for her friend Mrs. Otis (who in the film version is Sipsey's little sister, but who is white in the novel). When her friend dies, she returns to her home, only to find that it had been torn down (and no one told her for fear of breaking her heart).

60 In the 1990 screenplay Evelyn Couch first asks whether Idgie really killed Bennett and she responds, "Some say yes, ... some said no. ... of course nobody knows for sure except for Frank Bennett--and you know what they say, 'Dead Men tell no tales.' (Then in a whisper) But I do." This dialogue very much highlights the mechanism at work and conjoins secrets, narratives with the return of the dead/repressed/unknowable.
rapid shots is repeated practically verbatim except for
speeding train shots which twice interrupt the shots at the
Town Follies and the cafe. After Smokey is knocked down the
first time, he gets back up and repeats his warning, but
Frank punches him harder. While Frank turns to pick up the
bassinet, he is smashed in the head by Sipsey's frying pan.
This time we see her quite clearly from behind. His dead
weight hits the ground and Smokey says, "I told you weren't
going nowhere." When the camera pans to Sipsey, she looks
stunned, perhaps still in pain from being knocked down or
perhaps worried about having possibly killed Frank. She
picks up the wailing baby and coos, "It's all right angel,
it's all right." The white baby glows in the night and we're
shown quite clearly what she is protecting.

The following sequence opens with a close-up of a bushel
basket of tomatoes on top of which rests Idgie's top-hat from

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61 George and Idgie are not seen running; presumably in the first
run-through the editing suggests that they may have made it to the scene
in time to wield the pan. They are supposed to be likely "suspects."

62 Significantly, in the 1990 screenplay, at this moment she says
to her granddaughter, "Go fetch George, honey. I done killed me a white
man." Bennett's violence to her is similarly coded in terms of race.
When he smashes her face with his gun he yells, "Get away from me,
nigger." Since the the screenplay version does not preview the cause of
death--his violent attack on Sipsey and the kidnapping of the infant--
this version's recapitulation bears the ponderous weight of the first
run-through's association of blackness and cannibalism. When Idgie
arrives at the shed with George, they find Naughty Bird "like a
frightened animal over in the corner." While her father scoops her up
and comforts her, Idgie examines the body and agrees, "I see what you
mean. . . I guess it is hog boiling time." "Yes'm. . . that's the way
that I see it" (111-112).
the Town Follies." The camera cuts to Sipsey's swollen, bloody face to which she holds a compress. In a medium shot, Idgie enters the right third of the screen, dressed in her tuxedo white shirt, her hair slicked back, and her skin shining white. She begins, "It was self-defense." With Idgie still foregrounded in a medium shot, in the back of the room, Sipsey says, although her lips can barely be seen moving in the dim light, "I don't know any white jury that would care why I did it." Smokey answers, "Well, I saw it and I can testify." After George says, "Excuse me," the camera cuts to a close-up of him when he continues, almost laughing, "No offense, but I don't know who'd be more likely to convince the jury--you or my momma." After Smokey recognizes this social truth, Sipsey says, "You're a good man, Mr. Smokey."

The camera returns to a medium shot of Idgie, her white figure looming over the others while she thinks. In an instant, and while crossing to George, she carefully explains, "Juh-o-o-rge, I think it's hog boiling time." Not understanding her point, he says, "I don't know mam', it ain't cold enough" to which she responds more emphatically, "IT'S HOG BOILING TIME!" The next shot repeats the extreme close-up of the vat of barbecue sauce being stirred. Then,

*I can't help but find significance in these joined images at this moment: the fetishistic interest in the tomatoes, as previously evidenced in the foodfight scene, the reference to the earlier cross-dressing and Idgie's "drag."
Grady asks George when the barbecue's going to be ready. "Pretty soon [sic]," "Smells so damn good," responds Grady, "Can't wait to get me some." George laughs, but whether it's out of deference or ironic humor, is unclear. Idgie, in an upper body shot, fills half of the screen; with George barbecuing in the background, she looks at the departing Grady. When she approaches George, he tells her that Smokey has left town. Given the circumstances, she says, it's probably for the best. We next see Sipsey hard at work in the kitchen, sweating profusely, when she hears a knock at the back door. When an African American man says, "We want some barbecue," she responds by saying, "No, not today you don't. Go on, now." The camera tracks at floor level, following her shuffling feet. What at first seems like a terrible, stereotypical gesture, is, possibly, a performative

44 Noticeably, Sipsey is not shown suffering the next day in either run-through. Similarly, much earlier after Big George has been whipped by the KKK, the camera avoids his wounds and focuses our attention on Idgie scooping up lard for his back; while he's being treated, the camera focuses on Idgie and Grady's discussion of how to deal with the KKK members from Georgia. In effect, the Klan is more their problem than George's, according to the biases of the staging, dialog and camera work. White women and boys, by contrast, are shown to suffer: Buddy is killed by a train; Buddy, Jr., loses his arm; Ruth is badly abused by Bennett; Evelyn in the outer narrative has a range of psycho-emotional and physical problems; Idgie injures her ankle while hopping off the train and maintains her injury in the following bee-charmer scene; Ruth is viewed in her sickbed in pale white agony/rapture. In the 1990 screenplay Sipsey says, "No ma'am, my Jesus is a sweet Jesus. He never meant for one of his babies to suffer so. No ma'am" (101). In the novel the Weekly Weems newspaper includes a report on Buddy, Jr.'s amputation: "That makes a foot, an arm, and an index finger we have lost right here in Whistle Stop this year. And also, that colored man that was killed, which just says, one thing to us, that is that we need to be more careful in the future" (107).
one. She plays the part of the subservient Black woman as she approaches Smoote who says, "That's about the best barbecue I ever ate." Idgie peers around the booth she's sitting in with a look of commingled disgust and incredulity while Sipsey smirks and says, "Secret's in the sauce!"

The revelation of this secret is even more secretly handled in the novel's version of this recapitulation. But this secret like the other ones thus far examined marks a buried reality or possibility. None of the white characters in the novel knows what happened to Bennett, although Idgie might have suspicions. It's clear, though, that Sipsey conceals such information from her (366). Since Ninny cannot know this story, she is not the mechanism that brings this story to life. Instead, a 1967 newspaper report announces that a skull with a glass eye, likely from someone who had been decapitated, was recently found. By this point in the novel, because of half a dozen or so careful descriptions, Frank Bennett's signifying feature is his glass eye. His remains return from the dead to reveal a shocking secret. In the following chapter, Flagg catapults us back to 1930 and up until the moment Bennett is felled by Sipsey, things are the same. Unlike the movie, his skull is split open and Sipsey mutters, "Ain't nobody gonna get dis baby, no suh, not while I's alive." She passes by her grandson Artis, who is characterized by Flagg as inherently evil, someone who succumbs, not surprisingly, to a life of crime; not
surprisingly, given the vein of her portrayal, Artis "is so black he had blue gums" (99). As Sipsey passes him she says, wild-eyed, "I done kilt me a white man, I done kilt him daid" (361). Finding what his mother has done, George concludes that since there was no system of justice in Alabama for a Black who had killed a white man, he did what he had to do. He left Artis to guard that body while he disposed of the truck. Artis is excited and nervous about his charge and at one point unable to resist, "he opened his knife and, in the pitch dark, struck the body under the sheet--once, twice, three, four times--and on and on." When his father returned the two proceeded to strip Bennett of his clothes, but they were startled to find he had been decapitated by Sipsey, a reference to her superstitious habit of burying the heads of animals they had butchered (366). Artis is surprised by the pink and white skin of Bennett, and if this allusion is not clear enough, Flagg adds, "just like those hogs after they'd been boiled an all their hair had come off" (366). This secret of Bennett's disposal is empowering to him:

He couldn't help but smile. He had a secret. A powerful secret that he would have as long as he lived. Something that would give him power when he was feeling weak. Something that only he and the devil knew . . . He would never have to feel the anger, the hurt, the humiliation of the others ever again. He was different. He would always be set apart. He had stabbed himself a white man. And whenever any white folks gave him any grief, he could smile inside. *I stabbed me one of you, already!* (366).
Flagg's association of blackness and cannibalism is complexly problematic, summoning undercurrents of centuries of imperialist, racist discourse. Seventy-five years transpired between the first serial publication of Tarzan and the publication of Flagg's novel in 1987, but how little, seemingly, had changed. Clearly such overtones were all too strong for the producers of the film who chose to whitewash the association. In the film, white characters are equally imbricated within the mise-en-scene of Bennett's disposal. But, these changes are more necessary in the film which myopically views race. Lacking a broad range of representations of blackness, in the film, cannibalistic vengeance would have become the overdetermined signifier of blackness.

Perhaps one clue to reading the representational strategy of Flagg's novel, though, is in Artis' retrospective reaction to the episode. An old man in 1979, Artis thinks, "He could smile and shuffle, but it never bothered him" (372). This passage quite likely was the inspiration for Sipsey's shuffling gate in the last sequence from the inner narrative of the film. Through the screen of cannibalistic violence, Flagg could depict the power of private and secret resistance and subversion against the racist regime of power/knowledge. One more way to recognize the significance of this strategy is to compare it against its reformulation.
When it is translated by the film producers, what happens? In such a whitewashing, the very real social facts of blackness are lost. It becomes less a commentary on the impossibility of finding the full protections and rights of citizenship under the law, and more of a ironic basis for the feel-good, cross-cultural coalition that is formed. In sum, the cover-up becomes a renewed basis for friendship. Indeed, in the very end of the film, after recounting this recapitulation to Evelyn, Ninny says, "Truth's a funny thing... I feel better because all these people will live as long as you remember. You've reminded me of the most important thing in life--friends!"

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65 This is by no means the final answer. A fuller answer would attempt to examine in detail the novel's representation of African Americans. While the film is deeply conflicted on race, I think the novel is much less so. Critics have charged that Flagg relies on stereotypes. Holmund, 49. True to some extent, most of these, including the ones mentioned by Holmund are couched within the consciousness of characters whose estimations should be double-checked. One chapter, with some of the best writing in the novel, focuses on city life in Birmingham, Alabama: life goes on for these characters in rich and vibrant ways, out of the gaze of whites. And blackness is a varied, complex reality, not something lived in binding oppositional terms: "Blacks, tans, cinnamons, octoroons, reds and dukes mixtures, moving Artis down the street, all dressed in suits of lime and green and purple, sporting two-toned yellow-and-tan brogans..." (117). White Birmingham is oblivious to their world (an apt parallel to Hollywood's lack of awareness). The novel follows the private lives of African American families, instills individual characters with interiority and passion, unlike the film's flat depiction of subservient Blacks whose sole/soul vocation is working for white people.
That's What (Cannibal) Friends Are For

"Whatever you think their relationship offscreen is, it's up to you. The way she dresses doesn't mean she's gay. She just doesn't feel like being a conventional stereotypical female in the eyes of that society at that time because it wasn't her. But I don't think that's even a relevant issue."

---Mary Stuart Masterson on her character Idgie

"Well, I'm not sure [about the sexual link between Idgie and Ruth]. Those were innocent times in that part of the world and... I'm not sure people knew the word 'lesbian.' Maybe they didn't have a name for the girls, and maybe it doesn't matter."

---Fannie Flagg, 10 January 1992

"People can postulate what they want. Nothing's black-and-white, it's all on a curve. What I wanted to deal with was intimacy between two women. As to whether or not they are gay—who gives a shit?"

---Jon Avnet, winner of Advocate's 1992 Sissy Award: "You Say Tomatoes, We Say Lesbians"

What was this power, this insidious threat, this invisible gun to her head that controlled her life... this terror of being called names?

---Evelyn Couch

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9 Flagg, 236. Ellipses and emphasis in original. This passage continues: "She had stayed a virgin so she wouldn't be called a tramp or a slut; had married so she wouldn't be called an old maid; faked orgasms so she wouldn't be called frigid; had children so she wouldn't be called barren; had not been a feminist because she didn't want to be called queer and a man hater; never nagged or raised her voice so she wouldn't be called a bitch."
"I do think things are stated between the lines. It was obvious why it wouldn't be in the movie—it's completely obvious!"

---Mary Louise Parker (Ruth)⁷⁶

"If you don't believe us, read the book."

---Shelia James Kuehl, Zelda in TV's The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis, in announcing the GLAAD award for Fried⁷⁷

"I had to watch it twice to UNDERSTAND it."

---Female Guard at Columbus Metropolitan Library commenting on my video choice of Fried Green Tomatoes⁷⁸

Two bumper stickers on a Toyota Tercel: Towanda! & Gay Pride Rainbow Flag

---Summer 1994, Ohio State University⁷⁹

Just as the final sequence of the film recapitulates to the fuzzy logic of friendship, so does this chapter. Of course my section title makes an allusion to the mid-eighties' pop song/coalition anthem "That's What Friends Are For" by Dionne


---May 1996. I'm most probably over-reading the response of this fairly "butch"-looking African American woman. To be sure, the proposition that this movie necessitated uncanny repetition fanned the flames of my critical desires.

---This doubling of bumper stickers, uncanny in itself, was even more uncanny. On a hot summer Sunday I came back to my own Toyota Tercel parked in a remote, deserted lot; this car, the only other on the many acres of asphalt, was parked alongside mine, speaking to the heart of this critical project.

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Warwick and Friends, which ostensibly raised money for AIDS research. Using the vague pronoun of the song title as a critical premise, we might ask in Jeopardy!-style inversion, "What are friends for?" Well, if you were Jon Avnet, Fanny Flagg and numerous others involved with the film version of Fried Green Tomatoes, friends were the answer to all your problems. For example, in light of audience response, producer Norman Lear realized, "The movie is touching something that is very deep. I'm getting mail and calls and the message is always the same. In this very alienated time, it's invoking the longing for friendships and connections." It's quite likely that such reactions and evidence from test-marketing influenced the studio's revamped advertising campaign which emphasized and evoked friendship as the film's core value and meaning. The notion of friendship was even capitalized on by Universal Studios in a revamped advertising campaign which responded to viewer interests: "Share Tomatoes with a friend." Seeing that word-of-mouth campaigning was bringing widespread attention to the film, producers capitalized on this trend and interpellated viewers

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This single won a Grammy for song of the year in 1986. Its saccharine sweetness typified our nation's skewed Reaganomic response to a crisis of geometric proportions. Like the film Fried, the response to the personal-social-political-economic reality crises was friendship.

Fox, F8.


329
themselves into the aura of friendship on display in the film.

According to the film's narrative, friendship can fix long-entrenched class, race, sexuality and gender rifts. But, more consistently, the pronouncement of friendship becomes that which sends lesbianism and racism, among other things, into secrecy. Thus, following the logic of secrets which I articulated earlier, the concept of "friendship" serves as the present-marker of the unutterable absent-secret. In the novel, Ninny lives in an all-white nursing home where a few Black women work, but significantly, in the film, her best friend Mrs. Otis, the sole reason she has come to the nursing home in the first place, is Black. This shift may seem minor, but it marks a larger dissonance whether this slogan was an attempt to draw in repeat and three-peat customers (something that's becoming a commonplace in movie promotion).

"Such a solution to cross-cultural "misunderstanding" is increasingly commonplace in Hollywood films. Benjamin DeMott, for one, says that in evoking a rhetoric of sameness between the races, Hollywood films increasingly "eliminate[e] the constraints of objective reality and redistribute[e] resources, status, and capabilities. That cleansing force supersedes political and economic fact or policy; that force, improbably enough, is friendship." "Putting on a Happy Face: Masking the Differences between Blacks and Whites," Harper's (Sept 1995): 32. For a sustained analysis of contemporary Black-White male buddy films as well as a "[Leslie] Feidlerian landscape of interracial bonds," see also Robyn Weigman's American Anatomies.

"Ninny says, "Funny, now that I think about it, there aren't any colored people here at Rose Terrace at all, except the ones that clean up and some nurses. . . and one of them is just as smart, she's a full-blow[n] registered nurse. . . a cute and sassy little thing, and talks as smart and big as you please" (74). This passage compacts Ninny's naive, yet racist thinking. In one scene she recounts an episode reminiscent of Flannery O'Connor's "Everything That Rises Must Converge."
present in the film: the difference between what is expressed or voiced and that which is given expression (that is, experienced). In other words, the film's money is not where its mouth is. That the film speaks to racial harmony and similarly calls for an overturning of traditional gender structures is not borne out by what is actually seen on the screen. Cross-cultural/racial friendship is invoked but never articulated in a sustained or developed way anywhere in the film.

We hear about Ninny's friend Mrs. Otis, but she is never seen; we do see Evelyn talking to Sue Otis, her daughter-in-law for a half-minute, but this hardly makes up for other glaring absences. We hear about Idgie befriending the African American residents of neighboring Troutville (across the tracks from Whistle Stop), but such experiences are visually absent (as they are similarly absent in the novel despite allusions to them). When we do see Sipsey, George, and his tag-a-long daughter, Naughty Bird, they are forever working for the white families and white middle-class women. According to the visual representations, and absent a clear articulation of familial relationships, both Sipsey and

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9 The following anecdote about the film's production provocatively addresses the way the film paves over historical and cultural inequity: the scenes of the Rose Hill Nursing Home, all-white in the novel, were filmed at Starcrest, a former Blacks-only hospital. Premiere, 33.

80 The novel also characterizes George and Sipsey in terms of their work: Sipsey comes to work for the Threadgoodes as a cook when she is 10 or 11 (47), and George learns the trade of butcher at age 10 (49).
George lead narrow lives of hard work. Naughty Bird leads a seemingly slow, albeit extremely watchful, life following her elders around.¹ In the film we are not privy to the rest of George's family, in particular his wife Onzell and his twin sons Artis and Jasper. Ostensibly the reason for compressing such an interesting array of characters into a few is to minimize confusion and to maintain a streamlined plot.² But it comes mainly at the expense of African American characters and makes their private, non-working lives invisible. The implications in terms of representational politics is significant: blackness exists only in the face of whiteness, in oppositional ways; blackness floats around the margins and peripheries and never takes center stage; blackness is a problem that must be overcome. Thus, one may draw the conclusion that African Americans have a hard time occupying the position of Subject and must rely on the symbiotic friendship of whites if they ever want to achieve it.

The film sets forth the notion, then, that African Americans want to be befriended by whites, want to be

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¹ Chris Holmund has suggested that "Each of the three major African American characters is built around a stereotype, with Sipsey incarnating the 'mammy,' Big George the 'buck,' and Naughty Bird, the 'pickaninny.'" "Cruisin' for a Bruisin'." 40. Holmund also says that Naughty Bird in the movie is Sipsey's younger sister, but I'm not sure where she derives this information. Through the adaptation process the 1990 script maintains that Naughty Bird is George's daughter. I mention this only to suggest the ways that the film blurs for viewers (and critics) the self-integrity of the African American characters.

² An unstated quota system in terms of casting is also likely the case.
noticed. This becomes most obvious in the televised version of the movie which added several scenes better left on the cutting room floor. One scene is drawn from a passage in the novel when Evelyn is longing for what she thinks is the freedom of blackness: On a visit to an all-Black church, beaming Ninny and nervous Evelyn squeeze into the back pew as a gospel singer (Marion Williams) belts out "Didn't It Rain?" a paean to endurance through pain and hard times. In a crowded church, the singer makes her way to the only two white women, privately serenading them, once again proving that Blacks love whites, want their attention, and want to bask in the beacon of their reflecting whiteness, friendly attention.\(^3\) Although this film's representational politics may seem benign compared to others, it proffers a

\(^3\) The theater release of the film does not include this scene, although the audiotape abridgment includes a version of it. But, tellingly, the scene on the recording is stripped of its racist and essentializing notions—at least compared to the full version in the novel. This moment, though, in the novel reveals to her, her own whiteness: "This was the first time in her life she had ever been surrounded by only Blacks. All at once, she was the belly of a snake, the Pillsbury Doughboy, a page in a coloring book left uncolored, a pale flower in the garden indeed" (308-9). Evelyn does eventually realize "Maybe she had come today hoping she could find out what it was like to be Black. Now she realized she could never know, any more than her friends here could know what it felt like to be white. She knew she would never come back. This was their place. But for the first time in her life, she had felt joy. Real joy" (310). This scene in the televised movies suggests that the African American musical tradition can really speak in genuine ways across the cultural divide. I think that it can, but this scene, and especially the soundtrack itself—composed predominantly of pieces performed/written by or imitating African American performers—suggests that soul, blues, jazz and gospel can speak identically to the plight of middle-class whites. If this is overstated, I do see a persistent trend in the structuring of the film's soundtrack which significantly marks an Africanist presence in this lily-white fictive world.
rhetorically "reality" not only in marked contrast to social reality, but, as I have pointed out, in marked contrast to the "reality" made visible to us on celluloid.

If that's what friends are for in terms of race, what else are they for? In particular, friendship is invoked as the culminating explanation of Idgie and Ruth's relationship. The film precludes same-sex desire by installing Buddy, Idgie's brother, whom she once lived for, at the center of the two women's relationship. In the novel Buddy dies before Ruth comes to Whistle Stop. This is even true in the 1990 screenplay; indeed, in the bee charmer scene Idgie says, "I wish Buddy could have met you." But in the film it is the memory of Buddy which ostensibly draws these two together. They come to love each other across the (ghost) body of Buddy. About this very matrix, Lu Vickers astutely says, "it's easy to imagine why audiences walk away feeling they've just watched a movie about friends... The movie wants us to believe that the women's relationship revolves around their mutual love of Buddy, and that given his loss, they might as well settle for each other." I want to briefly examine three other noticeable locations where uttered lesbian desire and partnership are turned into mere friendship through the


* Vickers, 28.
commercial adaption process. Avnet and Flagg cannibalize the earlier novel and evacuate its meaningful content.

The film significantly ignores the wrenching pain and melancholy that both Idgie and Ruth experience when they part after a blissful summer. In the novel, Ruth's departure into compulsory heterosexuality is preceded by an angst-ridden couple of months:

> It's funny, most people can be around someone and then gradually begin to love them and never know exactly when it happened; but Ruth knew the very second it happened to her. When Idgie had grinned at her and tried to hand her that jar of honey, all these feelings that she had been trying to hold back came flooding through her, and it was that second in time that she knew she loved Idgie with all her heart. . . And now a month later, it was because she loved her so much that she had to leave. (88)

On the day of Ruth's departure (in the novel), Idgie is extremely angry, and when Ruth tries to rationalize her marriage to Frank, Idgie says, "Oh no you don't [love him]. You love me. . . You know you do. You know you do!" (90; original ellipses). In the 1990 screenplay the two say good-bye civilly. Idgie does burst out in anger by breaking things in her room, but the two speak in clipped sentences, and when Idgie tells Ruth that she doesn't love Bennett, she also says, "You know you don't. You want to stay here with us. I know you do. We love you." In the audio-tape, this chapter is altogether omitted. What we have is only Ninny's

"screenplay, 1990, 41."
rendition of events. And, most significantly, in the film, after a day at the Wagon Wheel Club, and during a private moonlight swim, Ruth casually mentions to a rather stunned Idgie that she's getting married. Idgie's blank stare connotes her feelings, but this is the extent of a reaction. There is no tantrum and there is no pleading about who's loving whom. Since the two are just friends, there's no outburst of emotions. Ninny's voice-over closes the scene and carries us to other matters.

When Ruth does return to Whistle-Stop after fleeing the abusive Frank Bennett, in the novel, she is welcomed into the family, more or less, as Idgie's partner. In the novel Ruth openly says to Idgie's parents, "I should never have left her four years ago, I know that now. But I'm going to try and make it up to her and never hurt her again. You have my word on that" to which Momma Threadgoode responds, "Poppa and I just want you to know that we think of you as one of the family now, and we couldn't be happier for our little girl to have such a sweet companion as you" (199). When Ruth gives birth, the baby significantly is named Buddy, Jr., something

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Since the full context of their relationship is unrealized in the film, if the presence of their lesbian desire does surface, it's still partly rhetoricized as the result of a failed heterosexuality. Judith Butler summarizes this phenomenon: diagnoses that posit a lesbian is one who must have had a bad experience with men, or who have not yet found the right one "presum[e] that lesbianism is acquired by virtue of some failure in the heterosexual machinery, thereby continuing to install heterosexuality as the 'cause' of lesbian desire; lesbian desire is figured as the fatal effect of a derailed heterosexual causality. In this framework, heterosexual desire is always true, and lesbian desire is always and only a mask, forever false." Bodies that Matter, 127.
which carries over into the film (and which visually marks the memory of the man/boy which connects them). But, in the novel, Idgie's mother announces, "Oh, Idgie, he's got your hair!" (192). In the film, the scene shows Idgie and her cohorts joyous over Ruth's delivery, not reserving the emotional connectedness primarily for her. This, though, is slightly more demonstrative than the 1990 screenplay which has Idgie saying, "Hi little fellow. What's his name?"

After their child is born, the novel's version of Poppa Threadgoode "sat Idgie down and told her that now that she was going to be responsible for Ruth and a baby, she'd better figure out what she wanted to do, and gave her five hundred dollars to start a business with" (192). Not surprisingly in the film it is only in a brief voice-over that we learn Poppa Threadgoode took out a loan to help the two women open a restaurant. This is the limit of Ruth and Idgie's filmic connection to the rest of the Threadgoode family, a marked contrast to the novel. While the film's reduction of the Threadgoode family's imbrication in Ruth and Idgie's relationship may seem to parallel the example of George and Sipsey, I think there is one major difference. By emphasizing the family's acceptance of the two, by demonstrating the pair's participation in a family economy, the film would have to rely on some "traditional" denotative

**" Screenplay, 1990, 62.**
explanation for their relationship. In a familial economy, each member is defined in relational terms: husband, wife, mother, father, sister, brother, aunt, uncle, in-law and so on. Idgie and Ruth defy traditional taxonomies; thus the film steers clear of moments when the anxiety of definition may surface.89

To conclude my comparison with the novel I want to return to the beginning of Idgie and Ruth's relationship. The two first bond in a meaningful way on an illicit and secretive train-ride to distribute food to the needy.90

89 For a more intricate discussion of these issues, see Ruthann Robson, "Mother: The Legal Domestication of Lesbian Existence," Hypatia 7 (Fall 1992). Such definitions hardly ever surface in the novel, but the film is even anxious about moments which circle around the taxonomic absence. Once the narrator describes Idgie and Buddy, Jr. (Stump) as "like father and son" and once Idgie says to Buddy, Jr.: "Now, you're my son and I love you no matter what. You know that, don't you?" (111, 115).

90 I have ignored the novel's crucial linkage between sexuality and other forms of cultural subversion, such as the economic disruption of their Railroad Bill campaign to steal from the trains to give to the needy during the Depression years, their own "thousand cans of light." In the film this is a significant secret as well and is importantly condensed within any image of trains seen in the rest of the film (trains, remember, figure significantly in the two scenes I've paid particular attention to above). Indeed, even in the film Idgie partakes of a "post-coital" cigarette. The scene of their first meeting is played up in an amazing way in the screenplay (it's a complete departure from the novel. It's amazing, in particular, for its recapitulation to standard romance-rescue plots: After Ruth and Idgie jump from the train, as in the film, Idgie is injured. Ruth carries her. They pass into a tunnel, but they hear a train coming. Knowing there is only one solution, "Ruth employs every ounce of strength she has and as the train is just about to catch them, she makes it out of the tunnel and they roll off to the side of the train tracks, to safety. The train screeches by them" (33-4). I'm sure the scene was removed, in part for its tonal absurdity, but also because the generic referencing reveals too much. The fact that it made it into the screenplay, I think, is a symptom of the writer/producer's anxiety about articulating their desire in the traditional film taxonomies.
Following this, Idgie takes Ruth to a secret place, a place where they first express their love for each other. The tender scene of Idgie dangerously retrieving a honeycomb from a hollow tree does appear in the film, but significant dialogue and gestures are excluded. In the novel, Idgie says to Ruth, "I never did that for anybody else before. Now nobody in the whole world knows I can do that but you. I just wanted for us to have a secret together" (84-5). Ruth explains she would be distraught without her. After finishing a picnic lunch and eating most of the honey, Idgie rests her head in Ruth's lap and says that she'd kill for her because she loves her. Following this,

Ruth took her hand and smiled down at her. 'My Idgie's a bee charmer.'
'Is that what I am?'
'That's what you are. I've heard there were people who could do it, but I'd never seen one before today.'
'Is it bad?'
'Noooo. It's wonderful. Don't you know that?'
'Naw, I thought I was crazy or something.'
'No---it's a wonderful thing to be.'
Ruth leaned down and whispered in her ear, 'You're an old bee charmer, Idgie Threadgoode, that's what you are. . .''
Idgie smiled back at her and looked up into the clear blue sky that reflected in her eyes and she was as happy as anybody who is in love in the summertime can be. (86-7; original ellipses)

The language may not be explicit, but coupled with the tenderness they exchange, it comes amazingly close to expressing the desire which our culture for so long hasn't dared to name. In fact, the roundabout avoidance of the term lesbian in this scene is appropriately characteristic of the
way our culture has for too long dealt with same-sex love. Significantly this term is never used in the novel. Queer is, but lesbian never is. Idgie does proclaim, "I'd kill for you," but it comes across as an absurd nonsequitur.

The novel's references to erotic love are limited. The narrator says about Ruth, "no matter how hard she tried to suppress it, Frank felt the love inside she had for Idgie. It had slipped out somehow, in her voice, her touch; she didn't know how, but she believed he must have known and that's why he despised her. So she had to live with that guilt and had taken the beatings and the insults because she thought she deserved them" (195). In another interesting moment, full of ellipses, Idgie, grieving over Ruth's "unrequited" love, turns to Eva, her deceased brother's lover: "Eva took [Idgie] over to her cabin and put her in the bed. Eva couldn't stand to see anything hurt that bad. She sat down beside Idgie, who was still crying, and said, 'Now, sugar, I don't know who you're crying over, and it doesn't really matter, 'cause you're gonna be all right. Hush up, now... you just need somebody to love you, that's all... it's gonna be all right... Eva's here... and she turned off the lights. Eva didn't know about a lot of things, but she knew about love." (98; all original punctuation).
(the honey) followed by Ruth eagerly reaching two fingers into the jar.

In such an evacuated text, significant meaning condenses in such visual moments. Undeniably, it is these queer surfaces—and, of course, a clear understanding of the novel—which promoted a heated debate about the film's politics in the alternative and progressive press. The epigraphs which open this section survey some of the varying reactions to the film. In many, the conceit of friendship is invoked to explain "what is really going on." Earlier in the production process, Avnet encouraged gay and lesbian interest; indeed, members from GLAAD saw an advance preview and were pleased that the characters had not been transformed into heterosexuals. Flagg and Avnet were particularly vocal in their resistance to such interpretations despite concessions that viewers could derive their own conclusions. Flagg says, "It's not a political film at all. It's about the possibilities of people being sweet and loving to each other." She is both unable to invoke the word "love"—being loving is different from being in love, after all—or the word "lesbian," unless her use of "political" is read as its substitute. When she does utter the word "lesbian," as in the first epigraph above, she semantically avoids the

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"James Parish, 149.
question. Instead of suggesting that the characters “do not partake of what we now term, in our culture, lesbian desire,” she says the word was unknown. In another interview, also avoiding the word “lesbian,” she emphatically declares,

No, no, no. It’s a story about love and friendship. The sexuality is unimportant. In the book, all the relationships are very close, and people can draw whatever conclusions they want. That’s what you hope for when you write a book. We are looking at them from 1991. [The 30s] were a totally different time period. There were very warm friendships between women. 96

Flagg first denies the importance of sexuality, then admits that her book might contain such suggestions, and then invokes our contemporary misreading of the situation. In effect, she authorizes any reading of the relationship as depicted in the book, but allows only her version of friendship and loving in the adaptation despite the fact that each portrays the same time period, thus ignoring her own cultural relativity argument. Most noticeable, of course, is her absolute refusal to address what lies at the heart of the question: if these women were portrayed as a committed same-sex couple in the novel (even without the presence of explicit eroticism), what accounts for the film’s transmutation? Caught in a triple bind, she comes back to the safe haven of that essential bond between women, friendship.

Avnet as well as the actors mentioned above similarly invoke this explanation, shifting between an emphasis on

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friendship to the bonds between women. In fact, the two subjects collapse into each other quite easily. Despite such reemphasizing, even Avnet found himself in convoluted, exasperated explanations:

The sexuality had no interest for me. It is what it is or whatever you wanted to think it is. What I wanted to deal with was the intimacy. I wanted two women who loved each other. Women seem to be closer to each other than men. I'm talking about straight women as well as gay women ["lesbian" cannot be uttered by him]. And that interested me quite a bit. I think intimacy is the most frightening experience of our lifetime. Sexuality has so little to do with it. Being able to be close to someone and suffer the pangs or rejection and fears of inadequacy, the intense wonderful feeling when you do have it and the nothingness when you don't. It's the most wonderful experience in life.97

The unwieldy circuitry of this passage probably speaks for itself. But, in sum, Avnet is suggesting that sexuality should be jettisoned from any discussion of the movie because the deeper bond lies elsewhere in friendship (translated, here, as "intimacy"). Of course, your average dictionary lists one meaning of intimacy as "of or involving a sexual relationship." Interestingly, Avnet makes sexuality an easy thing, something overvalued by our culture, too simple a topic to take on in his film. Like Flagg, no explanation is given for such shifts except that the focus on (homo)sexuality distorts the real focus. Of course the heterosexual world of Ed and Evelyn Couch and Ruth and Frank Bennett, the references to Idgie's search for a man, the

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97 Keough.
multiple references to heterosexual marriage, do not count as "sexuality" for Avnet. As has been common in the historical and cultural discourse about lesbianism, "lesbian desire is always and only a mask, forever false," a secret." In their definitional quandary, both Avnet and Flagg fail to see that the word lesbian can be applied to Idgie and Ruth without having to "enter the bedroom," as the director so adamantly wanted to avoid doing. Ellen Carton, then executive director of GLAAD makes such a point:

Yes, the book was about people who love people and women who bond. Some people who love and bond are lesbians. The book is not exclusively about these lesbians, but they were a part of the book and they should have been part of the movie. It's about time lesbians aren't seen only in terms of sexuality. The reality is that lesbians are often depicted negatively (most notably in the upcoming Basic Instinct) or as invisible. Fried Green Tomatoes missed a golden opportunity to depict a loving, caring relationship. That's outrageous."

Carton, importantly, brings us back to the continually unanswered question: why the change?

Noticeably avoided by all, except perhaps by Mary-Louise Parker's response, much commentary skirted the real reason behind the representational politics: the box-office. That dollars were at stake is clearly noticeable, as I've pointed out, in the shifting advertising campaigns. And, in interviews, its makers and actors wanted to have their

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"Butler, 127.

tomatoes and eat them too by continually shifting the parameters of the film's "meaning." Avnet, for example, claims that while it has parallels to Thelma and Louise, his film avoids a simple aping of "some stupid male genre." Mary Stuart Masterson similarly cites Fried's originality and its avoidance of what you see in typically male-centered movies or movies where "women play men's roles, you never see women just being women and bonding." Despite her oppositional rhetoric, she carefully suggests that "This isn't a guy-bashing movie. . . . just because men aren't a driving force in the movie, that doesn't mean that it's anti-male." Careful not to alienate men, yet still emphasizing its women-centeredness, Masterson and Avnet attempt to shore up bigger and better box-office. But perhaps the art of spinning a good soundbite was best achieved by Kathy Bates who interestingly brings this discussion back to the cannibal cause: "It's not about women. It's about friendship, people, relationships, passing down life experiences. It's about 'the secret's in the sauce.'" Like her character Evelyn in the first part of the film, she's afraid of names, afraid of naming the secret. Yet her vacuous--and perhaps wearied--response marks further proliferation of Universal's marketing

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scheme: invoke friendship, relationships, and if all else fails, say it's about "The secret's in the sauce!"

Like any pronounced secret, though, this slogan contains the seed of its own unmaking. By now it should be clear how the economy of secrets is deeply imbedded within the frames of this film and within the scenes of production and reception. My argument in this chapter has begun to unmask the lure of this recapitulation to secrecy and has made efforts to expose the traces of procedural ideology, the traces of the writer/director/producer[/murderer]'s act. Nowhere does this secreting get more symbolically and yet literally pronounced--and in such a highly charged historical, philosophical, psychological, and cultural manner--but in the cannibalism of Frank Bennett. The cannibal moment, when binarity is most literally threatened, is bound up in a matrix of secrets that exist to naturalize reigning ideologies. This moment puts pressure on the ideological practices which secret the closet-reality of same-sex love/desire/sexuality, of ontological integrity of African Americans, of the prevailing reign of both heterosexuality and whiteness; once outed, uncloseted from the interstices of normativity, such realities can begin to threaten, test, reconfigure and rescript the dominant narratives our culture knows so well.
EPilogue

THE WAY WE LIVE NOW: DAHMER, LECTER, AUNTIE LEE, ALIVE

The drama's done. Why then here does any one step forth?--Because one did survive the wreck.

---"Epilogue," Moby-Dick

Moby-Dick was published simultaneously in England and in the United States, but the English edition did not have an epilogue; presumably, everyone, including Ishmael, the narrator, perished in the Pequod's sinking. The U.S. edition, though, featured two additional paragraphs preceded by an epigraph from Job which reads, "And I only am escaped alone to tell thee." This emendation explains how the tale--the entire novel--came to be told retrospectively: Ishmael was buoyed to safety by the cannibal Queequeg's coffin. In the American edition it is the cannibal presence which permits the tale to be told.

Likewise, it is the continuing presence of the cannibal in contemporary U.S. culture which gives life to my epilogue. As with most epilogues, it marks only a partial and temporary conclusion--Melville's epilogue, after all, was not the conclusion, but the beginning of the narrative's telling. In

\[1 \text{ M-D, 470.}\]
this vein, before closing, I want to suggest some future and necessary possibilities for my line of critical intervention.

In analyzing American culture's cannibal fictions, my project has analyzed popular texts written or produced by white authors. I have attempted to articulate the presence of whiteness made visible by an imagined non-white presence. But, my analysis of race and the means by which the subject of cannibalism is used to articulate such differences has continued to rely on the very notion of oppositional difference critiqued by Frantz Fanon in my penultimate chapter. Cannibalism, itself, requires oppositional categories, and as I've demonstrated in the instances of Melville's novel, Burroughs' Tarzan, and Barnum's exhibition, race and ethnicity are most often the pivot points which demarcate the cannibal boundaries and which authorize—perhaps ambivalently, at times—the Imperial project.

To some extent, Fannie Flagg's Fried Green Tomatoes innovatively, if not problematically, inverts Burroughs' or Barnum's notions of the cannibalistic savage by suggesting that man-eating, given the prevailing social norms, is a just, retributive action. But even this recuperation, as I've demonstrated, contains remnants of racist and homophobic ideologies; furthermore, the structure which supports Flagg's/Avnet's critique still makes use of oppositional logic, although the oppositions are not only racial ones. In
the end, it may be possible that such logic must attain within the trope of cannibalism; indeed, its symbolic freight relies on a (perceived) tension between $P_1$ and $P_2$ and the fear that each will collapse into $P_{1,2}$. Without such oppositions, little tension remains and the possibility of cannibalism loses its significance (of course, there always exists the tension between being alive and being annihilated).

For Euro-America, the discourse of cannibalism originally emerged in a cross-racial interchange. Yet recent cases suggest that when the interracial situation disappears or is reconfigured, the discourse of cannibalism retains traces of its racialized origins. Because cannibalism is historically and culturally bound to the racialized scene, its appearance in seemingly non-racialized settings encourages us to "read for race" where we might not normally. Such moments might allow us to see the ways that racialized discourse becomes imbricated in other attempts to negotiate differences in gender, sexuality or class, among other things. At the same time, such moments might allow us to rethink earlier textual-historical examples wherein the opposition of non-racial categories underpinned the formation of a racialized discourse (to a certain extent, my chapters on Barnum's Fijis and Tarzan have been mindful of the imbrication of gender and race). My reading of Fried attempts this, but the interactions of Black and non-Black
characters suggests that I'm still reading race as an oppositional presence.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s several texts came before the American public which push the limits of my analysis and ask us to understand the means by which structures traditionally employed to articulate racial differences (the rhetoric of cannibalism, for example) are redeployed or imbricated within narratives preoccupied or taken up with notions of difference not predicated (solely) on race. The camp movies *Flesh Eating Mothers* (Dir. James Martin, 1988) and *Auntie Lee's Meat Pies* (Dir. George Steiner, 1991) both focus on the white heterosexual domestic world in Reagan-era America. In each, as in *Fried*, women turn cannibalistic for a reason: to counteract abusive men. In the first, a virus transmitted by their philandering husbands turns the women into raving cannibals who want to devour their children and their mates. In the second, Auntie Lee and her coterie of "nieces" bake meat pies which are tremendously popular at local cafes. The nieces lure men into making inappropriately forward sexual advances, whereupon they murder them, and return to their southern California ranch to process the meat. This film, in its twining of economic and gendered critiques, recalls Paul Bartel's earlier *Eating Raoul* (1982).
Parents (Dir. Bob Balaban, 1989) also returns us to the domestic sphere, but in this case the mother, a throwback to June Cleaver and Donna Reed, has been converted to cannibalism by her cannibalizing husband. For Bartel's young protagonist who views his parents' lives, cannibalism serves as a screen for their ravenous, fiendish sexuality as well as for the father's Ecological-Economic-Imperialism through his industrial research at Toxico where he is experimenting on an agent-orange-type chemical. Presumably, the bodies the parents consume are castoffs from his research.

Traditional racial markers are similarly missing in the most recent incarnation of cannibal survival narratives: Disney/Touchstone's production of Alive (dir. Frank Marshall), based on Piers Paul Read's docu-novel about the real life survival of an Uruguayan soccer team in the Andes in 1972. Quite successful at the box-office, the film was publicized by, among other things, the real-life victims' appearances on Joan Rivers and Geraldo. Intriguingly, the buzz surrounding the film boldly announced its cannibal center, an unusual facet given the pressures of Hollywood production, but also revelatory of Americans' fascination with such a subject. The film version (featuring many American actors of European extraction) revisits terrain Americans have become familiar with in the ur-narrative of the 1846 Donner expedition by similarly exploring the
competing forces of morality and endurance. At one point, debating the resort to cannibalism, one character ponders if "it would be worth living, knowing they were cannibals." Not surprisingly, given the Catholic backgrounds of many of those involved in the crash, the resort to cannibalism becomes literally realized as a communion. In the hands of the director (who directed Arachnophobia) and the screenwriter, John Patrick Shanley (who wrote Moonstruck), the story of man-eating becomes the ultimate example of endurance through teamwork and bonding, a tradition with literary roots in Melville's Moby-Dick, particularly the chapter, "A Squeeze of the Hand," where Ishmael soliloquizes: "Come; let us squeeze hands all round; nay, let us all squeeze ourselves into each other; let us squeeze ourselves universally into the very milk and sperm of kindness" (349). American novelist Marianne Wiggins explores similar terrain in John Dollar (1989). Set in colonial East Asia, a group of young (mainly white) girls, their teacher and the eponymous English seaman find themselves marooned on an island. This female version of Lord of the Flies, explores the collapse of acculturated normativity as the group struggles to survive. One subplot details the subversive exploits of Nolly and Amanda who secretly pare the skin off the leg of John Dollar in a mock communion ritual. Clearly, Wiggins is using the tradition of
survival cannibalism to interrogate the terms of the patriarchy, Imperialism, and resistance to such ideologies.

The cannibalism-communion continuum is exploited in the wildly successful early 1990s film, *The Silence of the Lambs* (dir. Jonathan Demme, 1991), based on Thomas Harris' novel (1988). It builds on an earlier novel, *Red Dragon* (1981) which also features Hannibal "the Cannibal" Lecter. In each novel, cannibalism functions as the most extreme and heinous violation of another human being. In the more recent novel and its adaptation, cannibalism is problematically intertwined with homosexuality, although such a linkage results primarily from culturally biased assumptions and stereotypes. Nevertheless, despite filmmakers' protest that neither Hannibal Lecter nor Buffalo Bill is gay, and despite Thomas Harris' more nuanced account of his character's sexuality, this text conveys to many viewers/readers a complicated and dense equation which links homosexuality, cannibalism and sadistic, murderous perversion. High-profile attempts to out the star of the film, Jodie Foster,

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only added fuel to the fire of this discursive linkage. As with the case of Jeffrey Dahmer, which I pause on below, these texts suggest that critical work about cannibalism can further extend the important work already completed by David Bergman in *Gaiety Transfigured* by attempting to analyze the means by which discourses previously preoccupied with the racialized Other are recast to articulate differences in sexual desire.

More thematically, the subject of cannibalism in the film and novel parallels detectives' attempts to commune with the minds of killers. Harris portrays the attempt to see and know as the Other--elementary identification--as akin to epistemological cannibalism. Clarice Starling in *Silence* and Will Graham in *Red Dragon* (adapted for film as *Man-Hunter*) are the seekers, drawing, at first unsuccessfully, on the knowledge of Hannibal Lecter in order to put an end to vicious serial killing sprees. In the film and novel of *The Silence of the Lambs*, attempts at identification are multi-leveled: 1) Hannibal identifies with serial killer Buffalo Bill (Jame Gumb); 2) Starling with Lecter; 3) Lecter with Starling; 4) Starling with victims; 5) Starling with Crawford. Early on, FBI Agent Crawford warns Starling. "If Lecter talks to you at all, he'll just be trying to find out about you . . . We both know you have to back-and-forth a little in interviews, but you tell him no specifics about
yourself. You don't want any of your personal facts in his head." These instances of epistemological metamorphoses through a communion of sorts are matched by the perverse transformative desires of the serial killer, a rejected candidate for transexual surgery. Buffalo Bill's totemic marking of his corpses with exotic moth pupae (a symbol of metamorphosis) connotes his preoccupation with making himself into a woman by flaying his victims and building himself a woman's suit. Through this grisly occupation, the novel suggests, he is attempting to recover his lost mother.

One account of Jeffrey Dahmer's murderous cannibal-killing spree similarly suggests that the killer's flesh-eating was motivated by a desire to hang onto his mother with whom he had reestablished ties after a significant period of estrangement. This theory notes that his killing spree escalated the month of his reunion with his mother. In August of 1991 and well into the winter of the following year—in a pre-O.J. world—Dahmer's case, with its uncanny parallels to the fictional Silence, permeated the media. Americans debated the factors which gave life to this sort of monster: child abuse, cultural and personal misunderstanding of his sexual desires, fear of abandonment, a borderline personality disorder. Notably, such explanations revolved around his totemic cannibalization of the brain, heart and

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1 Thomas Harris (New York: St. Martin's, 1988) 6.
biceps of some of his victims. When questioned about this topic, Dahmer himself simply answered in a February 1994 Dateline NBC interview, "It made me feel like they were a permanent part of me." While this concise explanation cut to the heart of the matter, it did not end the public's fascination with such a figure.

Popular accounts of Dahmer, such as the rushed-to-press Milwaukee Massacre (1991), suggest one reason so many might have been interested in this grisly account:

No screen, no test, allows us to predict these guys ahead of time. If Jeffrey Dahmer looked bizarre, if he looked crazy, if he drooled or wet himself, no one would get close to him. On the surface, he blends in. That's what makes him so dangerous.4

Lionel Dahmer's memoir, A Father's Story, similarly expresses his son's uncanniness. The initial news of the breaking case fell on unresponsive ears: Dahmer the killer was affectionately known as Jeff and thus the public reports using his full name failed to have the same impact on his father. Lionel Dahmer, in attempting to fathom the unfathomable, resorts to the familiarity of names to explain his psychological vertigo: "Still, for my own sanity, I have to pretend he's my Jeff, that there's some Jeff left in

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4 This passage is the opinion of James Fox, a criminologist at Northeastern University. Robert Dvorchak and Lisa Holewa, Milwaukee Massacre: Jeffrey Dahmer and the Milwaukee Murders (New York: Dell, 1991) 140.
Dedicated to the victims, Lionel Dahmer's memoir attempts to make sense of his progeny's heinous violence, but also delves into his own dark-spotted heart--assuming others are like him as well--to chart the small degree of separation between his own acts of violence and feelings of pent-up aggression and his son's.

During the killer's arraignment, the uncanniness of Dahmer was often returned to. The title of the cover story from 3 February 1992 Newsweek sums up this country's preoccupation: "The Secret Life of Jeffrey Dahmer." Part of his uncanniness stemmed from the fact that many believed he didn't look the part. But part of his uncanniness was also derived from the eerie parallels to the popularly consumed The Silence of the Lambs. Americans were shocked to find that what they were enjoying in the fictive spaces of the multiplex might actually be happening in the rental units of their apartment complexes. One writer in Newsweek suggests that Dahmer provided a "therapeutic shock to those who wallow so deeply in the pornography of violence in books, movies and on TV that they blur the distinction between let's pretend and the real thing."  

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One facet of the case jolted this country out of its complacent interest in the fictional aura of Dahmer: the majority of his victims were young men of color. Family members and other activists suggested that the murders were racially motivated, while others scape-goated the Milwaukee police department for its inaction, while still others pointed fingers at holes in the social services net which allowed a sex offender to run virtually unchecked. Dahmer himself claims that his killings were not motivated by race, but that he simply preyed upon those who seemed weak or easy to manipulate.

Whether or not this is true, and given the absence of a note such as Tarzan might pen, our culture could not deny the transparent fact that Dahmer of the (white) suburbs was the serial-killer of many black (and non-white) men. Indeed, Dahmer's murder in prison in November 1994 was directly motivated by a fellow inmate's perception that he was racist. Thus, within the figure of the white cannibal killer, centuries of racial stereotypes are reversed and re-disseminated. Evidence of this is provided by the very same issue of Newsweek to which I earlier referred: the graphic accompanying the lead page of the feature displays a cardboard cutout of Dahmer's disembodied head. To it are pinned sketched versions of photographs of his victims. Their murders are graphically pinned on him. His eyes are
circumscribed by intricately drawn lines which resemble tattooing. Surely such resemblances are meant to associate Dahmer's barbarism with the cannibalistic barbarism of non-westerners, particularly Pacific Islanders, notorious for their cannibalism and tattooing. This does seem operative, but the graphic lines are too unlike tattooing to offer only this connotation. It is too simple, as Diana Fuss has wrongly suggested, to say that in this graphic his heinous criminality is coded as African (her critique blurs all non-western types together). She rushes to the conclusion that the graphic "can only be described as a displaced Western fantasy of cannibalism." The pins in his head, Fuss explains, are part of some secret deadly form of African voodoo and the graphic ultimately masks the reality that Dahmer, the killer, is a white man of German descent who killed primarily black, Asian and Latino men. This association seems dubious and plays fast and loose with non-western rituals; moreover, it ignores the social and cultural reaction--particularly that emanating from Milwaukee--which prohibited an erasure of his whiteness. His whiteness is made uncanny by the "tattooing," and as such, visibly pronounces itself. If anything, the tattooing suggests that he has crossed over into a savage world, but his whiteness remains intact. The mask is also suggestive of another dynamic worth considering, one which does not deny his race.

\[\text{Fuss, 199.}\]
The mask--whether it is tattooing or ceremonial paint as Fuss suggests--reveals an alter-ego, a person whom others did not know existed. In this respect, the mask in the magazine, with small cartoon skulls replacing his real pupils, marks the strange, alien Jeffrey "The Cannibal" Dahmer, estranged from the man with whom they were familiar.

While Fuss and I may disagree about the implications of this illustration, we do concur that Jeffrey Dahmer has activated old phobias about homosexuality and breeds "new justifications for the recriminalization and repathologization of gay identity." And perhaps this is the profoundest implication of the case, one which begs for deeper critical analyses: Dahmer's homosexuality becomes linked in the cultural Imaginary with sadistic, cannibalistic sex-crimes. A different sort of intervention is called for, one which builds from David Bergman's, who mainly studies the artist's appropriation of cannibalism within the scene of production, but also one which moves beyond Fuss' narrowly circumscribed psychoanalytic limits--an approach that ignores important cultural and social realities. What happens when the evidence of actual cannibalism becomes imbricated within the scene of cultural production and is once again levied against the gay male subject? Dahmer's story does complex, if not illogical, cultural work: the figure of Dahmer specifically embodies an anxiety about male homosexuality and

* Fuss, 197.
a more widespread anxiousness about another serial-killer, AIDS. Dahmer becomes the embodiment of the apocryphal sociopathic gay man bent on killing others through his sexual practices. The threat of cannibalism operates structurally within this narrative to enunciate other perceived pathologies.

The context has shifted radically from Mary Rowlandson's seventeenth-century wilderness, from Melville's South Seas, and even P.T. Barnum's Reconstruction-era America, but the signifying act of cannibalism and its effects remain. By staring the cannibal in the face, by closely examining the divisiveness that is endemic to U.S. nationhood and that obtains in the practices of the white writers I've isolated, I have begun to expose the operative structures of representational practices. My intervention implicitly suggests that alternative systems of re-presenting and re-negotiating difference are possible. Moreover, it implicitly hopes for textual and cultural modes where oppositional tension no longer adheres, where cannibal fictions no longer have need to exist.
APPENDIX

Exhibit 1
On his first trip abroad, late in 1844, Barnum was engaged in conversation with several British men who condemned United States' slavery. In this reconstruction of his speech, Barnum comes across sounding like an apologist for slavery, although he proclaims otherwise:

[It would be] impolitic and unsafe to set free armies of ignorant Negroes in such portions of the states that the whites were far inferior in point of numbers and that their masters 'were induced by interest alone, if they had no higher motive, to use their Negroes well—to feed and clothe them well and to administer to their wants when sick—and that the law compelled them to provide for their comfort in decrepitude and old age, and that, on the whole, they were much happier than starving workers of this country, who could scarcely earn a subsistence while in health, and who in sickness and old age frequently died from starvation. . . . [If] the blacks were unceremoniously set free and there was no army to protect the whites, the blacks would murder them and take possession of their property . . . I am no apologist for slavery and I abhor its existence as much as any man. But the rabid fanaticism of some abolitionists is more reprehensible than slavery itself and only serves to strengthen instead of weaken the fetters of the enslaved.¹

Exhibit 2

¹ P.T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man, 83 n35. Quoted from Saxon's reconstruction of the original New York Atlas article.
His ambivalence about freed Blacks is further revealed in his recollections of General Tom Thumb's performance in London:

A Negro came into the General's exhibition the other night with a well-dressed white woman on his arm. The darkey was dressed off in great style, with gold chains, rings, pins, etc. (niggers always like jewels), and his lady love was apparently quite fond of him. I made General Tom Thumb sing all the 'nigger songs' that he could think of and dance Lucy Long and several 'Werginny breakdowns.' I then asked the General what the Negroes called him when he traveled south. 'They call me little massa,' replied the General, 'and they always took their hats off, too.' The amalgamating darkey did not like this allusion to his 'Brack bredren ob de south,' nor did he relish the General's songs about Dandy Jim, who was 'de finest negger in de county, O' and who strapped his pantaloons down so fine when to 'see Miss Dinah he did go.' The General enjoyed the joke and frequently pointed his finger at the negro, much to the discomfiture of 'de colored gemman.'

**Exhibit 3**

Late in his life, about a decade after Custer's Battle of Little Bighorn (1876), Barnum tries to procure Sitting Bull's services by appealing to the Secretary of the Interior: "I shall be much obliged to you for information as to Sitting Bull's whereabouts and the best way to reach him." Needless to say, he is unsuccessful in his efforts. What is illuminating, and, moreover, pertinent to the discussion at hand, is the rationale he sets forward for touring Indians in eastern cities. He recollects a conversation he had with President Jackson in 1837 about the matter. Once again, he

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portrays himself as someone rubbing elbows with policy makers:

[H]e said that a very effectual and practicable way of impressing the Indians with the numerical strength of the whites would be to take their chiefs through the country, and especially to show them our largest and most thickly populated cities. Also, he says, the sight of buildings, manufactures, industries, schools, &c might inspire some degree of awe and respect in the savage mind. Several times since that interview I have tested the wisdom of General Jackson's suggestion. I have, with the aid of the government, induced prominent Indian chiefs who were in Washington to see their great Father to visit New York--I have taken them through the city, the public schools, the courts of justice, the city prison, and finally to my museum, where I introduced them to the multitude . . . The savages were amazed, awed, and impressed by the superior numbers and achievements of the white man. 1

Exhibit 4
The following public account from the summer of 1872 differs little from Barnum's comments in the letter quoted above or from his autobiographical musings about the visiting Indian chiefs in the early 1860s:

It is the gracious custom of the Indian chief, when game is scarce and the collection of scalps is attended with difficulty, to listen to the friendly offers of the Indian Agent, and visit the President of the United States. Usually he comes with a pretense of forming a treaty, or with a grievance which he desires to have redressed. Nothing, however, as a rule, results from his visit. If he makes a treaty, he straight-away breaks it at the first convenient opportunity, and if he demands redress for a grievance usually relating to a reluctance on the part of the white man to present him with powder and ball wherewith to facilitate

1 This passage comes from a letter written to the Secretary of the Interior, 25 September 1888, quoted in Saxon's Selected Letters letter 280.
the collection of Caucasian scalps he seldom succeeds in arranging matters to his own satisfaction. During his visit, he conforms in some degree to the prejudices of civilized men, and behaves himself with much outward propriety. He washes the war paint from his face, and conceals his string of honorable scalps in the recesses of a civilized carpet bag. He is taken to see the public buildings and other objects of interest in the cities through which he passes, but expresses no opinion upon them. He neither laughs at the protorial Indians of the Capitol, nor weeps at the sight of Mr. Clark Mill's statuary. Unless the gleam of his eye when passing a liquor store, or his pleased surprise when contemplating the tresses exposed for sale in hair dresser's windows be excepted, he betrays neither admiration nor dislike of anything which is brought to his notice.  

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4 The New York Times, 6 June 1872.


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376


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