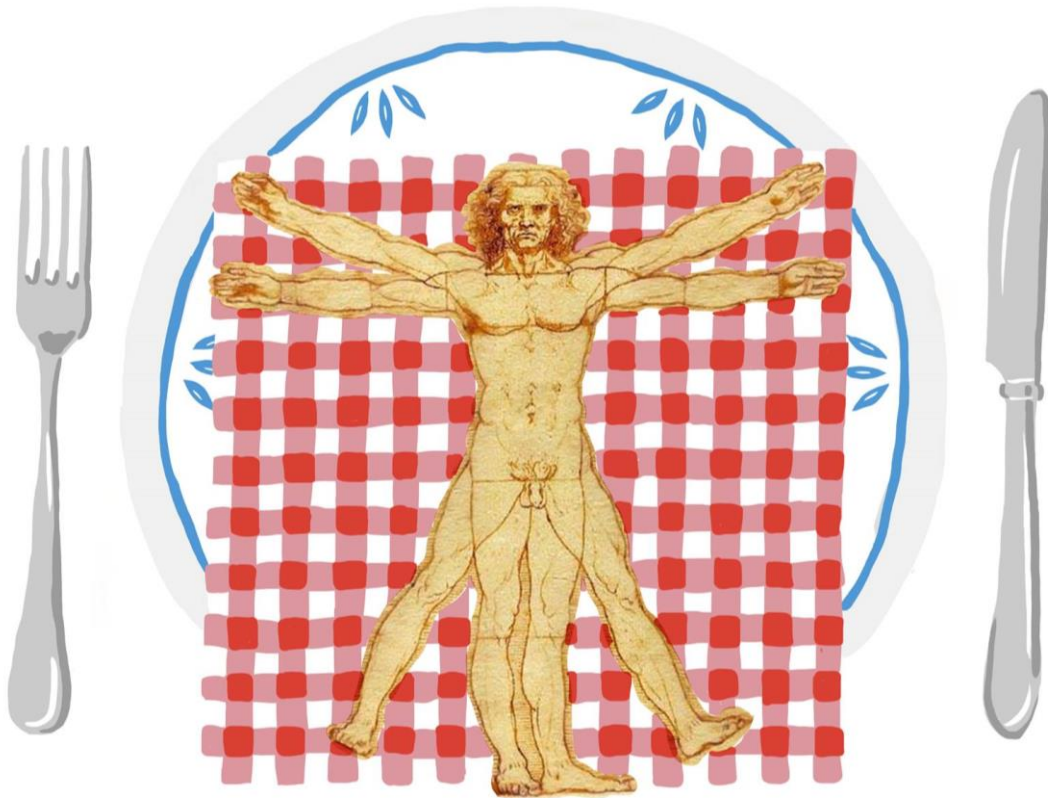


Consu/Me: Posthumanist Cannibal Ethics and Subjectivities in the Literary  
Imagination



Master's thesis

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## Introduction

The question is no longer one of knowing if it is “good” to eat the other or if the other is “good” to eat, nor of knowing which other. One eats him regardless and lets oneself be eaten by him.

Jacques Derrida

If in the past the cannibal was used to construct differences, today it is invoked in order to deconstruct them

Maggie Kilgour

November 1492. Columbus has arrived on the Caribbean. Having cast his eyes upon the beautiful, exotic landscape, he was soon struck by another sight that filled him not with joy, but with horror. Columbus was already used to the different looking and acting bodies of the natives inhabiting the New World through encounters with the natives of his earlier explorations. This time however, Michael Palencia-Roth notes, “as Columbus sailed through the Caribbean landing on island after island, a different image of ‘the Other’ began to intrude forcibly into his consciousness: the New Man not as a new Adam but as a devourer of human flesh” (3). The cannibal from here on would start its life as a sensationalist figure, starring in sixteenth and seventeenth century travelogues and novels. These travelogues describing the cannibalistic eating habits of the New World Other would inspire authors in the centuries to come, Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1716) being a famous example.

The cannibal was first believed to be a dog-headed creature. Later in Columbus’ travelogues, it became clear that the cannibal, even though ‘different looking,’ was none of the above, but rather a New World “normal looking” (despite its different skin-tone) savage (cf. Palencia-Roth 2-4). Yet this newly discovered New World savage was exactly what Europe needed. Europe was at a point of transition, questioning religious orthodoxy and laying the basis of a scientific revolution and what would be known as the humanities, where knowledge was based on *ratio*. The formulation of the Western, transcendental subject was well underway. The writings of René Descartes, one of the founding fathers of the humanistic thought and the accompanying body/mind dualism, established what was to be confirmed by the newly discovered cannibals and Indians alike: the superiority of the transcendental, European subject. Palencia-Roth notes that

the cannibal represents the New Man at the point of greatest difference from the European: he is the New Man as the extreme Other. Because of the cannibal’s clearly

conceivable otherness, European reactions to him, both favorable and unfavorable, reveal deeply rooted civilizational and moral values. (2)

The cannibal was favourable because it embodied an extreme Otherness the Cartesian subject needed; it was the embodiment of all that the European subject was not. It was unfavourable because, as this thesis aims to lay bare, it remained, and still is, a menace for the humanistic European subject. In his article “Eucharist from Hell,” Peter Kitson argues that cannibalism is the most notorious process of colonial ‘othering’, both as an alleged practice and as a critical construct. It is clear that cannibalism was used as [a] process by which imperial Europe distinguished itself from the subjects of its colonial expansion while concomitantly demonstrating a moral justification for that expansion (par. 1)

Cannibalism was not only an addition to the European lexicon and a moral justification for their imperialist deeds, but also became a discourse of otherness, horror and immorality.

The figure of the cannibal—which would be a common stereotypical embodiment of the colonized, non-Western Other—was but one of the figures that was added to the European “awareness of human variety and difference” (par. 1). Starting as a New World figure, the cannibal would soon become susceptible to the pseudo-scientific discourse of the Enlightenment on race and “different looking” bodies. The cannibal, Daniel Cottom in his *Cannibals and Philosophers* points out, is both a body of Otherness and a body related to flesh, the latter being a substance that in the Enlightenment “became a new thing [...] a surface of stimuli against which all knowing proceeds and against which it must be measured” (Cottom 1). Still today this stereotype of the (cannibalistic) Other is prevalent in children’s animations, amusement parks (e.g. the children’s ride “Monsieur Cannibale” in the Efteling amusement park in The Netherlands).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As I write this thesis, the Netherlands are under the spell of cannibalism as a racist stereotype dating back to colonial times as depicted in Monsieur Cannibale, a ride in the amusement park Efteling. Numeral activist groups, particularly “Stop Blackface”, have addressed and attacked the racist and colonialist implications of the depiction of the cannibal in the ride, and are calling for its removal. The true Dutch ‘patriots,’ however, do not see how the depiction is racist; they see it as an innocent attraction for children. Whereas the debates around the Monsieur Cannibale are still in their “early stages,” the argument made by the Dutch ‘patriots’ is exactly the same as the apologist for Zwarte Piet, a clownesque figure who bears many resemblances of (and is even based on) the stereotypical depiction of the Slave in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In *Dutch Racism*, Rebecca Brienen points out that, “while there is criticism in the Netherlands of Zwarte Piet, many Dutch adults defend the demeanor and ‘black’ appearance of this clown-like figure, declaring that no harm is intended – Piet is, after all, beloved by children” (181). This argument is also the main argument shared by apologists for Monsieur Cannibale: “it’s for kids, therefore it cannot be political”. The “Stop Blackface” movement, however, is all too aware of the brutal colonial history of the cannibal, but it seems that many of the Dutch have not (or do not want to) connect their brutal colonial past and the stereotypes connected to that, nor let it taint what they consider to be innocent children’s rides and festivities. However, as Stop Blackface repeatedly points out, it is precisely through these mediums, Zwarte Piet and Monsieur Cannibale, that children are raised with the idea that every black person is the inferior, jolly, candy-distributing and/or cannibalizing subordinate of the white man.

The cannibal was the most threatening Other, not only because it looked different, but also because it threatened to lay bare the edibility of all bodies, whether these were viewed as transcendental and superior or not. In all its threatening and extreme otherness, the cannibal revealed the supposed deeply rooted values of the European, values that would become the basis for the formulation of an individualistic, Cartesian humanistic subject. The colonial explorations of the 16<sup>th</sup> century resulted in (and were partly the result of) an anxiety to formulate a stable, European identity, and it was the body and the diet of the cannibal that would become the ideal antithesis of the noble European. A few centuries later, Descartes and Enlightenment thinkers started writing their theories on subjectivity, identity, and finalized the articulation of a humanistic and individualistic Europe.

Posthumanists deconstruct the Cartesian subject and the humanist ideal of the rational human at the top (of the food chain), and they often do so by constructing and proposing a subjectivity framed by bodies of difference, abhorrence and monstrosity. There is a large body of scholarship on the relation between the cannibal and the humanistic subject within humanism, but also within anthropology, postcolonialism, cultural studies and sociology. It is surprising to note, however, the growing field of posthumanism has not paid any significant attention to the cannibal, and it is this gap that this thesis seeks to fill. The cannibal, as will be argued throughout this thesis, is a particularly productive figure for this deconstruction, not only because it emerged in tandem with the Cartesian subject, but also because it is defined by *what it does*. It is a figure that conjures up notions of incorporation, power structures, colonialism, Otherness, and most importantly, a figure that allows for a critical deconstruction of the binary of the eater and the eaten. Who gets to eat and who is eaten is not only a question of power (the weaker is eaten), it also makes us think about our relations between bodies and 'selves' ('you are what you eat'), sexuality ('to eat someone out,' or the general idea of the capitalist market consuming and living off (feminine) bodies), and the signification of flesh. As Cătălin Avramescu poetically points out in his *Intellectual History of Cannibalism*:

In relation to us, the subjects of technologically mediated organization, the cannibal of the state of nature allows us to explore this impossible dimension, to traverse the crystalline sphere of the political. In his strangeness, the cannibal is sovereign over a species of freedom. His story is one that casts light on the origins of the modern state and the boundaries of modern civilization, and weighs up their right to existence. Let us listen to this cannibal, for his voice comes from beyond, whence we too come and whither we shall perhaps never arrive again. (2)

Answering to his call to listen to the cannibal, this thesis shall do so by receiving its voice through a posthumanist headset, and follow its voice all the way back from whence it came. Yet this thesis differs in relation to Avramescu's call because it will not solely consider the cannibal as being 'the state of nature,' because the aim of this paper is precisely to frame a new subjectivity outside binary thinking. Instead, I shall listen to the cannibal precisely because it unsettles the strict binary between self and other, and in doing so, is a figure of ambiguity, hybridity and plurality.

*Cannibal Ahoy! On Colonialism, Irony and Identity*

Soon after the term 'cannibal' rooted itself in the Western lexicon, it soon expanded beyond its simple definition of 'human eating the flesh of another human,' but rather became an act through which the antithesis of self/other, Christian/pagan and noble/savage was expressed. Particularly important in the rooting of cannibalism was the publication of Lope de Gomora's *Historia general de las Indias* (1552) and Bartolomé de Las Casas in his three-volume *History of the Indies* (1560). When back in Europe, these accounts became wildly popular and widely read, not only because of the 'exoticism' of this act, but also because it confirmed what was believed at that time: the supposed savage natives of the New World and other overseas lands needed to be cultivated and salvaged by the supposedly noble, Christian, white Europeans. Cottom notes that Las Casas was engaged in "an anxious search for historical context" (136) in that Las Casas wrote about cannibalism not in terms of exoticism, trade or as an object of ridicule but rather with "a spirit of revenge in lieu with immediate understanding, a polemic insistence of miscommunication" (136). Cannibalism, for Las Casas, only meant that those performing this act were not yet aware of Christianity, and thus not yet aware that eating other people goes against the integrity of the body and the possibility of resurrection. Las Casas and his cannibals were particularly important in that he reversed the 'cause' and 'effect' order in the colonial project by adding 'desire' in the narrative. In historically and culturally situating cannibalism, Las Casas argued that, as a signifier of savagery performed by the 'primitive' indigenous people of the New World, cannibalism was an *effect* of European desire for the exotic. In other words, cannibalism as indicating the savage indigenous other was, for Las Casas, an effect of a desire for a (radical) Other in looking and affirming their 'noble and civilized' identity, rather than, as was believed, it being a cause and justification for the Western colonizers to colonize these savages. A few centuries later, in the heart of the Enlightenment, the desire at stake in the figure/figuration of the cannibal in European society became particularly evident. Cottom notes that,

In this era [the Enlightenment] cannibalism was transformed from a behavioral category into a nexus of desire. Sex between Europeans and the peaceful Tahitians had taken place in the context of and as art of commerce, and there was growing recognition that the European encounter with the supposed cannibals of New Zealand and other lands was also a matter of trade. In fact, it had become clear that whatever else they might be, cannibals were being merchandised as objects of consumption (153)

Cannibalism was viewed as a product of Europeans' desire for trade, capital, and also as an effect of the European tendency to be fascinated with the exotic. Radically differentiating himself from his predecessors, Las Casas was the first to take cannibalism *not* simply as being an act of savagery for granted, nor was he content with solely considering cannibalism as being an act that can be defined as a human eating and/or sacrificing another human for food. Instead, he established a discourse that allowed employ cannibalism as strategy with which we can interpret other acts of violence in a quest for a Western identity through *othering* the unknown, and desiring the exotic. Important to note is that Las Casas was not an apologist of cannibalism, nor was he on a quest to defend acts of cannibalism. What he aimed at with his work was to "divert the reader's attention away from the formal definition of cannibalism and towards its historical figuration" (Cottom 152). Perhaps even more important to note is that Las Casas's aim was to inject Christian doctrine in this New World, and by historically situating cannibalism, Las Casas aimed to open up the possibility of converting even what were considered the most savage of people.

It was with Michel de Montaigne's essay "On Cannibals" (1580) that Las Casas' reversal would be pushed further, and the figure of the cannibal would be employed to express irony and hypocrisy (cf. Cottom 141). Montaigne appropriated the act of cannibalism and the specific colonizer/colonized constructed through this New World savage. Montaigne turned cannibalism into a tool of comparison, and used the cannibal to address social relations by doing, in an ironic fashion, "a comparative weighing of sins" (Cottom 142). In writing that there is "nothing barbarous or savage about them, except that we all call barbarous anything that is contrary to our own habits" (Montaigne 109-110), Montaigne set the tone that would turn cannibalism into a site where cultural criticism and philosophy meet, and as a site through which the relation between inside/outside could be investigated. Indeed, as Montaigne noted, one tends to consider the outside, the other and the periphery as evil, or at least as something that can threaten the inside, the latter being in this case the Western individual. Montaigne, in writing about cannibalism in this ironic tone, asked his reader to be



aware of the cultural differences and identity politics at stake when allowing acts of cannibalism to play such a big part in justifying the oppressive colonial presence of the Europeans in the New World. Kilgour claims that Montaigne's employment of the cannibal showed an anxiety that would continue to haunt the Enlightenment because the fascination with the cannibal showed a fear of losing the newly gained notions of identity, selfhood and individuality. In writing that Montaigne's "On Cannibals" "coincides also with the emergence of the individual" (*From Communion to Cannibalism* 147) and that the "definition of the other as cannibal justifies its oppression, extermination, and cultural cannibalism (otherwise known as imperialism) by the rule 'eat or be eaten'" (148), Enlightenment thinkers (unwillingly) exposed their biggest fear, and this thesis will use this exposed fear to unleash it upon Western superiority and their beloved notions of fixity, identity and individualism.

It is also through these two major turns (the discovery of the New World and the inauguration of the rational, Cartesian subject a few centuries later) that Sylvia Wynter formulates the history and genealogy of the episteme of Man1 and Man2 (or the Manichean epistemai). Man1, for Wynter as interpreted by Drucilla Cornell and Stephen Seely, is born when the New World is discovered, and when the "Christian theology begins to lose its hegemony over the institutions and imaginations of what is to become "modern" Europe" (122). Man1, the ratiocentric *homo politicus*, displaced God and the clergy from the centre of sense-making and knowledge, and instead modern sciences, rationality, and how the European, white man made sense of phenomena through these faculties became central. All other peoples became objects of knowledge, power and colonial oppression. Cornell and Seely argue that "the enslavement, subservience, confinement, and slaughter of Man1's Others is *rationaly* justified based on their lack of (recognizably) European history, culture, and language, and therefore, of Reason" (125). Man2, not necessarily replacing the episteme of Man1 but rather becoming the dominant one, emerged in the wake of the Enlightenment. Cornell and Seely read Man2 as "the birth of 'Man' of the modern episteme – the living, laboring, and speaking being" (125). The rise of the industry, capitalism, and consequently, the working class, caused discontent the elitist and bourgeois principle underlying Man1 became unacceptable, and the "ratiocentric *homo politicus*" (125) was overshadowed by the episteme of the "biocentric *homo economicus*" (282). The biocentric Man2 is an episteme that is still dominant, and is underlined by biological sciences and Charles Darwin's formulation of the evolution theory and the descent of man. The role played by the 'other' (i.e. non-Western) is one of a dysselected; poor, "excluded from successful life" (126). Man1 and

Man2 are thus epistemai “made possible only on the basis of the dynamics of a colonizer/colonized relation” (Wynter 264). Consequently, as Wynter points out,

In the wake of the West’s second wave of imperial expansion, *pari passu* with its reinvention of in [sic] Man now purely biologized terms, it was to be the peoples of Black African descent who would be constructed as the ultimate referent of the “racially inferior” Human Other, with the range of other colonized dark-skinned peoples, all classified as “natives,” now being assimilated to its category—all of these as the ostensible embodiment of the non-evolved backward Others—if to varying degrees and, as such, the negation of the generic “normal humanness,” ostensibly expressed by and embodied in the peoples of the West. (266)

The colonized Others, starting in the colonial explorations overseas, were now not only the “irrational/subrational Human Other” (266), but also “dysselected by Evolution until proven otherwise” (267). The cannibal in all this is central; it was the body of otherness *par excellence* that made and constituted both Man1 and Man2. Consequently, as Seely and Cornell explain, “all human groups [...] institute a specific descriptive statement (or ‘episteme’) through which they know themselves, others and the world, and that includes symbolic codes of Life/Death or Good/Evil” (127). Because of the world-wide hegemony of the West, Cornell, Seely and Wynter thus argue, all human groups understand themselves in the context of the epistemai of Man1 and Man2. Cornell, Seely and Wynter explore (the politics and ceremonies of) liminalized Others, and how they “might provide different materializations and imaginations of being human together” (131). Overcoming Man, therefore, means coming to a different understanding of human; it means freeing the human from the oppressive hands of Man. Moreover, as shall be thoroughly explored in the first chapter, overcoming Man also means decolonizing the material and meaty *body* from the episteme of Man. Maggie Kilgour, in her research on metaphors and figurations of ‘the cannibal’, defines the cannibal metaphor in general as being a site “where self and other, love and aggression meet, where the body becomes symbolic, and at the same time, the human is reduced to mere matter” (Foreword viii). The cannibal opens up the historical era in which the colonized Other, the primitive and the humanist subject meet; in which species boundaries are reinstated but also transgressed in the sense that it is a human eating another body, but in doing so, is labelled a primate, an animal. It is a praxis, a human, a monstrous and grotesque body; it reduces the human body to something edible, but also into something nutritious.

*On the ends of Man and Posthumanism*

By focusing on the cannibal, I propose that we must reinterrogate the potentialities of being human together, outside the confines of the Manichean episteme. It is thus important to not get ahead of ourselves and simply propose that we must discard that which we define as human and move beyond it, but rather come to a new understanding of what it means to be human, as a collective. The “post” in *posthumanism*, in this regard, is not a clean break from humanism, but rather the historical situating—and deconstructing—of the humanism and the binary oppositions it produces. “What this means,” Cornell and Seely suggest, “is that the overcoming of Man will not take place through wishful thinking or declaring ourselves to be ‘posthuman,’ but will instead demand the overthrow of colonialism and capitalism through a collective praxis of the human” (129). Cornell, Seely and Wynter criticise the seemingly clean break with the humanities embodied by the prefix “post.” the *posthumanities*, which seems to indicate a blind embrace of “things like ‘nature,’ ‘life itself,’ ‘the animal,’ or ‘the universe’ as ways of overcoming Man [that] do not adequately grapple with the ways in which each of those things have only ever been figured from *within* the episteme of man” (130). In a bid to move beyond Western superiority and the humanities, they argue that we must move beyond the Manichean episteme not by kicking Man back into the mud, leaves, and insects, but rather through “the project of renaturalization with one of reenchantment – finding a new *cosmogony* that can institute our new *sociogenic* descriptive statement, our revolutionary praxis of being human beyond Man” (157). When considered in this regard, Cornell, Seely and Wynter are still situated within the same scholarly history of posthumanism, namely, the “Ends of Man”. Foucault, in his *Order of Things* writes that “man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end” (422), and this nearing end was brought to the finish line with Jacques Derrida’s lecture “The Ends of Man” in which he urges that we realise that “Man” is situational, historical, and that it must be deconstructed as such.

To try and give a concise overview of posthumanism and all its ramifications is, as Cary Wolfe notes, “a bit like herding cats” (“Human” 564). Posthumanist scholars use different terms for the same concept. The posthumanism of Rosi Braidotti, and consequently that of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari is framed by the discourse of the ends of Man. As Wolfe points out, “the point is not to reject humanism *tout court*—indeed, there are many values and aspirations to admire in humanism—but rather to show how those aspirations and values are undercut by the philosophical and ethical frameworks used to conceptualize them” (*What is Posthumanism* xvi). Indeed, the posthumanism that frames this thesis is not necessarily anti-humanist, but rather posthumanist in the sense that it critically undermines

humanism and the hegemony of “Man,” and consequently, that it looks for new ways to think of the relation between bodies by deconstructing binary thinking. Cornell and Seely take on a different project to overcome and deconstruct Man, namely, by looking for a new praxis to be human as a collective, and consequently, as quoted above, to be reentranced with what it means to be human together. This praxis, for Cornell and Seely, requires new ceremonies; they draw upon corporeal rituals from Afro-Caribbean traditions to explain and come to terms with a new praxis of being human. “These spiritual traditions,” Cornell and Seely explain, “are not about a person going individually to pray or worship in a church or synagogue but rather consist of corporeal rituals that include forms of bodily touching and meant to heal” (144). Cornell and Seely explicitly state that these ceremonies are always “heretical acts, given that they violate the governing splits of any episteme and, moreover, are often produced by those who are liminalized Others within that episteme” (130). Through these rituals of touching and dancing, and consequently, exploring (the potential of) the material body, Cornell and Seely formulate a spiritual and ontological politics of being human together.<sup>2</sup> In this thesis cannibalism will be the ceremony, the “symbolic, aesthetic, and ritual practices that work to heal the deep psychic and somatic traumas inflicted by life under conditions of capitalism, colonialism, racism, and phallogocentric heterosexuality [...] that point us toward new ways of living together” (121). Next to cannibalism as a ceremony/praxis, it is also an embodied figure in that it is constructed through how it relates to other bodies. It takes other bodies in itself, making it a body of monstrosity, and thus a productive figure to deconstruct the normative, European body and the transcendental ideal of subjectivity formation.

### *A Guide through the Bowels of this Thesis*

In the first chapter I explore notions of subjectivity in greater detail, both in humanistic and in posthumanist discourse. I will dive deep in the writings of Giorgio Agamben and Michel Foucault, and their configuration of biopolitics. A thorough exploration of biopolitics will expose how the excluded inclusion of the material, fleshy body, and bodies of Otherness in general has been central in the formulation of the humanistic Cartesian subject. After having mapped out different takes on biopolitics, I will explore posthumanism’s deconstruction and reconfiguration of biopolitics. Particularly important in this chapter are the writings of Braidotti, Deleuze and Guattari, all of whom are specifically concerned with (re)establishing

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<sup>2</sup> Erin Manning’s *The Politics of Touch: Sense, Movement, Sovereignty* is another example of deconstructing Man and redefining human through bodily encounters. Manning, however, explores tango, and how the rhythm and moves of tango dancing intervene in our traditional conceptions of politics, meaning and being.

(or exhuming) the posthumanist subject through reconfiguring the place of the material body in subject formations and critiquing the violence done on the body by humanistic Cartesian thought and biopolitics. Already in this chapter I briefly touch upon metaphors of incorporations and the ethics of food, since, as I argue, these metaphors allow us not only to shed new light upon the move away from binary thinking towards a (rhizomatic) interconnectedness, but also to consider the role played by the (eating of factory farmed) animals in the posthuman(ist) subjectivity.

Taking this newly established discourse on subjectivity (and bodies) by the hand, I shall guide it to the second chapter, which focuses on food, and the (un)ethical structures running through eating and foodstuffs. Derrida formulates his ethics of alterity through an inevitable cannibalism of otherness. I clarify and analyse Derrida's ethics of alterity through one of the most widely practiced forms of (symbolic) cannibalism: the Eucharist. The Eucharist, however one interprets it, is a process of mourning performed through the incorporation of the body of Christ. To mourn (and be thankful to the sacrifice made by Christ) through an act of incorporation is precisely what Derrida is exploring through his ethics. Alongside the Eucharist, I explore Wolfe's interpretation of the film *Hannibal Lecter*, directed by Jonathan Demme, and consider the role played by the "symbolic" in cannibalism and sacrificial practices. Besides the Derridaen ethics of alterity and the Eucharist, I will explore Baruch Spinoza's *Ethics* (and Deleuze's interpretation thereof), and consider how Spinozist monism has informed both Derrida's ethics of alterity as the posthumanist scholarship. Spinoza formulates an indifferent Nature that is relative, relentless and allows no notions of universal truth. As shall become clear, Derrida is uncomfortable with a nature that lacks ethics and thus lacks a voice which is can say what is evil as such. In order to explore less indifferent natures and thus a posthumanist ethics which does allow for at least a hinge of moral imperative, I turn to David Wood, who criticizes the Derrida's claim that, because we are inevitable all cannibals, pure vegetarianism does not exist.

The second half of my thesis is divided into three chapters, each focusing on a different literary text. The relation between the written word, literature and the posthumanities is a specific one: it is through literature that one can speak of, through, and about nonhumans, but also, as these analyses will demonstrate, as a medium through which silence (of the human) can be reached. Literature and the written word, when employed accordingly, is also an opening up of the imagination. It can shatter, surprise. It moves through the reader, leaving her never the same. Deleuze, a major figure in this thesis, emphasizes that it is in writing that

the posthuman and post-Man becomings- can be imagined, and consequently, can unfold.

Deleuze writes that

To write is certainly not to impose a form (of expression) on the matter of lived experience... Writing is a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed, and goes beyond the matter of any livable or lived experience. It is a process, that is, a passage of Life that traverses both the livable and the lived. Writing is inseparable from becoming: in writing, one becomes-woman, becomes-animal or -vegetable, becomes- molecule, to the point of becoming-imperceptible. ("Literature and Life" 225)

When reading and encountering characters in the story, the reader moves through this character; he or she tries to empathize with, hate, love this character. The reader is moved through the plot by a desire to understand and grasp what is taking place. What better place to explore cannibalist subjectivity and ethics than through a medium that is inseparable from becoming? I will closely read the tales of cannibalism and 'becoming-through-incorporation' as featured in Clarice Lispector's *The Passion According to G.H.*, Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* and Margaret Atwood's *Edible Woman*. Whereas all three books are separated by time and literary tradition, what binds them is that all tales employ the figure of the cannibal in order to critique the status quo of Western society, capitalism and transcendentalism, poetically making the cannibal the guide leading us to insights within—or as an entrance to—posthuman(ist) subjectivity and ethics. Moreover, they are all texts written in the New World/America, the geographical and historical homeland of the cannibal.

Lispector's *The Passion According to G.H.*, which tells the tale of a woman eating and becoming a cockroach, adds the layer of '*becoming-animal, becoming-other*,' whilst it also alludes to notions of the Eucharist. The writings of Deleuze and the Brazilian modernist Oswald de Andrade will play an important part in this analysis, since Lispector's tale of *becoming* tells us that incorporation and pity is what must be imagined when thinking about the posthuman(ist) subject, and our relation to our nonhuman others. Lispector's work in general is situated within Brazilian modernism, an -ism inaugurated by de Andrade's "Cannibalist Manifesto", which calls for poets and authors to cannibalize the traces and inscriptions made by Western colonial oppressors and reclaim Brazilian culture. With this in mind, I shall analyse the extent to which Lispector employed this cannibalistic literary method, and how it relates to her usage of a stream of conscious-like language. I will also explore how *The Passion* imagines the *ceremonial* aspect of cannibalism, and consequently, answer Cornell and Seely's demand to explore new ceremonies. The ceremonial and

meditative taking in of the roach by G.H. suggests that it is indeed the taking in and incorporating of the substance that we are made of and that surrounds us that will open up the bliss of immanence and help us out of our cage of transcendence.

Lispector's affirmative cannibalism, however, will be contrasted by the vicious and bloodthirsty cannibals in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*. While both texts imagine cannibalism in relation to civilization, in the case of Lispector, the cannibalism performed resulted in a leaving behind of identity and civilization, whereas in McCarthy's case the cannibals cannibalize the civilization that is still left after the apocalypse. McCarthy's postapocalyptic novel depicts a bleak and ashen world. Only a few humans have survived the apocalypse, among whom a father and his boy and packs of bloodthirsty cannibals. *The Road* has been read as a critique on consumer capitalism, and consequently, how Western capitalism not only mirrors cannibalistic practices (it devours its own subject, turning it into resources and commodities), but it also turns its subjects into wanton cannibals. In this chapter I explore the cannibal consumer and consider how the cannibal as a New World is now the very Western man himself (he who created the cannibal Other in the first place). I will read the consumer cannibal alongside Agamben's notion of profanation and capitalism as a religion, and examine how the cannibals in *The Road* foreground the difference between use and consumption.

McCarthy's capitalist cannibal consumer will then be accompanied by another capitalist consumer. In *The Edible Woman* the protagonist, Marion, develops a severe case of anorexia, which is a symptom of Marion's body preventing itself from being devoured by a male dominated society. She overcomes her anorexia and her 'living outside the male domination' by cannibalizing a cake shaped like herself. Whereas most analyses of *Edible Woman* focus on the cannibal scene, I shall focus on the period preceding this scene; her anorexic period. Consequently, I will bring both the cannibalistic scene and the anorexic body together in Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the grotesque, and explore how both forms of cannibalism, even though performed in opposite directions, are an expression and manifestation of the grotesque. Anorexia, as I shall argue through the works of Deleuze, is a form of self-cannibalism and experimentation with an inorganic, disorganized body. Moreover, Marion eating the cake is a symbolic cannibalism, whereas her anorexia is a literal cannibalism. The difference between symbolism and literalism is important in this regard because, as will be argued throughout this thesis in general, cannibalism is horrifying precisely because it rejects symbols substituting the human fleshy body and instead feeds on it directly. Marion's anorexia as a literal cannibalism, and the Deleuzian reading thereof, will be

the cannibalism mirroring the overall argument of this thesis in that it foregrounds relations between bodies, and the body as a site of affects and intensities rather than organization and control. Every tale adds and addresses another layer; the (anti-) capitalist, postapocalyptic, the sexual/feminist and the (Deleuzian) becomings-, layers that construct that transdisciplinary ontological palimpsest we call posthumanism.



## 1. Bringing It Back to *Zoe*: Exploring the Political Flesh and Life of the Subject

We need a humanities in which the human is no longer the rule, norm, or object, but instead life itself, in its open multiplicity, comes to provide the object of analysis and poses its questions about man's – and woman's – specificity as a species, as a social collective, as a political order or economic structure

Elizabeth Grosz

Traditional humanisms' logics are based on discourses of binary oppositions, wherein one side of the binary is always the more dominant and superior one. In *Becoming Undone*, Elizabeth Grosz points out that “as traditionally conceived, philosophy, from the time of Plato to René Descartes, affirmed man's place as a rational animal, a speaking animal, a conscious animal, an animal perhaps in body but a being other and separated from animals through mind” (12). However, as became clear in the introduction, it was not just the animal that was m/Man's radical other. Indeed, as Grosz points out, “[traditional humanist] philosophy has attributed to man a power that animals lack (and often that women, children, slaves, foreigners, and others also lack: the alignment of the most abjected others is ubiquitous)” (12). The Cartesian body/mind dualism in general is the antithesis upholding many other binaries, such as the colonizer/colonized (the latter being the “irrational Other” and thus closer to animal than to human, existing more in the body than in the rational mind), but also man/woman, wherein the former is often considered as closer to nature and considered in terms of her body (“a sexy piece of meat”).

The humanistic Cartesian body/mind dualism is the main aggressor that has pushed the irrational, the animal, the Other and the woman to the periphery. For many posthumanists, then, the first task is to relocate and reconfigure the place and the processes of subjectivity formation; from the normative, non-material and transcendental place of the mind, to the material, fleshed and vital place of bodies of difference, defiance and Otherness. Braidotti (1994) has done so through the figure of the monster and the Deleuzo-Guattarian nomad (1988), and the figure of the cyborg is repeatedly making an appearance, think for example “A Cyborg Manifesto” by (proto)posthumanist and critical animal scholar Donna Haraway. Or, to put it differently; posthumanism frames subjectivity through the material body “so that it can now be understood as the very “stuff” of subjectivity” (*Volatile Bodies* ix). This chapter will partake in the deconstruction of the body/mind dualism. I will consider the role of the material and sovereign body within humanistic and posthumanistic theories on subjectivity

and politics. Consequently, I will propose the cannibal as a body that allows for a critical deconstruction of the humanistic subject, and as a body through which a posthuman(ist) subjectivity can be imagined. Indeed, as pointed out above, figuring a posthuman(ist) subjectivity through bodies that were oppressed and pushed to the periphery because of their difference is essential.

The notion of “figuration” is borrowed from Braidotti, who in turn borrowed it from Haraway. Haraway defines figuration as being a mode of knowledge that does not presuppose any dominant paradigm, nor works according to a binary logic. Instead, Haraway argues,

Figures do not have to be representational and mimetic, but they do have to be tropic; that is, they cannot be literal and self-identical. Figures must involve at least some kind of displacement that can trouble identifications and certainties. Figurations are performative images that can be inhabited. (*Modest Witness* 11)

It is a way of knowing that supposes that all knowledges are situational, but even more, a way of knowing that incorporates the certain perspective from which the knowledge is taken in, produced, and distributed. Or, as Braidotti defines it, by using a certain body as a figuration, we also inhabit its specific history, its flesh and so forth. Braidotti argues that a figuration is thus “a kind of discourse: the history and philosophy of the biological sciences, and their relation to difference and different bodies” (77). Braidotti figures the posthuman(ist) subject through the nomad and the monster. The cannibal *is* nomadic in that it moves through, is moved by, is affected by, and temporarily inhabits, other bodies. As Eduardo Viveiros de Castro points out in his *Cannibal Metaphysics*, “[s]elf-consciousness is reached not through confrontation with the other and subsequent self-return but through temporarily occupying, as dramatized by the Tupian cannibalistic sacrificial rituals [...], the enemy’s point of view, and seeing ‘oneself’ from there” (12). In framing it in posthumanist theory, that is, the body of the cannibal is not the fixed other that was kept at bay, but rather that can be temporarily inhabited, and that allows other perspectives (or Deleuzian folds) on notions of incorporation, food, and (un)ethical eating. Yet before inhabiting the cannibal to construct posthuman(ist) subjectivity, a thorough deconstruction of the relation between humanism, the body, subjectivity and politics is necessary because it will expose how the strict binaries between bodies, minds and species have always been unstable.

### 1.1 *Biopolitics/Bodypolitics: On Bare Life and Exception as the Norm*

Subjectivity traditionally and roughly means (as defined by the *OED*) “the quality or condition of being based on subjective consciousness, experience, etc.; the fact of *existing in*

*the mind only.*” Yet in daily life, the word ‘subjectivity’ tends to take on broader definitions. In his “‘Eating Well,’ or, the Calculation of the Subject”, Derrida points out that a subject is a “being-before-the-law, the subject as a subject subjected to the law and held responsible before it” (97). Dazed by the abundant mentioning of the word ‘subject,’ it becomes clear that talking about ‘subjectivity’ also means talking about power structures wherein a subject is (held) responsible, has rights and is consequently subjected to them (and responsible to those of other subjects). This becomes particularly evident when considering that ‘subjectivity’ is derived from the Latin *subjectum*, which literally means ‘to be thrown under.’ What made the human stand out from nonhumans was that it had a mind where thoughts were produced, which it could consequently verbalize in signs, words, and sentences.

Descartes is considered to be founding father of traditional humanistic philosophy. His body/mind dualism runs through humanistic thought in general, a dualism that is the foundation of humanistic explanation of the difference between a subject and an object, and indirectly, between humans and animals. Descartes favoured rationality over faith, yet did believe in a complete, unified world made by the hands of an all-knowing God. For Descartes, the body and the mind were made of two completely different substances, the latter controlling and influencing the former. In doing so, he claimed that bodies are like inanimate machines and unless there was a ‘mind’ controlling their bodies, it was nothing more than matter existing in space and moving uncontrollably yet ‘programmed’ through time. This made the body of an animal mechanic, since there was no mind controlling the movements of these animals; they lacked the *res cogitans* that humans did have. Controversially, especially at the time Descartes was formulating these theories, this also meant that human bodies were, essentially, mechanic. The rational mind however elevated the human body above animals, plants, and other mechanic or inanimate beings, and thus turned the human condition into an exceptional condition. In *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1642), Descartes claims that one can even doubt that one actually has a body, because the fleshy, material figure of the body only comes to us via the senses, which are, when not mediated by rationality, essentially unreliable. He wrote that, after ‘meditating’ for several pages upon the body/mind question,

[I]t is now manifest to me that even bodies are not properly speaking known by the senses or by the faculty of imagination, but by the understanding only, and since they are not known from the fact that they are seen or touched, but only because they are understood, I see clearly that there is nothing which is easier for me to know than my mind. (12)

Favouring the mind over the body, Descartes set the attitude that was to be taken by his philosophical contemporaries and peers: faculties of the mind and rationality were favoured over materialities and the body, and all that one could be certain of were one's own perceptions, understandings and sensations of things. Yet the body and its workings, particularly the brain and the heart, remained a substance of fascination. If perception and touch are essential to understanding, the specific workings of perceptions, vision, and consequently, the (sensible) human body became a thing. The human body became a fascinating mechanism, which was consequently rationalized through the mind. As Cottom points out "in the eighteenth century human flesh became a new thing, a flesh of sensibility, a surface of stimuli whence all-knowing proceeds and against which it must be measured. (...) [I]llumination would need to come from the opening of the body: the ideal of human autonomy would be forced to come to grips with human anatomy" (xiii). The body was a source of knowledge, but only to reaffirm the superiority of the mind.

Around the same time that the transcendental subject was formulated and widely accepted as the explanation of the relation between subject, object, body and mind, Giorgio Agamben and Michel Foucault observe another shift, one within the political and juridical system.<sup>3</sup> In *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Agamben argues that around mid-seventeenth century,

It is not the free man and his statutes and prerogatives, nor even simply homo, but rather *corpus* that is the new subject of politics. And democracy is born precisely as the assertion and presentation of this "body": *habeas corpus ad subjiciendum*, "you will have to have a body to show [in court]." (124)

Alongside a formulation of the body/mind dualism, there is also the importance of the body that emerged during the Enlightenment; a body is needed before it can enjoy any rights, a

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<sup>3</sup> Important to note is that Agamben argues that the sovereign and the biopolitical have always existed. Foucault, on the other hand, locates the emergence of the biopolitical in the Enlightenment, at the same time when the mentality of the power shifted from sovereignty to governmentality (see footnote 5 of this thesis). Agamben observes that

the inclusion of bare life in the political realm constitutes the original-if concealed-nucleus of sovereign power. *It can even be said that the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power.* In this sense, biopolitics is at least as old as the sovereign exception. Placing biological life at the center of its calculations, the modern State therefore does nothing other than bring to light the secret tie uniting power and bare life, thereby reaffirming the bond (derived from a tenacious correspondence between the modern and the archaic which one encounters in the most diverse spheres) between modern power and the most immemorial of the *arcana imperii* (6)

Whereas both Agamben and Foucault consider the Enlightenment and the Victorian era as an important, if not vital, in the emergence of the biopolitical, for Agamben it was an era that only affirmed and exposed how 'bare life' and power are inseparable. The Enlightenment, and modernity *an sich*, only exposed what was already at play for centuries. However, both Agamben and Foucault observe that the modern biopolitical is formulated during the Enlightenment, and it is for this reason that I discuss Agamben and Foucault abreast.

body which can present itself materially. The body, for Agamben, is the locus of sovereign power. Agamben locates a paradox inherent in this ‘politicization’ of the body when he states that, “*Corpus is a two-faced being, the bearer both of subjection to sovereign power and of individual liberties*” (125, original italics). Agamben theorizes this two-facedness by discussing it in relation to *bios*, *zoe* and, and ‘bare life.’ *Bios* means “[a] way of living proper to an individual or a group” (9), and *zoe* as being “the simple fact of living common to all living beings (animals, men, god)” (9). Bare life is the stripped down and vulnerable version of *bios* (or, the exposing of *zoe* within creatures of *bios*). The politics of democracy, formulated in the Enlightenment and still visible in today’s Western democracies is a politics that focuses on the vulnerability of bodies. One has to be reduced to a vulnerable body to be a body subjected to sovereign power to enjoy a life of *bios*. Andrew Norris explains this paradoxical nature of bare life when he notes that “[b]are life is a necessary part of the good life, in that the good life is both what bare life is not and what bare life becomes” (41). Bare life, then, is the vulnerability of the human body, the naked *corpus*, and the inclusion of this vulnerability within politics makes the body the locus of sovereign power. Agamben points out that

The fundamental categorial pair of Western politics is not that of friend/enemy but that of bare life/political existence, *zoe/bios*, exclusion/inclusion. There is politics because man is the living being who, in language, separates and opposes himself to his own bare life and, at the same time, maintains himself in relation to that bare life in an inclusive exclusion. (8)

The power and politics described by Agamben revolved around the body and the vulnerability thereof, the liberty and freedom was regulated by the law through “the repetition of the sovereign exception and the isolation of *corpus*, bare life, in himself” (123). A subject, in the biopolitics explained by Agamben, became a political subject through the included exclusion of being fleshed and embodied; a constant reinstating of the body and its vulnerability of the flesh to reach the ‘state of a sovereign, political subject.’ However, as shall become clear below, this formulation of biopolitics does not correspond with today’s political and capitalist system, where all materialities, even non-perceptible ones (streams of data, bacteria), have become the locus of (sovereign) power. But before exploring the biopolitical through the eyes of the posthumanists, it is important to dissect sovereignty and the biopolitical even further in order to see the role played (and the menace formed by) the body.

The body during the Enlightenment became both the centre of politics as of philosophical humanistic thinking; it became a locus of politics, and bodies and their

vulnerability where strategically mobilized and controlled, so that those in power had control over the precariousness of the bodies, and had the power to protect these bodies from suffering with a layer of rights and liberties. What greater power than the power over one's suffering, death and vulnerability? Foucault focuses on discourses of sexuality inherent in biopolitics, which for him not only encapsulates the controlling and centralizing the differences between the empirical sexes, but biopolitics also clearly shows the move, situated once again in the Enlightenment era and more visibly in the Victorian era, from sovereign power to governmental power, and thus a move from individual power to power over an entire species by a network of institutions and governments.<sup>4</sup>

Foucault's notion of biopolitics has been criticized, particularly because he did not extend it to analyse totalitarian regimes and concentration camps, an analysis that seemed all too important for Agamben (see pages 126-144). Agamben points out that "Foucault... never dwelt on the exemplary places of modern biopolitics: the concentration camp and the structure of the great totalitarian states of the twentieth century" (4). Foucault defines biopolitics most explicitly in his lecture series *Security, Territory and Population*:

By this I mean a number of phenomena that seem to me to be quite significant, namely, the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power, or, in other words, how, starting from the eighteenth century, modern Western societies took on board the fundamental biological fact that human beings are a species. (1)

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<sup>4</sup> This shift for Foucault is the 'mentality' of power, and it is for this reason that he coined the notion of 'governmentality,' which is mainly characterized by a dislocation of 'power' from one, wealthy sovereign unto a network of different institutions and authorities. These latter institutions, in their turn, practiced their power in such a way that it was internalized by those susceptible to these power, leading to a seemingly uninvolved government, and a disciplined and (self) controlled society. (See Foucault's "Governmentality," and Thomas Lemke's analyses thereof in his "The Birth of Biopolitics"). This shift towards 'governmentality', however, is one that could be described as "cannibalistic" when adding Claude Lévi-Strauss' notion of cannibalistic and "anthropemic" states. For Lévi-Strauss, governmentality would be a cannibalistic society in that it neutralizes the other by incorporating it, and the "anthropemic" one that ejects and 'vomits' the threatening other (comes from the Greek *émeîn*, to vomit). Governmentality, as well as the body politics, includes the other through inclusion: it is thus a more cannibalistic one than an anthropemic one, since the government *needs* this threatening other to affirm its own power, control. Yet, in including the body (as the subject's other, both as its own body as the body of otherness) is only included in order to be ejected. The governmentality and body politics, when read through Lévi-Strauss' eyes, is one that both cannibalizes as excrements. In *On the Punitive Society*, an edited volume of a lecture series Foucault held at the Collège de France, the editor of the volume, Bernhardt Harcourt reads the Foucauldian governmentality through this Lévi-Straussian cannibalistic lens (see page 15). Lévi-Strauss, furthermore, argued that the anthropemic society was regarded as barbaric by the "primitive" other, whereas it was part of the "civilized" society of the West. Ambiguity thus comes to the fore when considering the biopolitics through the figure of the cannibal, and ambiguity that breaks open the assumption of the West that the colonized, racialized and sexualized Other are the cannibals and they the civilized. Moreover, it is an ambiguity exposing itself in their most cherished trope: the sovereignty of *their* body, and their political conduct.

Foucault only observed and theorized the notion of biopolitics (and thus not, as Agamben and Hannah Arendt would have liked it, used it to explore totalitarian regimes, which for them was the most visible and lethal form of biopolitics visibly reducing humans to bare life), and emphasized the internalization of these policies, leading to a *self-conditioning subject*. The government's aim, or governmentality as Foucault calls it, was to make *homo as a species* the target of control, and consequently, an internalization of this control, leading to a societal and political structure in which the bodies are self-regulatory and self-disciplinary.

Human bodily existence became central in politics starting from the Enlightenment, whereas, peculiarly, philosophy and knowledge was to be located in the mind. However, the need to control the *corpus* is an acknowledgement of the power of these bodies, and an acknowledgement that we are actually not able to determine what a body is capable of. The body became a political agent through which humans were regulated and controlled. A peculiar relation between subject formation and the fleshed, vulnerable body arose, one of inclusive exclusion. Exception of the body became the norm. When we add the cannibal to these simultaneously emerging discourses, what we end up with is a rough outline of the humanistic attitude towards bodies, both as a vulnerable substance as bodies of Otherness (as discussed in the introduction) but also as sources of knowledge and power; every inch needed to be studied, known, cut open, controlled, cultivated, only so that the rational subject could transcend it, and the sovereign could own it. Bodies served as that which has to be included only to be excluded again via institutions of power, or via rationality. The body, including the ambiguous Othered body of the cannibal, is considerably included via exclusion; it served as a discourse of otherness securing the sovereignty of the European (white) identity. It was the embodied and meaty counterweight that kept the sovereign and the transcendental mind floating high at the other end of the scale.

To consider the "body as the stuff of subjectivity" in this regard means a loss on the side of those in power (the sovereign and the government). Moreover, it means that those who were defined in terms of the corporeal, the colonised, racialized and sexualized Others are now subjects and agents, and not mere objects of inquiry. It means that the biggest power is reterritorialized on a substance that was inscribed with difference, race and sex, which does not work in favour of the humanistic ideal of transcendence and dualistic thinking. As we will see, making the body of the cannibal the "stuff of subjectivity" is even more unfavourable for the humanistic ideals in that it foregrounds ambiguity and rejects binary opposition. As Kilgour notes, "[t]he cannibal presents a disturbing fiction of otherness because it both constructs and consumes the very possibility of radical difference" (Foreword viii). However,

as the posthumanists note, when deconstructing the biopolitical and figuring it in today's capitalist techno society, it will automatically result in an affirmative politics ascribing subjectivity and vitality to all matter-realities and bodies.

Braidotti, in her *The Posthuman* and later in her essay "The Politics of "Life Itself" and New Ways of Dying" picks up on Agamben's theorization of the biopolitical, and argues that today's (Western) society is witnessing an extended version of the biopolitical. Braidotti, however, also notes that now is the time to come to a new understanding of "life," not as something that is vulnerable and perishable (as suggested in Agamben's interpretation of bare life) but rather as an affirmative and powerful force running through all materialities. The thorn in the side of many posthumanists is what underlines the traditional and Agambian distinction between *bios* and *zoe*. Braidotti explains that,

The relationship to animal life, to *zoe* rather than *bios*, constitutes one of those qualitative distinctions upon which Western reason erected its empire. *Bios* is almost holy, *zoe* is certainly gritty. That they intersect in the human body turns the physical self into a contested space and into a political arena. The mind-body dualism has historically functioned as a shortcut through the complexities of this in-between contested zone. (206)

Emphasizing how the body has functioned as an arena, rather than being considered as an agential and vital substance, the body/mind dualism motivated this view of the body as a mechanic and vulnerable substance. Braidotti notes that "[t]he notion of "life itself" lies at the heart of biogenetic capitalism as a site of financial investments and potential profit" (204). In contemporary Western society, it is not solely bare life (and thus the human body) that is an object of control and the arena of (sovereign) power, but rather all materialities that are potentially a resource for profit and power. Consequently, Braidotti argues, "[w]e have all become the subjects of biopower, but we differ considerably in the degrees and modes of actualization of that very power" (205). It is thus not *bios* and bare life that is the locus of sovereign power, but rather "life itself," the latter for Braidotti the definition of *zoe*. Contemporary Western society, according to Braidotti, is characterized by *zoepolitics*, rather than biopolitics. For Braidotti, then, the time for an affirmative reconfiguration of "life itself" is now. Whereas biopolitics focuses on the vulnerability of the body, a Spinozist reading of *zoe* reconfigures this vulnerability to the *vitality* of matter as such. Braidotti summarizes Baruch Spinoza's monism as

the central concept that matter, the world and humans are not dualistic entities structured according to principles of internal or external opposition. The obvious target



of criticism here is Descartes' famous mind-body distinction, but for Spinoza the concept goes even further: matter is one, driven by the desire for self-expression and ontologically free. (*The Posthuman* 55)

*Zoe* then for Braidotti means *zoe* as “a nonhuman yet affirmative life-force” (“The Politics” 203) that runs through all. Consequently, as Braidotti points out, a Spinozist reading of *zoe* results in an affirmative politics that is inclusive, where “[l]iving matter itself becomes the subject and not the object of inquiry” (201). Spinoza shall be discussed in depth in the next chapter, but for now what is important to note is how a reconfiguration of how humanism and politics view and cultivate “bodies” and matter is vital.<sup>5</sup>

### 1.2 On Deleuze, Delicious Rhizomes and Nomadic Wanderings

Braidotti, inspired by Deleuze and Guattari's concept of nomadology, proposes we must figure subjectivity in terms of the concepts of the nomadic. For Braidotti, nomadism is being in a state of ‘becoming-,’ or what she refers to as a state of ‘as-ifs.’ Nomadism is a “technique of strategic re-location in order to rescue what we need of the past in order to trace paths of transformation of our lives here and now” (*Nomadic Subjects* 6). Nomadic notions are notions that travel, that do not stand still, are constantly becoming and are never truly “at home. Nomadism, and its accompanying ‘as-if’s’ “are the affirmation of fluid boundaries, a practice of the intervals, of the interfaces, and the interstices” (6). The nomad therefore is an important figure through which Braidotti aims to rethink theory, and the consequently what ‘subjectivity’ means in the era of the posthuman(ist).

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<sup>5</sup> Braidotti, in *The Posthuman* explicitly mentions that her reconfiguration of biopolitics is *zoe*/Life politics. However, I deliberately choose to only refer to her politics as *zoepolitics* as she herself does in her later works, (in for example “The Politics of “Life Itself”). I, however, agree with Wolfe's critique of universalisms (often found in new vitalism and new materialism) exemplified by the spelling of Life with a capital L. Wolfe, in his *Before the Law: Humans and Other Animals in a Biopolitical Frame* argues “the problem with the recourse to “life” as the ethical sine qua non is that it bespeaks the desire for a nonperspectival ethics, ethics imagined fundamentally as a noncontingent view from nowhere, a view which—for that very reason—can declare all forms of life of equal value” (85). Whereas Wolfe here is referring to the recourse to “life” in general, I argue that universalisms is predominantly embodied in “life” when written with a capital L. However, Braidotti's general take on *zoe* and “life itself” does not, as Wolfe warns us for, annul differences. For Braidotti, turning to “life itself” means approaching ‘matter’ as an affirmative and self-expressive substance. “Life itself” for Braidotti, is affirmative precisely because it is inscribed with differences, differences that are in a constant flux and self-expressive. “Life itself” thus means a constant unfolding of multiple differences. Braidotti's “life itself” is not an egalitarian approach to life, but rather one that must eventually will allow many forces to unfold to their own multiple capacities and. However, when capitalizing a word, it uncannily starts to resemble that which we are deconstructing: the “Other,” “Man,” that is, something that dominates and oppresses something, indicating that, in a world of infinite differences, there is still one dominant, prevailing force that overshadows the other differences.

Deleuze and Guattari play an important role in the writings of Braidotti, particularly because they constructed the basis for thinking through the ‘nomadic’.<sup>6</sup> For Deleuze and Guattari the urgency to rethink the subject emerges out of the Western theoretical tradition of normative thinking, which has caused many to be excluded or hurt and consequently, a tradition that is not able to represent the hyper capitalized techno society of today. The rhizome, in Deleuze and Guattari’s work, serves as a model for culture, namely a model that resists linear narrativity and history but instead trickles down all open spaces and sites. It prefers growth over organization, that is, it prefers a nomadic kind of growth and movement. The nomadic subject is what constantly moves and grows in this culture, constantly becoming through, with and by the rhizome. The Deleuzo-Guattarian nomad, constantly on the move in a rhizomatic fashion. It incorporates what comes on its way; affects, other movements. Nomadology as a configuration of practical philosophy is what allowed Deleuze and Guattari to reconfigure the act of cannibalism as an act against the restrictive biopolitics as practiced by the capitalist consumer market. Well aware that the cannibalistic body is a body both embodying and defying the biopolitical, they write that “[e]very time they eat a dead man, they can say: one more the State won’t get” (118). Deleuze and Guattari are referring to the double-sidedness the figure of the cannibal embodies; it is both a figure that is the capitalist monstrosity (consumerism gone haywire) but also a figure of constant incorporation, change, assimilation, and becoming. Either way, the cannibal, for Deleuze and Guattari, is a body defying the biopolitics traced by Foucault since it either eats the bodies that the government wants to control, or because it is in itself already a material body and thus reduces itself to this “organless” (disorganized) existence, and not letting the government/State/Capitalism do it. This form of cannibalism is central in my readings of Atwood’s *Edible Woman* and Lispector’s *The Passion According to G.H.*, texts that, even though they are radically different, envision a cannibalism performed out of a necessity to escape society, the ‘self,’ or consumer capitalism.

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<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Deleuzo-Guattarian ‘practical philosophy,’ which is characterized by nomad thought and rhizomatic models, and is formulated as something that thus must be practiced and experienced (and thus not as something that must be understood and dogmatically performed. This is particularly important because their move away from Western ‘fixed’ philosophy means a move away from metaphysics, the place of the subject. As Simon Critchley writes, metaphysics is the very place of philosophy *and* the place of the subject; “metaphysics is always a metaphysics of the subject, insofar as philosophy has always sought to name the subjectum, the ultimate foundation or beginning point for an understanding of entities, or to offer a thesis on the Being of beings. ... *The subject is the subject of metaphysics*, and philosophy deals with the determination of the subject as the ultimate foundation upon which entities become intelligible. The possibility of the subject is the very possibility of philosophy” (52). Deleuzian nomadology and practical philosophy, then, is a deliberate move away from metaphysics, and moreover, from philosophy as a ‘steady basis upon which arguments are built for the subject’ towards a traveling, infinite plane of affects.

Deleuze and Guattari explain the nomadic with the help of a set of principles. The first principles, characterized by the 'rhizome' (which is a stem that can be found in the subterranean that does not have one root but instead grows horizontally, shooting new stems and connections as it spreads and grows), are those "of connection and heterogeneity: any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order" (7). Nomadic thought and the nomadic subject are intra-connected, encountering others and making different connections along the way. Moreover, the rhizome does not suppose any fixedness, no origin, but instead owes its existence to its multiple connections and networks. The second principle is the

[p]rinciple of multiplicity: it is only when the multiple is effectively treated as a substantive, "multiplicity," that it ceases to have any relation to the One as subject or object, natural or spiritual reality, image and world. Multiplicities are rhizomatic, and expose arborescent pseudo multiplicities for what they are (8).

The rhizome, then, exposes that a group of 'ordinary' trees does not mean multiplicity but rather a collection of separately existing roots and origins, forming in the end a homogenous yet unconnected mass which we like to call a forest. Instead, Deleuze and Guattari plead for multiple multiplicities, emphasizing the difference that exist between different multiplicities. The rhizome, multiple multiplicity and horizontal connectedness is what moves the concept of the nomad. The nomad does not stand still, nor does it have a specific destiny or goal. Instead, it travels through the world, becoming-nomad and becoming-environment as he continues his errantry. Brian Massumi, in his foreword to *A Thousand Plateaus*, illuminates the concept of the nomad:

[n]omad thought does not immure itself in the edifice of an ordered interiority; it moves freely in an element of exteriority. It does not repose on identity; it rides difference. It does not respect the artificial division between the three domains of representation, subject, concept, and being; it replaces restrictive analogy with a conductivity that knows no bounds. The concepts it creates do not merely reflect the eternal form of a legislating subject, but are defined by a communicable force in relation to which their subject, to the extent that they can be said to have one, is only secondary. (xii- xiii)

Nomadic thinking moves between inside and outside, making difference its mode of transportation. Moreover, nomadism emphasizes an act: to become a nomad, one must be constantly on the move, never really settling somewhere. Cannibalism is the nomad that is insatiable, and consequently, is constantly looking for nourishment and nutritious others. It

moving out of a desire to encounter other material bodies, eating and incorporating all that it encounters during its errandries.

### 1.3 *Eat Your Heart Out! On Matter, Relations and Eventful Food*

Even though the body of the cannibal has been discussed, I would like to briefly point out the role played by foodstuffs in general. Indeed, food is also what is at stake when discussing cannibalism, because it is the specific diet that defines ‘a cannibal.’ Indeed, the cannibal is not just a body of otherness, it is also an eating body. In his *Foodscapes: Towards a Deleuzian Ethics of Consumption*, Rick Dolphijn reads Deleuzian nomadic theory, ethics and Spinozist monism through the event that takes place between the eater and the eaten. Dolphijn is reading the materiality of food, and how food is always already embedded in a rhizomatic network. He writes that

[m]ateriality has coded matter in some vague corporeal essences, but in the end, the eater and the eaten are only defined in their immanent relation to each other, in the way they move according to one another within the event. The consumables are defined in relation to the supermarket in which they are stored. The customer is defined in relation to temporal and spatial folds of the fastfood restaurant... (31).

Food allows for an exploration not of food itself, but rather for an exploration between the eater and the eaten, or “relations that are composed between them” (31). The eater and the eaten, within Deleuzo-Guattarian philosophy and Braidotti’s posthumanist theory allow us to consider food as being a process out of which infinite other different processes are produced. The relation between the eater and the eaten in acts of cannibalism is a peculiar one, particularly because it is a relation defined through species, types of flesh, and inferiority. Drawing back upon Dolphijn’s quote, the consumables at stake in acts of cannibalism are, however, not defined through the supermarket in which they are stored but rather by the specific setting; is it cultural, is it for survival, or is it a metaphorical cannibalism? The figure of the cannibal is a figure that is only defined through that which it temporarily becomes: that which it eats, making it a particularly productive figure through which Deleuzo-Guattarian becomings- can be explored. Dolphijn thus shows how it is a figure that has haunted us for so long, using the infamous Hannibal Lecter, or Hannibal the Cannibal who interestingly had a specific appetite for human *faces*, that it is this edibility of the body that scares us the most:

Dr. Hannibal ‘the Cannibal’ Lecter is one of our worst nightmares because he makes us aware that *we, too, can be consumed...* And even by our equal!<sup>7</sup> As we are still under the spell of Linnaeus, the father of taxonomy who categorized the world into genera and species [...] we are surprised that this viscous predator could be ‘among us.’ [...] The cannibal is not a separate species (as neither the werewolf nor the vampire are); we are all encoded in the event that makes us cannibals, werewolves or vampires (17)

It is the event taking place between the eater and the eaten that the cannibal is encoded as such, but in the case of the cannibal, the matter that is to be consumed, is also human. For Dolphijn, as explained above, food serves as perfect food for thought namely because it never exists in isolation; it is within a rhizome of different relations making the cannibal a nomadic, Deleuzian figure. I choose to start with subjectivity, rather than ethics as done by Dolphijn, precisely because subjectivity is the site (or plane) where ethics, rights, the body and vitality come together. If we choose to feast on (and with) the cannibal rather than hold hands with the transcendental Cartesian subject, notions such as ethics and rights will move through this ambiguous, meaty envelope, and consequently, will travel through a different body, one that disorganizes the organs of the humanist subject, one that feeds on the limit and binaries separating different bodies and species.

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<sup>7</sup> Lecter, the main character in the tv series *Hannibal* created by Bryan Fuller, cooks his victims *haute cuisine* style. He only glazes and fries the best parts of his victims, which are mainly pieces from the face. If one does not know that Hannibal is a cannibal, the cooking scenes would be like watching any other high-end cooking program. Hannibal thus particularly makes us uncanny because his cannibalism is almost unnoticeable. He is not the cannibal Other we have kept at a safe distance since the colonial era, but instead is more refined, civilized and intelligent than the most of ‘us.’ The case of Hannibal, in relation to cannibalism and the posthuman, would thus make an interesting case-study, since Hannibal is a colonial other that has escaped from the ‘lesser’ side of the self/other binary, roaming around and threatening what we conceive of as ‘self,’ ‘the West’ and ‘civilized.’

## 2. "I'm having an old friend for dinner:" On Ethics, Mourning Well and Alterity

As that which both viscerally segregates us and radically brings us together, without doubt food is a hugely powerful system of values, regulations and beliefs: in short a system of representations that hides its nature in appeals to immediacy and non-mediation.

Elspeth Probyn

Hannibal Lecter: [on telephone] I do wish we could chat longer, but... I'm having an old friend for dinner. Bye.

*The Silence of the Lambs*, perf. Anthony Hopkins

Whereas the previous chapter was a move away from death and suffering and towards a *zoepolitics*, to come to an affirmative ethics within the posthuman(ist) subjectivity in the figure of the cannibal means to inevitably tackle the question of death more thoroughly, particularly because the ethics of cannibalism as formulated by Derrida and others are an ethics of mourning. Sarah Gruyer, in her "Albeit Eating: Towards an Ethics of Cannibalism" posits the main question throughout this chapter, namely

Can murdering and eating another uncover a conception of relation and even a model of ethics? Of course not. And yet what if the object of sacrifice is sacrifice itself and what if dining is really a symbolic act of mourning? In an attempt to understand the exchange between ethics and eating, incorporation and introjection, experience and communication, *oikos* and mourning, nutrition and the Good, it is time we came to terms with the aporetic and rhetorically slippery ethics of "Eating Well." (63)

In what follows, I will explore the ethics through posthuman(ist) bodies, focussing specifically on food, consumption, and how these material introjections help in formulating an ethics to team up with the posthuman(ist) subjectivity explored in the previous chapter.

Derrida and Spinoza think the ethical through digesting, devouring and desiring the other, and consequently, how this digesting will either lead to greater compositions, or is an acknowledgement of the other's alterity. This inevitably will lead us to the necessity to explore the difference between this Derridaen ethical inevitable cannibalism, and the literal cannibalism that that the West accused the New World natives of. Symbols substituting bodily flesh and the ethical defined through a desire to devour the other expose the cannibalistic structure of Western thought. We are all cannibals, yet the degree to which one cannibalizes, and what substitutes the actual human flesh is essential. However, as will be discussed in Wolfe's reading of Jonathan Demme's film *The Silence of the Lambs*,

cannibalism is to be understood as the *rejecting of symbols all together*. The cannibal unsettles the Western logic of restraining from cannibalism by substituting it with animal flesh and a wafer (or, as will be discussed below, unsettles carnophallogocentrism) by instead feeding directly on the one and only desire: the o/Other.

### 2.1 *Love Your Cannibals: On Derrida and Deconstruction as Vegetarianism*

Penelope Deutscher, in her article “Mourning the Other, Cultural Cannibalism and the Politics of Friendship,” compares the cultural cannibalism as formulated by Luce Irigaray, and cannibalism in the politics of friendship and mourning as formulated by Derrida. For Irigaray, the cannibal is the ultimate emblem of the unethical in that it indicates that the other is now made ‘the same’. Cannibalism for Irigaray is a figure that considers others to be a potential object of property; it reduces the body to something that can be consumed and made into ‘the same’. Deutscher argues that Irigaray “has formulated an ethical ideal for love and friendship in which the cannibal becomes the emblem of what she condemns as the appropriative” (161). Derrida’s formulation of the cannibal and ethics however concerns the inevitability of cannibalism; one *must and always will* eat the other to recognize the other (’s alterity), and construct a sense of ‘self’ through the alterity of the other. Through Derrida, the cannibal will be the opposite of the appropriative in that it is precisely the embodiment and praxis of the impossibility to appropriate the o/Other. This becomes particularly evident for Derrida when he considers processes of mourning as formulated by Sigmund Freud. Deutscher explains that, for Freud, ‘mourning’ turns into ‘melancholia’ when the deceased friend is not incorporated successfully into the ego, where “the lost object is not renounced. Instead, a part of the ego is given over to sustaining the continued direction of libido towards that object through identification with it” (163-164). Mourning, for Freud, is ‘successful’ (and thus not transformed into melancholia) when the deceased other is fully taken into the ego. All the memories and characteristics of the deceased friend are made ‘one’s own,’ incorporating the other in its entirety. This, for Freud, is normal mourning, and melancholia is result of abnormal or failed mourning, that is, when the other remains to *be other*.

For Derrida on the other hand successful mourning as described by Freud is actually failed mourning. Derrida argues that, when one loses a dear friend, one intends to incorporate the other; to cherish the memory, past times and shared moments. In his *Memoires: for Paul de Man*, Derrida notes that this successful mourning for Freud “entails a movement in which an interiorizing idealization takes in itself or upon itself the body and voice of the other, the other's visage and person, ideally and quasi-literally devouring them” (34). Yet when one

fully incorporates the other and thus make it 'same,' one has failed to be responsible to the memory of one's friend; it is an act of *infidelity* towards your deceased friend. The friend's alterity ceases to exist, and instead, in Freud's logic, he or she lives on in the ego as the same. Paradoxically, this leads Derrida to think the ethics of alterity through a failed success, and a successful failure; the former meaning that one 'successfully' mourned (in Freud's terms, meaning that the other is now fully part of the ego of the self), the latter meaning that, in not fully incorporating the other, its alterity remains intact and is thus faithful to the other.

The successful failure thus means the opposite, when one has failed to incorporate and digest the memory and alterity of the perished friend, leading to, in Derrida's view, 'successful' mourning because the otherness or alterity remains intact, like a spirit constantly haunting and displacing the 'I'. Derrida, in arguing that one successfully mourned when it is failed, metaphorically frames this in an inevitable cannibalism, but also a failed cannibalism. Deutscher writes that

What is the other to me in my various modes of fidelity and mourning? In successful mourning, the other is to me digestible and assimilable. But in failed mourning, the other is to me indigestible, unassimilable. Where the other is to me indigestible, the other is to me other, not same. Cannibalism, then, (digestion of the other) would appear to be an ethical miscarriage. (165)

For Derrida, mourning leads to an inevitable cannibalism, but also a failed cannibalism; if one wants to show fidelity to the deceased body, one digests him, yet if one does this fully, the alterity of the other disappears. The dictum 'you are what you eat' once again comes in handy; in incorporating the deceased friend, and all his follies, foes and memories, one becomes the friend, and the friend is thus not partly left out there like a spectre, haunting the self. Derrida is thus proposing that one should cannibalize in the style of Hannibal Lecter; only feasting on the best and savoury parts and leaving the rest rot in the dirt (Lecter's specific cannibalism shall be thoroughly explored below).

Deutscher extends Derrida's failed mourning to an overall notion of *ethics* and cannibalism. She argues that Freudian 'successful mourning' is to be considered as 'normal,' and it mirrors the 'normal' subject formation, in that it integrates fully the otherness into itself, and in doing so, stabilizes the 'I' of the subject by projecting the ego upon characteristics of the other. Mourning, when generalized, is then "refigured as an encounter with the otherness" (170). Freudian 'normal' and Derridaen 'successful' mourning, then, works in two ways, yet both presuppose some sort of encounter with otherness, the first being a full incorporation and assimilation of the other, the latter being a constant encounter with



otherness without assimilating it fully. Both these generalized structures, both for Deutscher as for Derrida, mean that the subject must actually always be thought of as being other.

Derrida's inevitable cannibalism emerged out of the question of mourning, but also, as we have seen the integrity of other subjects and the ethics of alterity. Freud, in his formulation of narcissisms and the ego, argues that narcissism is a form of desire of love for something the other owns; consequently, the 'I' interiorizes this otherness, making it an object of love of the self and for the self, leading to a desire to merge with those aspects of the other. Deutscher, in summarizing Freud, argues that

Freud distinguishes narcissistic and object-directed forms of love in adult life. Loving the other narcissistically is loving the other in terms of an economy of sameness. As Freud argues in "On Narcissism," I engage with the other insofar as s/he represents to me my idea of what I was, would like to be, or am. However, all forms of love and identification are also expressions of an ego constituted in the mode of primary narcissism. All forms of love involve the attachment of ego-libido to the object. (172)

The engagement and encounter with the other, for Freud, and melting it into 'sameness,' are expressions of narcissism. This is for Derrida what it means to mourn and love (successfully). However, Derrida argues, if it is indeed the 'I' that is imbricated in narcissistic ego-formations—it always supposes *an other*, whether the subject is successful or failed (referring back to the structure of normal or failed mourning).<sup>8</sup> In his *Memoires for Paul de Man*, Derrida writes "[b]ut the narcissistic structure is too paradoxical and too cunning to provide us with the final word. It is a speculation whose ruses, mimes, and strategies can only succeed in supposing the other-and thus in relinquishing in advance any autonomy" (22). The other is always implied in the 'I,' and the narcissistic sameness as described by Freud can thus never really be achieved. The cannibalistic characteristics of Derrida's ethics of alterity, then, are this 'always present alterity' of the other inherit in the constant encountering of the 'self'. Deutscher writes that "[i]f we are never proper to ourselves, self-identical, then in different

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<sup>8</sup> This may be disputed in that Freud's normal mourning supposed that the 'other' could be wholly incorporated and assimilated by the ego (and thus not supposing the other anymore since it is now 'same'), yet Derrida here is drawing upon the interpretation/reformulation of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, who expand upon Freud's work on mourning by proposing 'incorporation' to be impossible, and instead thinking through notions of encryption or introjection. Encryption, as the name indicates, implies that in the process of mourning, the other is *encrypted* "in a 'vault' carved out within the ego" (Deutscher 164). Encryption, also 'encryptic identification' implies that the other remains intact, yet it is still fully in the ego, thus not allowing the other to exist exterior to the self (Deutscher 164; Abraham and Torok ch. 5). Derrida thus draws upon Abraham and Torok's interventions in psychoanalysis, enabling him to argue for an always present 'other' in the 'I,' and thus enabling him to refute normal or successful mourning in general. However, Derrida's drawing upon Abraham and Torok's intervention of Freud must be regarded into the bigger Derridaen poststructuralist frame of *différance*, where the multiple 'others' are always already implied in the 'self.'

ways we always have alterity enfolded within us, we are always in this sense, cannibal selves” (172). Particularly interesting here is that the cannibal is once again employed to indicate the relation between self/other. Moreover, Derrida paves the way to think ethics both through death *as through friendship*, allowing, as shall become clear below, an affirmative reading of posthuman(ist) ethics within the subjectivity as formulated in the previous chapter.

For Derrida, ethics is thus also an ethics of cannibalism and consuming the other/otherness. Ethical relations between bodies are relations defined through an inevitable cannibalism; it is the other’s alterity that leads this cannibalism, yet it is ‘failed’ because one cannot incorporate the other fully. “The moral question,” Derrida observes,

is thus not, nor has it ever been: should one eat or not eat, eat this and not that, the living or the nonliving, man or animal, but since one must eat in any case and since it is and tastes good to eat, and since there’s no other definition of the good (*du bien*), how for goodness sake should one eat well (*bien manger*)? (“Eating Well” 115).

Everyone has to eat; it is not about what one eats, for Derrida, but *how* one eats. It is the act through which the ethical unfolds itself; how does one eat the good, eat well, leaving otherness intact? Derrida’s ethics of alterity and mourning suggests that *pure vegetarianism* does not exist. Vegetarians too eat the flesh of others, they just “practice a different mode of denegation” (115). Consequently, for Derrida, all eating is violent; it means devouring someone or something’s alterity. For Derrida this eventually means that to refuse to eat animals is pointless; one partakes in cannibalism anyway. Eating meat is for Derrida simply the most visible and direct expression of this war between selves, others and species. Even though Derrida seems to advocate for vegetarianism, he is trapped in his own deconstruction, where a subject cannot simply know its place and its responsibility within the world; his deconstruction suggests an infinite and incalculable chain of differences. Knowing that we cannot eat meat because we have a kind of responsibility towards our nonhuman others would be what Derrida calls ‘good conscience,’ which is a notion that Derrida rejects in his deconstruction. Derrida’s deconstruction rejects that the ethical can be known in advance; this knowing in advance is a moral imperative, indicating a certain decidability and universality that deconstruction rejects. Derrida states in his *The Other Heading* that responsibility and ethics, “*if there are any*, will only ever have begun with the experience and experiment of the aporia” (41). Good conscience, then, is when a moral imperative is injected in the ethical, and thus when someone or something is made responsible for (un)ethical events *as if they can be calculated and predicted*.

David Wood criticizes Derrida's stance on vegetarianism as being a case of good conscience. Wood argues that Derrida has fallen in his own trap by considering vegetarianism as those who "buy good conscience on the cheap" (32). Instead, Wood proposes, vegetarianism is not necessarily about "substituting beans for beef" (33), but rather about a resistance against what Derrida termed "carnophallogocentrism," roughly meaning the Western subject formation and philosophy "linked to eating flesh, virility, the possession of nature, the privilege of the head and the head of state" (Wood 30). Carnophallogocentrism encompasses in one brutal neologism Derrida's take on Western (humanistic) thought and subjectivity; one that revolves around a phallic centre (and thus supposes that there is a centre) and that wants possession over nature and other species by eating and killing them (a sacrifice of nonhuman species for the sake of human superiority). Derrida's deconstruction and *différance* is a resistance (or laying bare of) this Western tradition of thought (roughly meaning traditional humanities). Consequently, Wood argues,

Carnophallogocentrism [...] is a mutually reinforcing network of powers, schemata of domination, and investments that has to reproduce itself to stay in existence.

Vegetarianism is [...] a site of proliferating resistance to that reproduction. If we allow the imminences and pressures (and ghosts and cries and suffering) to which I have been yielding to have their say, we might well end up insisting that "deconstruction is vegetarianism." (34)

Wood thus makes Derrida's own deconstruction bite its own rear-end, and claiming that vegetarianism is in itself an act of refusing power networks suggested in carnophallogocentrism. Vegetarianism does exist, yet it must be considered in the form of resistance, of embodying one of the many 'possibilities' suggested in Derrida's deconstruction.

Derrida's surprising claim that pure vegetarianism does not exist in relation to his ethics of alterity is not only 'due' to his deconstruction (and thus his rejecting of calculability, good conscience, and notions of responsibility) but also because his work is informed by Spinoza's continental philosophy. According to Julie Klein, in her article "Nature's Metabolism: On Eating in Derrida, Agamben and Spinoza," Derrida's poststructuralism is influenced by a Spinozist monism, explaining Derrida's impossibility to make moral claims.

## 2.2 "Nature's Metabolism:" On Spinoza and Desirous/Desiring Hunger

Spinoza's *Ethics* is an ethic of appetite and desire in which no natural moral imperative of 'good' and 'evil' exists; there are only ethical implications of 'good' and 'bad', which are

wholly contextual, relative and thus ever-changing and differing. Morality is thus non-existent, in that morality presupposes some sort of common ground, an agreement between individuals on what one should or should not do. Morality “is the judgement of God, the *system of Judgement*” (Deleuze *Spinoza* 23). Spinoza’s ethics, as explained by Deleuze, relies on the presumption that “*we do not even know what a body can do*” (17-18), leading both Deleuze as Spinoza to rely on these unknown and uncalculatable capacities of the body, rather than the supposed fixed consciousness and body/mind dualism.

Spinoza, as opposed to Descartes, argued for a parallelism between the body and the mind, indicating that “what is an action in the mind is necessarily an action in the body as well, and what is a passion in the mind is necessarily a passion in the mind” (18). For Spinoza, bodies and consequently the ethics between bodies is an ethics of encountering, composition, desires and passions. Deleuze explains that, when two bodies (and this can be all types of bodies, or intensities, thus not exclusively referring to a human body) or ideas encounter, they “sometimes combine to form a more powerful whole, and sometimes one decomposes the other, destroying the cohesion of its parts (19). Consequently, the cause of these encounters is not known to us, we only experience the results or effects of these encounters. Since the cause of these encounters, and how it affects the compositions, is non-existent, we can only imagine what caused some encounters to be more joyful, and others less so.

All bodies are driven to compose more powerful compositions, and are thus driven by an appetite, for Spinoza and Deleuze meaning “nothing else but the effort by which each thing strives to persevere in its being” (*Spinoza* 21). Consequently, this appetite for compositions differs per encountered body or object; it relies on the affect the object or body has on us. This object can thus either decompose and fragment my ‘essence,’ or it can make it more wholesome. The awareness of these different degrees is what ‘consciousness’ means for Spinoza. These “greater or lesser” encounters with bodies is also what for Spinoza means “good and bad”; it is a conception of good and bad that is “relative and partial” (22) in that it only determines what will add “greater or lesser” to my essence (my body and composition). It is also for this reason that Spinoza replaces any moral law, which for him is an imperative in that it presupposes a pre-given notion of what good is and what evil is, and consequently, “has no other effect, no other finality than obedience” (24).

For Spinoza, then, ethics are the body’s capacities to affect and be affected, the cause of this body being an appetite for greater compositions, yet conscious of the lesser encounters on the way. The imagination creates the narrative explaining why the encounter was joyful or

sad, an imagination that is based on earlier imaginings of earlier encounters. For Spinoza, there are two sorts of affections: “*actions*, which are explained by the nature of the affected individual, and which spring from the individual’s essence; and *passions*, which are explained by something else, and which originate outside the individual” (27). What we have here is an ethics that is affirmative in that it moves through passions, affections and actions, rather than (moral) imperatives. Consequently, Spinoza’s ethics may help Derrida’s in deciding what it means to “eat well,” in that it does not even intent on asking this *moral* question in the first place. Both Spinoza and Derrida agree upon the question of “one must eat,” which for Derrida is a cannibalistic hunger in a search for, and fidelity to, the other’s alterity, and for Spinoza the ethical and immanent practice of self-expressing, affective movements of bodies. The most important thing is to prevent that the imaginations, and who claims to have the right to make the grand narrative explaining a lot of encounters, are not in the hands of one powerful instance.

Klein discusses Spinoza’s influence on the work of Agamben and Derrida, particularly their notions of the relation between eating and ethics. She argues that “[a]ll three thinkers find in eating the intersection of themes in the philosophy of nature, ethics, and politics (187). Derrida’s employment of eating and food, as discussed above, is interesting in this regard because for Derrida eating is imbricated in structures of sacrifice: acts of violence, killing and eating have the same “natural imperative” (“Nature’s Metabolism” 198). Consequently, for Derrida, “the logic of sacrifice renders the question of living beings constantly and elementally at issue” (198), or as Derrida formulates it, sacrifice is underscored by the “noncriminal putting to death” (“Eating Well” 112). Not only is the moral question for Derrida not whether or not one should eat, but more, how one can eat well, but it also leads him to contemplate on how to sacrifice *sacrifice*. Consequently, Derrida’s work is highly influenced by Spinoza, particularly because Spinoza’s monism, and his *Ethics* in general, opposes the Cartesian dualism of substances, and works in infinite gradations, bodies. In doing so, as emphasized multiple times, rationality is replaced by a body’s capacity to affect and be affected.

Yet Derrida is hesitant in the formulation of his ethics. As Klein points out, in “Eating Well” and in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida seems to have qualms about accepting a non-teleological philosophy and Nature, and seems to long “for a natural and real separation of good and evil and a direct passage from natural law to moral law” (208). Derrida still thinks through terms of suffering, death, and pain when it comes to the killing of animals for food. If Derrida were ‘true’ to Spinozist ethics and *Ethics*, then that would mean that there is

no ethical ground that would make the killing of animals not unethical. It means that all bodies, if they are capable and if that would make them more powerful, can and will ‘kill’. It is nature’s doing, and therefore it is ethical. That is, for Spinoza “whatever occurs, is an expression of the power of nature, for there is nothing other than nature. It is thus not by appeal to nature that we will adjudicate anything” (201). Derrida, then, still seems to long for a common ground, for a moral imperative prescribing that suffering is bad, even within a Spinozist framework. For Derrida, as formulated by Klein, “Derrida’s discourse is marked by, or perhaps haunted by, a longing for moral harmony, progress, and even purity [...] Everyone has to eat, but eating must become a matter of learning and gratitude rather than mere taking in and grasping” (199). Wood’s reading of Derrida, and consequently, his suggesting that vegetarianism does exist and is a deconstructive (or even ethical practice) may perhaps bring the positive vibes this chapter needs; his critique proves, and is still proving, to at least consider the abstinence of violence as something that is a practice of posthumanist ethics. Another illuminative example would be Jane Bennett’s employment of the Slow Food as explored in her *Vibrant Matter: a Political Ecology of Things*. The Slow Food Movement, as the name indicates, stands Slow Food acknowledges actively the agency and influence of eating, both on our bodies as on the world; it moves away from the idea that food is there for mere survival, as a means to an end, but rather as an agent in itself in a constant flux. Bennet then concludes that,

If I am right that an image of inert matter helps animate our current practice of aggressively wasteful and planet-endangering consumption, then a materiality experienced as a lively force with agentic capacity could animate a more ecologically sustainable public... [T]o the extent that we recognize the agency of food, we also reorient our own experience of eating” (51),

With this conclusion she hopes to not only stretch the frame of Slow Food beyond the human species, but also show that, in acknowledging agencies to traditionally ‘inanimate’ matters, we will also, as a heterogeneous assemblage, conglomerate according to the enhanced power of this sustainable diet. Many possible solutions to approach the question of how to “eat well” (and obviously, there is not one solution because that would mean that there is a general moral imperative). It is about how to take in the other without damaging one’s composition.

### *2.3 Devouring the Body of Christ: The Eucharist, Immortality and Sacrifice*

In this short section I would like to insert an entremets, that is, a small dish in-between the dense philosophy explored above by doing a ‘case-study.’ This will help us to visualize

Derrida's ethics, and also, why eating, devouring, the divine (be it in the form of Nature of God) is practiced in the form of incorporation. The real cannibals, as will become clear, are the Westerners themselves. As made clear above, Derrida's poststructuralist theories are mainly characterized by a deconstruction of logocentrism and the privileging of speech (i.e. the spoken word) over the actual written, perceivable word. Yet, as Chris Danta argues, in his "Might Sovereignty Be Devouring?", Derrida's concerns extended beyond a deconstruction of the Western logocentric philosophical tradition and the practice of writing; his theorizations on orality have not received the attention they deserve according to Danta. Derrida's ethics of alterity is defined through consuming and digesting the other, which all happens through the mouth, that same exit through which the supposed *logos* (which for Derrida is the Sovereign) and the spoken word is uttered. Derrida, in his *The Beast and the Sovereign* writes that "it's about mouth, teeth, tongue, and the violent rush to bite, engulf, swallow the other, to take the other into oneself too, to kill it or mourn it [...] The place of devourment is also the place of what carries the voice" (23). The voice and the spoken word together make *logos*, because it is not only uttered by a supposed rational subject, but it is also traditionally preferred because the speaking subject is visible. In his deconstruction of this logocentric tradition, Derrida ends up deconstructing the site where consumption and *logos* come together, and consequently, where the flesh and thought intersect: the mouth. The mouth and orality, for Derrida, is the place where the Sovereign (the rational, Western privileged being) meets the beast (or he who devours the other, and flesh). It is where human flesh meets meat, and it is precisely the mouth that "links beast and sovereign—making them consubstantial figures—is the fact that they each devour the other" (Danta 38); the sovereign 'devours' the beast, and thus where *logos* meets/meats the animal. Consequently, Derrida notes, "[t]he subject does not want just to master and possess nature actively [...]. In our cultures, he accepts sacrifice and eats flesh 'the *chef* must be an eater of flesh'" ("Eating Well" 114). Carnophallogocentrism, the beast and the sovereign intersect in the mouth. Orality, as the site where both *logos* is expressed, meat is consumed, is the site for Derrida where the beast and the sovereign meet, yet in reversed directions. Yet other ethical relations and expressions of fidelity are also expressed via the consumption of another body. The relation between alterity, ethics and cannibalism is not philosophical and ethical, but also historical, dating back to the colonial period, and the relation between the noble Christian European and the savage pagan Other.

The Eucharist, the Christian sacramental rite through which the sacrifice of Christ is remembered by eating the wafer and drinking red wine, the former symbolizing the body of Christ, the latter his blood. In this silent move away from ethics, we are enabled to move a bit

more towards a historical and colonial perception of the notion of incorporating the other, mourning and alterity. Exploring the Eucharist will help situate the cannibal as a crux of the ethics between bodies, cultures and (lacking) morals. The rite of the Eucharist, however, differs itself from actual cannibalism because it is a ‘transubstantiated’ cannibalism, and is performed not out of bodily hunger or appetite, but rather to pay respect to the sacrifice Christ made for ‘mankind.’ For Kilgour, the Eucharist is a “banquet at which host and guest come together without subsuming the other, as both eat and are eaten” (*From Communion to Cannibalism* 79). The Eucharist, then, is to be shared, and symbolizes the body of Christ; it is ritual act binding the Catholics in that it is exclusively performed within the Catholic community. The Eucharist, at least for the Catholics, is a way to profile themselves against the non-believers, and also against the Protestants; interestingly, the reformers did the same in labelling the Catholics cannibals. The Eucharist became the “crux of the Catholic and Protestant debate” (80). Even though Christians in general agreed that there was a relation between the body, the blood, the bread and the wine, the specific nature of this relation remained contentious. Kilgour argues that

According to the reformers, bodily analogies degraded the spirit, but it was they themselves who took them completely literally for their own purposes. By cleverly pushing the sacrament to a grotesque extreme unimagined by most Catholics and misrepresentative of the official interpretation of the rite, the reformers made the other extreme, their own position, appear as the only alternative for those who did not wish to be cannibals. This strategy of self-definition against a projected alien group is a version of “colonial discourse,” the construction of the savage cannibal as antithesis of civilized man used as a justification for cultural cannibalism that emerged out of the discovery of the New World. (83)

The Catholic Eucharist was turned into a “bloodthirsty rite, in which the Priests ate God over and over again” (83), allowing the reformers to formulate their (individualistic) identity as opposed to the communal identity of the cannibalistic Catholics. The Protestant reformation emerged, like humanism, as a schism from the community and sovereignty of the Church. Consequently, “in order to delineate themselves as one religious body against another, the reformers defined themselves in terms of eating: as those who ate spiritually in opposition to the others who ate God literally” (82). Even though the reformed church is characterized by notions of sobriety, faith and educating this faith (as opposed to all the ornamental rites and sacraments practiced by the Catholics), interpreting the incorporation of the body of Christ



literally seemed like a necessary move to make, because it threatened the reformers' newly gained identity.

The Eucharist, however one interprets it, is a process of mourning; mourning the death of Christ. For the Catholics, it is an acknowledgement of the sacrifice made by Christ. For the reformed protestant belief, simply 'believing' is already enough, for the Catholics, the sacrifice needs to be acknowledged over and over again by eating his body, becoming yet not merging with the body of Christ. This for Derrida would then be a failed success, in that the eater can never become the eaten, it can only temporarily be the host of *Corpus Christi*; a successful failure, in Derrida's terms. For the Catholic however these terms imply something negative, yet the repetitive nature of the Eucharist seems to imply something different: it needs to be performed over and over again, otherwise the Catholic sense of community would dissolve. Moreover, for many the Eucharist was not only an affirmative nod towards Christ's suffering and sacrifice, but also victory over dying and perishing. Caroline Walker Bynum, in her *The Resurrection of the Body*, affirms this victory by explaining that

Small wonder then that the funerary Eucharist, at first condemned as a continuation of pagan piety [for example through colonial discourse] came to be seen as palpable assurance that our flesh unites with the undigested and indigestible flesh of Christ in heaven. The Eucharist is a guarantee that the risen body we shall all become cannot be consumed. (56)

The Eucharist poses issues of conflict between religions, but it is also one of the most widely practiced acts of cannibalism within Western culture. The 'evilness,' however, is seemingly absent particularly because it distances itself from the material body. Sara Castro-Klarèn, in her "Parallaxes. Cannibalism and Self-Embodiment," points out that, in the rite of the Eucharist,

We become one with Christ by consuming Christ. But the fact that Christ can never really be consumed, brought to end, guarantees that our own consumption by beasts, by fire, or by the gaping maw of the grave is not indeed destruction. Such logic of man-God mutuality in consumption-digestion and consequent incorruptibility safeguards Christians from complete and utter finitude. Thus the grave is not the disappearance of the body. Death, that is to say rot and decomposition, is made productive via its inversion. It gives birth to its opposite. (107-108)

The Eucharist as a practice was thus an anxiety to face death. Yet the cannibalism practiced by the Tupi, natives of Brazil, according to the Western onlookers, out of appetite, hunger and savagery, and thus, in the ambiguous logic of the Catholic faith, deemed the 'actual' cannibal

otherworldly, savage, either in need of saviour, or according to some, too savage for saviour. It is this responsibility towards the other, a responsibility that is answered via eating and incorporation, which brings us back to Derrida and his ethics. So far the cannibal has been discussed in relation of the body/mind, the colonizer/colonized and self/other. The cannibal always served as a figure to demarcate the difference between the West and the New World Other. However, as we have seen through Derrida and Deutscher, “we are always [...] cannibal selves” (“Mourning the other” 172). However, Derrida’s ethics of alterity concerns a metaphorical cannibalism in that it is not about the actual eating of the flesh of another body. The difference between symbolic/metaphorical and literal cannibalism is a division that still needs to be deconstructed. Literal cannibalism as supposedly practiced by the natives of, for example, the New World is never actually proven, and the cannibal was constructed by the West not only because they needed the monstrous counterweight, but also because symbolism and substitutes are essential in Western philosophy (which, as Derrida observed, is carnophallogocentric). What made the *literal* cannibal monstrous is that it rejected symbols, and fed on the human body directly and thus on the flesh of animals. The rejecting substitutes that symbolized the human body was vital to Western society. The human body was thus transubstantiated on something nonhuman: a piece of bread, red wine, animal flesh. Indeed, so far the cannibal has only served to deconstruct humanistic ideals of the body/mind dualism and the colonizer/colonized binary. That is, the history and the function of “the cannibal” (as a product of colonialism and New World savage) has been thoroughly explored, but not how imaginings of *literal* as opposed to *symbolic* cannibalism deconstruct the carnophallogocentric logic of (Western) humanism. Wolfe’s discussion of Jonathan Demme’s film *The Silence of the Lambs*, a film that tells the story of the most notorious cannibal the West has known: Hannibal “The Cannibal” Lecter.

#### 2.4 *Anti-Eucharist: On Hannibal the Cannibal and Psychoanalysis*

The wafer and the wine in the Eucharist symbolize the body and blood of Christ, and consequently, an act of incorporation to acknowledge the sacrifice made by him. When reading notions of sacrifice and incorporation through a figure that skips the transubstantiation and feeds right off the bodies, things become more eerie, and whether we like it or not, more in line with posthumanist thought. Cary Wolfe’s analysis of the film *The Silence of the Lambs* in his “Subject to Sacrifice” is insightful because he adds psychoanalysis to the discussion, allowing for a more thorough foregrounding of notions such as sacrifice and the symbolic. Drawing upon Lacanian psychoanalysis and Slavoj Žižek’s extension thereof,

Wolfe explains that Lecter represents the primordial order, and the primary repression, or in other words, drawing upon Žižek's employment of Lacanian psychoanalysis is "the missing link". *The Silence of the Lambs* tells the story of Clarice Starlin (perf. Jodie Foster) who is trying to catch a vicious serial killer who skins his victims, going by the name of Buffalo Bill. In order to catch Buffalo Bill, Starlin is dependent upon the mind of a serial killer who cannibalizes his victims she caught earlier in her career: Hannibal Lecter. His intelligence and ability to empathise with a mind as bloodthirsty as his is what Lecter needs to catch Buffalo Bill. However, the reader does not only look in the mind of Buffalo Bill, but also in the horrifying yet uncannily intelligent brain of Lecter. As opposed to the earlier films of the Hannibal Lecter series, *The Silence of the Lambs* centres on Lecter's psyche, his drives, motivations, and consequently, how this psyche enables Starlin to catch Buffalo Bill, but also to be interrogated and explored by the gaze of Lecter during their meetings in the prison.

Lecter's cannibalism is noteworthy, because, as I mentioned in a footnote in the first chapter, he is everything but the stereotypical cannibal. He is white, middle aged, educated and well-read, has an ambiguous sexuality. His eating manners are extremely civilized, his appearance extremely calm and perhaps intellectual. He is both an animalized human as he is a humanized human. Or, as Wolfe points out, Lecter's specific position within the "species grid" cannot be discerned, leading Lecter to be the embodiment of both the animal as the human, he is animalized and he is also humanized (102). Wolfe then notes, by drawing upon Žižek's reading of Lacan, that Lecter as the embodiment of the two poles of the species grid is what makes him the "missing link between nature and culture" (qtd. in Wolfe, "Sacrifice" 109). This missing link is formulated in the Enlightenment, but has also found its way to psychoanalytical theory, where the missing link takes on the form of a primordial repression. Wolfe explains that

This unsettling and "impossible" convergence in Lecter of analytic vision and animal Žižek follows Lacan in claiming that the transcendental turn of the Enlightenment (as completed by Kant) consists in the desubstantialization of the subject, its "purification" from its substantial origin in nature, the animal, the bodily, the contingent, in what Kant calls, in *The Critique of Practical Reason*, the "pathological." But if one result of this desubstantialization is precisely the "subject" such a product can never appear without its by-product, what Lacan analyzes under the name of "the Thing" (*das Ding*). (109)

In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the "thing" takes on the form of the primary repressed unity between the child and its mother, in Enlightenment thought this "missing link" is caused by a

body/mind dualism, where the subject was thus situated in the non-material and transcendental place of the mind. Either way, Lecter as “the missing link” makes itself particularly evident in his disavowal of substitutive symbols. The primary repression and “the missing link” are normally coped with in the form of substitutes, symbols that aim to go back to this unity; when all was the same and the body/mind dualism or self/other were still tied together. For Lacan, language and the symbolic order are these symbolic substitutes. Yet these efforts are in vain; once the subject is split, there is no going back; the missing link really went missing. The Eucharist is symbolic substitute as well. The eating of the wafer is a recognition of the sacrifice made by Christ, and consequently, a sacramental rite that suggests a temporary reunion between the Christian and Christ—a moment of community and union. If it is through the desubstantialization that the Enlightenment subject is made, and the symbolic order sets in according to the psychoanalysts, then, Wolfe notes, sacrificial acts is what keeps the subject at its desubstantial place, so to say. Think for example Derrida’s carnophallogocentrism, where the eating of flesh is a way to hold ‘human’ at its place of the subject. Lecter, however, being the missing link incarnate, rejects these symbolic substitutes, and consequently, emphasizes how it are these ‘symbolic’ and sacrificial structures that are central in Enlightenment and humanistic thought. Wolfe notes that

In embodying a kind of unavowable “presymbolic other,” Lecter exposes symbolicity as such (the assignations of otherness and sameness identified by Derrida) as the core mechanism of Enlightenment and humanist modernity. But in this exposure, it is made clear that Lecter does not respect the principle of the symbolic substitute, the sacrificial victim [animal], the object of exchange, the metaphoric equivalent. Lecter’s strategy in the face of these endless substitutions will be to deny their efficacy, to demetaphorize, to literalize, to substantialize. (113).

Lecter does not accept substitutes, animal flesh or any other fleshy substitutes, but rather feeds directly on what these substitutes supposed to replace; the (reunion with) the fleshed body. Indeed, as Wolfe points out, when Lecter orders lamb “Lecter does not say ‘I eat animals and not, therefore, humans’; rather, he says ‘I eat animals and, therefore, humans’” (113).

The cannibal as the missing link, when read alongside the Eucharist and Derrida’s ethics of alterity, makes it a figure that embodies the link between the primordial and the symbolic, between friend and self, and also seems to embody the wafer and red wine in itself. It rejects symbolism, and in doing so, particularly through Wolfe’s reading, lays bare that it is precisely this symbolism and culture of sacrifice and substitutes is what is at the centre of

humanistic Enlightenment thought. Thinking ethics and relations through the cannibal, mourning and the Eucharist results in thinking fidelity, responsibility and alterity. However, what this line of thought presupposes is a certain degree of transcendentalism, particularly in the case of the Eucharist in that it is a rite of becoming a divine body that is somehow hovering above humankind. If we want to truly think posthuman(ist) ethics, we must consider cannibalism and consumption within an immanent universe. In summary, what has been discussed and uncovered above is how cannibalism is a recurring theme in the ethics of alterity, and in the ethics of friendship; not only philosophically, as Derrida has demonstrated, but also culturally and within religious. To be true to another means to digest the other metaphorically. Derrida's inevitable cannibalism does serve as an illuminative example to think ethics through consuming of other bodies, but it does not seem to push itself far enough to discuss power relations within this act of consuming. By exploring two extremes of the grid; the Eucharist and the cannibal (even though they both perform the same act but in different gradations), Derrida's ethics of cannibalism got more 'fleshy.' Moreover, it foregrounded how acts of cannibalism are acts of ethical recognition of the other, or in the case of Lecter, the missing link and thus as a body that refuses metaphorisation and thus rejects the Enlightenment ideal by being the very embodiment of the "Enlightenment Monster" ("Subject to Sacrifice" 110). That which the Enlightenment humanists tried to repress, and the split psychoanalytical subject lacks, comes back in the form of a cannibal; it links nature and culture, 'God' and man. The cannibal rejects carnophallogocentrism, and thus, in following Derrida, rejects Western logocentric thought in general. If symbolic substitutions and *logos* are central in Western thought, the body of the cannibal comes in as an inevitable result and consequence. It has haunted the Western Man, and it is out for its blood and flesh.

### *2.5 Embracing the Ethical and the Cannibal: Some Leftover Remarks*

Let us return to what was posed as the initial question, or demand as posed by Gruyer; "it is time we came to terms with the aporetic and rhetorically slippery ethics of Eating Well" (63). Derrida, Deleuze and Spinoza consider ethics through food, eating and the inevitable consumption of the other. Even though this did not lead to an ethics of 'good' or 'bad' eating in a political, ecological or economic sense, it did lead to an ethics that can only be formulated through food and appetite. The religious outing to the Eucharist has shown that Derrida's inevitable cannibalism is translated into a *literal* incorporating of the body. Even though the body of Christ is transubstantiated into a wafer and red wine, it is a rite to acknowledge the

sacrifice of Christ, but also to take the body of Christ into one's own. Moreover, the Eucharist was the very site where the battle between the Protestants and the Catholics took place, and where the Eucharist took on the same role the cannibal served in colonial discourse, namely as the site of the Other against which the I was profiled. By reading the figure of Hannibal the Cannibal alongside the Eucharist, it became evident how the cannibal (and the difference between symbolical and actual cannibalism) differ in that the former performs cannibalism as a substitute, the latter rejection metaphorisation in its entirety. The cannibal, within the ethics explored throughout this chapter, continues to be the body through which the self and the other merge, symbols are rejected, and deconstruction is performed. Thinking ethics in posthuman(ist) theories means thinking how to consume and incorporate otherness, both human as nonhuman, without subsuming it wholly. In a Spinozist frame, one can consume 'good' or 'evil,' but it happens either way. One only consumes and composes in greater or lesser extents. For Derrida, one consumes one's alterity inevitably. By considering Derrida's ethics of mourning and alterity, we encountered the always present, unavoidable cannibal, and when considering it through a Spinozist lens, the 'ethics through cannibalism' could be extended beyond the human sphere; all bodies have appetite, and all bodies incorporate and move through other bodies to become more powerful.

Spinoza's ethics is an affirmative ethics, it focusses on vitality and thus not on death and suffering. Braidotti too takes Spinoza as a frame to formulate her posthuman(ist) subject and ethics, yet instead of focussing on power and indifference to morality, she emphasizes the 'as-ifs' that are at stake within posthumanist ethics. The non-One within these as-if's<sup>9</sup> is particularly important for Braidotti; all is intracconnected rhizomatically, leading to an infinite of compositions within a Spinozist monism. Braidotti then states that

This humbling experience of not-Oneness, which is constitutive of the non-unitary subject, anchors the subject in an ethical bond to alterity, to the multiple and external others that are constitutive of that entity which, out of laziness and habit, we call 'self'. Posthuman nomadic vital theory stresses the productive aspects of the condition of not-One, that is to say a generative notion of complexity. At the beginning, there is always already a relation to an affective, interactive entity endowed with intelligent flesh and an embodied mind: ontological relation. (100)

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<sup>9</sup>The Spinozist influence here is evident, yet by using the word 'as-if' Braidotti seems to long for a more affirmative notion of ethics in that she emphasizes the *potentiality* of all the different 'becomings-', rather than on the all-encompassing Nature, and the indifference and lack of moral.

Braidotti emphasizes the relationality that is within this not-Oneness, and consequently, the responsibility the 'self' has to other alterities. With regard to the posthuman ethics quoted above, the cannibal in relation to the ethical is the fleshed figure embodying the ontological relation (that is thus the ethics); an ontological relation where self and other meet, where inside and outside meet, where meat meets flesh, the beast the sovereign join hands, and the both the Eucharist and the Enlightenment monster materialize.

3. “A portrait of an empty stomach:” On the Eucharist, and Becoming Unclean in *The Passion According to G.H.*

A form shapes the chaos, a form gives construction to the amorphous substance – the vision of an infinite piece of meat is the vision of the mad, but if I cut that meat into pieces and parcel them out over days and hungers – then it would no longer be perdition and madness: it would once again be humanized life.

Humanized life. I had humanized life too much.

Clarice Lispector

For Deleuze and Guattari, a book is what makes up an *assemblage*: “it is made up of comparative rates of flow on these lines produce phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, or, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture” (3-4). Moreover, to continue following Deleuze and Guattari’s lines of thought, literature, (de-)composed of syntax and linguistic is an infinite detour, trying to reach the supposed truth hidden behind it, yet in doing so, becomes even more indefinite, rhizomatic, if you like. For Deleuze, “there are no straight lines, neither in things nor in language. Syntax is the set of necessary detours that are created in each case to reveal the life in things” (227). The infinite detouring and reconnecting with other lines of literature is what reveals that it is a medium of becoming—becoming-animal, becoming-woman, becoming-object—it allows the reader to travel through these lines, to be transformed over and over again. Let us not wait longer, and be submerged in the immanent meditations of the literary imagination of Clarice Lispector.

3.1 “Tupi or not Tupi:” On *Tiny Women and the Cannibalist Manifesto*

Lispector is born in 1920 in Ukraine as Chaya Pinkhasovna Lispector. Yet her stay there was brief; when Lispector was two months old she and her parents emigrated to Brazil. Upon arrival in Brazil, the Lispector family ‘Latinized’ their names, and Chaya was renamed Clarice. Lispector died relatively young, at the age of 56, one day before she would turn 57 and one day after her widely received novel *Hour of the Star* was published. Her writing style is often described, particularly by her biographer Benjamin Moser, paradoxically, as “mystical Spinozism or religious atheism” (262) mainly due to her frequent references to ‘God’, and partly due to the spiritual, ‘unhuman’ undertone of her writings. Lispector has always been looking for a way to escape life, human life that is, through exploring the ahuman, nonhuman, or God. It is this mysticism, not necessarily religious but aiming for posthuman states, that kept Lispector writing. Yet it was also this writing, as Moser argues,



that places Lispector within an excruciating and painful position: on the one hand, it is through writing that she is “in search of the thing itself” (qtd. in Moser 267), but it is also through her writing that she alienates herself further and further from human life (see Moser, ch. “I Humanized Myself”).

Lispector’s ‘Spinozist atheism’ sets her apart from her Brazilian peers, who were undergoing a revolution of their own, a revolution in which Lispector did participate, but not as devoted as her modernist peers. Interestingly, ‘Brazilian modernism’ as formulated most prominently by poet Oswald de Andrade is articulated through the act of cannibalism. For de Andrade the role of modernist writing was one of nation building, and finding an own, authentic voice (exhuming it from a history of colonial oppression starting in the 16<sup>th</sup> century). As explained in Leslie Barry’s introduction to his translation of De Andrade’s *Cannibalist Manifesto* [*Manifesto Anthropofago*], the colonial mission of the European explorers was characterized by a ‘salvaging’ of the indigenous, cannibalistic inhabitants of the conquered lands. The Tupi, the indigenous tribe of Brazil, were the ‘first’ cannibals. De Andrade, in turn, claims that it is via modernism that Brazil can formulate its national identity, without losing its cosmopolitan character. Barry notes that both de Andrade’s own writings as his manifesto “neither apes nor rejects European culture, but devours it, adapting its strengths and incorporating them into the native self” (36). Consequently, the cannibal for de Andrade only incorporates the ‘good’ parts, and excretes or leaves to rot the bad parts, a process resembling what Derrida labelled “the ethics of alterity”. De Andrade appropriates the image of the savage native by inserting them with (imported) literary giants from Europa when he for example ponder “Tupi or not Tupi, that is the question” (38). Lispector found herself among the Modernist cannibals, who used cannibalism to formulate a civilization and a Brazil identity through cultural decolonization. For Lispector, particularly in *The Passion*, cannibalism was meant to elevate her precisely in an opposite direction: outside of humanity, outside of civilization, and into an immanence of Life and vibrancy. It is for this reason that Lispector’s *Passion* serves as an interesting example: on the one hand, it arose in tandem with the modernist cannibal, whereas on the other hand she was well aware that cannibalism could also be used to explore different territories than just a (de)colonial one. That is, the posthuman and mystic aspect of becoming-cannibal and becoming-cockroach, suggests that *The Passion According to G.H.* is a proto-Deleuzian work.

De Andrade’s influence in Lispector’s work is particularly evident in her short story “The Smallest Woman of the World.” It tells the story of the discovery of a tiny, black woman, the smallest woman in the world, named Little Flower, by the a French explorer

Marcel Pretre. Pictures of the woman appear in newspapers and the all over the world people are fascinated by the tiny woman; they want to possess her, have her in her house. The smallest woman in the world is the biggest headline of the Sunday Newspaper. ‘Little Flower’ becomes the object of the gaze of the explorer, and subsequently, also of the gaze of the Western world. Marcel’s gaze (mimicked by the Western onlookers) takes on a devouring character, scientifically taking in every aspect and gesture performed by Little Flower. Little Flower, who rarely speaks, feels a sensation of love for the explorer, and consequently an overwhelming sense of joy; she experiences his gaze as joyful and loving. Little Flower thus bursts into a joyous laughter, rejecting the devouring, objectifying gaze by subverting its implications: “not being devoured is the most perfect of feelings. Not being devoured is the secret goal of an entire life. So long as she wasn’t being eaten, her bestial laughter was as delicate as joy is delicate” (505). Subverting the primitive through the cannibal here is subverting the gaze through a cannibalistic gaze, and consequently, the feminine and indigenous rejecting this. Lispector’s *Passion* does not necessarily subvert the primitive by cannibalizing European culture. Her emphasis is less on the relation between the European cultural dominance and the Brazilian identity that it is on the relation between human, civilization, and how the latter is rejected through a cannibalizing—and becoming, the unclean, nonhuman, the roach.

However, in reading de Andrade’s *Cannibalist Manifesto* next to Deleuzo-Guattarian becomings-, another discussion comes to the fore, namely the (seemingly) opposed notions of becomings- and mimicry/mimesis. The Deleuzo-Guattarian becomings- are temporal rhizomatic relations; it is how one particle of an assemblage is taken up into another assemblage, composing new (rhizomatic) relations. These becomings- thus not presuppose any original, but rather, how the assemblage moves and changes, and how it thus gains new properties. Consequently, this means that Deleuze and Guattari reject the notion of mimicry. In their *A Thousand Plateaus*, they express this rejection quite literally when they state that “[m]imicry is a very bad concept, since it relies on binary logic to describe phenomena of an entirely different nature” (11). However, as the following reading of *The Passion* will demonstrate, this conception of mimicry is a narrow one. Even more, cannibalism as an (anti/decolonial) literary technique shows that mimesis can actually exist next to becomings. When reading de Andrade’s *Cannibalist Manifesto* in terms of colonialism more explicitly, it shows that it is a re-appropriation of the colonial processes of mimicry. Homi Bhabha, through his notion of colonial mimicry, considers mimicry as a colonial process, where the colonized other is required to mimic the colonial oppressor, but this mimicry must

“continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference” (126). There must always be a notion of difference between the colonizer and the colonized, it is a process of recognition and disavowal which continually reinstates itself. De Andrade’s *Cannibalist Manifesto* also suggests a mimicry, but not simply in the form of aping the colonizer, but rather, digesting him and keeping only what is nutritious and useful. The *Cannibalist Manifesto* thus articulates a notion of mimicry that only takes in the aspects it needs and wants, makes it ‘the same’, and excretes otherness. This conception of mimicry is, I argue, not necessarily compatible with the Deleuzo-Guattarian notion of becoming. Mimicry, rather than articulating a normalizing of the colonized subject because of the “desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as *a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*” (Bhabha 126), de Andrade’s mimicry through cannibalism suggests an affirmative *urge* to become the other. The cannibalism as suggested by de Andrade is both pro-mimicry as it is anti-mimicry: it digests and it excretes, it purloins and it rejects. That which is excreted is not the needed “surplus” that Bhabha formulates (a surplus that affirms the ‘authenticity’ of that which is mimicked), but rather, a surplus that is figuratively excreted, detracted from its (nutritious) value and usefulness. This notion of mimicry is also what is suggested in Eduardo Viveiros de Castro’s *Cannibal Metaphysics* briefly discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. Viveiros de Castro formulates an anthropology of anthropology, and consequently, for an anthropology that is philosophy and vice versa. Particularly important is that Viveiros de Castro pleads for a “decolonization of thought” (40) of anthropology and philosophy, and argues that it is time that anthropology stop appropriating Western concepts to analyse non-Western peoples. Interestingly, Viveiros de Castro reads this tendency to appropriate the West to make sense of the rest alongside the workings of traditional philosophy, namely that all ideas are legible and intelligible, as long as the right ratio is there. Re-reading Deleuze and Guattari, Viveiros de Castro argues that anthropology must become a metaphysical practice of perspectivism, where it are not ideas and identities that come first, but rather perspectives of different bodies and substances. In his introduction to *Cannibal Metaphysics*, Peter Skafish argues that

Where the identities of objects and substances come first for us, in perspectivism they are second. Because each soul only knows who and what it is on the basis of what its body looks like from the perspective of another soul (which only knows itself on the basis of how its body is seen from the outside, etc.), difference and relations are primary (13).

Perspectivism is thus the metaphysical position where one knows not ideas but things, and consequently, knows itself only from the relative perspective of its own body. In a clear and

outspoken move away from universalism, Viveiros de Castro employs the Deleuzo-Guattarian notions of becoming (which is also a notion of perspectivism) to formulate this metaphysics of anthropology. The cannibal, a figure that has fascinated, if not formulated, anthropology, plays the role of embodying this perspectivism. Viveiros de Castro writes that “[s]elf-consciousness is reached not through confrontation with the other and subsequent self-return but through temporarily occupying, as dramatized by the Tupian cannibalistic sacrificial rituals..., the enemy’s point of view, and seeing ‘oneself’ from there” (12). Cannibalism, both for Viveiros de Castro as for de Andrade, is an act of temporal digestion and excretion, of temporality and perspectivism, and consequently, an act that allows for a constant unfolding of compositions. It is thus an anthropological and in de Andrade’s case, modernist, figure that allows for temporal digestions of otherness, and in this process, altering the properties of the practice. This notion of mimicry through cannibalism is thus not so much founded upon the notion that there is an intelligible origin which is mimicked and incorporated, but rather through a relation between substances, things and bodies that constantly digest, and thus temporarily become the other.

### *3.2 Transcendence/Immanence: the Unmaking of G.H.*

In *The Passion According to G.H.*, the reader is absorbed in the life, existential crisis, and eventually, the becoming-cockroach/unclean of G.H., an upper-class sculptress living in Rio de Janeiro. G.H., who finds herself bored on a sunny day off, decides to clean the room of her previous maid. Once entering the maid’s old room, she is overwhelmed with an emptiness flowing through it.

The room was the opposite of what I’d created in my home, the opposite of the soft beauty I’d made from my talent for arrangement my talent for living, the opposite of my serene irony, of my sweet and absentminded irony: it was a violation of my quotation marks, the quotation marks that made me a citation of myself. The room was a portrait of an empty stomach. (34)

The emptiness and cleanness is interrupted by “life-sized charcoal outlines of a naked man, a naked woman, and a dog that was more naked than a dog” (30-31). The emptiness of the room, and the sudden appearance of the huge drawing, leaves G.H. pondering the impossibility of organizing the room. She decides to start with the closet, yet when opening the closet G.H. is faced with a cockroach. Followed by this encounter between G.H. and the roach is a chaotic account of G.H.’s thoughts, and subsequently, how she, as an organized, fixed person, is ‘unmade,’ disorganized and un-humanized. “I was watching my

transformation from chrysalis into moist larva, my wings were slowly shrinking back scorched. And a belly entirely new and made for the ground, a new belly was being reborn” (72). In a moment of fear, G.H. slams the door, wounding but not killing the roach. G.H., through her encounter with the cockroach, finds herself facing a room where the earlier described emptiness was now “deserted and primarily alive. I had reached the nothing and the nothing was living and moist” (55). What follows is a descent of G.H. into immanence; there is no difference between the white stuff oozing out of the roach and G.H. herself. The reader gets taken into this world, and is invited to enter. On several occasions, G.H. refers to a hand guiding her into this immanent universe, as a sort of escort. At the beginning of the book, Lispector warns the reader that the book is different, and that she “would be happy if it were read by souls that were already formed... they who, only they, will slowly come to understand that this book takes nothing from no one” (xi). Whether it is the hand of a god, the hand of the reader, or the hand of some other entity, the reader too is escorted (or escorts) down to the plane of immanence. Lispector’s precaution reads like an invitation, particularly when considering that, when nearing the end, G.H. realizes that it takes a fully formed soul and voice to take the descent: “one must first climb painfully until reaching high enough to be able to fall” (185). If the soul of the reader is already formed enough, it is also able to fall low enough. Consequently, this quote may as well be the epigraph of the posthumanities, whose main task is to point to the inevitability of the fall of a humanities through a worn out anthropocentrism.

The becoming-nothuman means for G.H. a move away from the rational, the teleological, and more radically, from the spoken and the written word. These moves away from logic towards chaos, disorder and muteness are initiated by the wound of the roach. In the beginning, when G.H. had ‘only’ hurt the roach, G.H. is still clinging on to identifying herself; she ponders upon her initials, G.H., and how it may still help her. She tries to cry for help. Yet gradually, as G.H. ‘monologue’ continues and G.H. as a persona and clearly delineated person fades, G.H. sees the joy it brings her in leaving her human characteristics behind. Scared as she is, she lets go of the hand she was clinging onto, a hand which has been interpreted as the hand of Christ or the hand of her mother, and enters into a world from which there is, so it seems, no return.

Entering was only a sin because it was the damnation of life, to which I later might never be able to regress. I might have already known that, beyond the gates, there would be no difference between me and the roach. Not in my own eyes or in the eyes

of what is God. That was how I started taking my first steps into the nothing. My first hesitant steps toward Life, and abandoning my life. (79)

The distinction between Life and life is a distinction commonly made within posthumanism, and as I have articulated in the previous chapters, most notably through the works of Braidotti, who considers Life/*zoe* as a force or a vitality “posited as process, interactive and open-ended” (*The Posthuman* 60), and ‘life’ as being a state of mortality.<sup>10</sup> The Life with a capital L for which Braidotti advocates is a Life based on a Spinozist Nature defined by a self-expressive stream of vitality (hence the open-endedness) running through all compositions. Leaving life to enter Life means leaving her ‘human life behind’ and becoming nothuman. The term ‘nothuman’ specifically is important, and a term carefully described by G.H.: “not human” is a great reality, and that it does not mean “unhuman”. On the contrary: the nothuman is the radiating centre of a neutral love in Hertzian waves (181-182). The nothuman, as becomes clear, is all what is *not* understood as human, that is what “life itself” is. Particularly ‘indifferent’ Spinozist Nature as discussed in the previous chapter is brought to the fore in *The Passion*. G.H., for example, struggles with “just sitting there and being, and so I wanted to do. Doing would be transcending, transcending is an exit” (83). A direct link here is made between immanence (which is the opposite of transcending) and the becoming-nothuman. That is, when G.H. leaves her human life behind, she is inevitably taken up by “life itself,” by an immanent state of *being*. Later, as G.H.’s meditation is reaching the desired muteness, she realizes that she feels the love of an indifferent God.

Through a love so great that it would be of such an indifferent personal – as if I were not a person. He wanted for me to be the world with Him. He wanted my human divinity, and that had to start with an initial stripping down of the constructed human. And I had taken the first step: since at least I already knew that being human is a sensation, an orgasm of nature. (131)

This encounter, however, is one that *has* to be an encounter with the unclean, and an encounter that goes through the mouth, through incorporation of the other. For G.H., a cockroach is the most primitive and unclean of all animals, an uncleanness deriving from the Bible.

I was finding out that the unclean animal of the Bible is forbidden because the unclean is the root – for there are created things that never decorated themselves, and

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<sup>10</sup> As pointed out earlier in this thesis, I refrain from writing Life with a capital I, but since this concerns a literary analysis, it is here not a matter of opinion about how to spell it correctly, but rather about considering why G.H. refers to her nothuman life with a capitalized L and consequently, what this means for the narration, the plot and my interpretation thereof.

preserved themselves exactly as they were the moment they were created, and only they continued to be the still wholly complete root. And because they are the root one cannot eat them, the fruit of good and of evil – eating the living matter would banish me from a paradise of adornments, and leave me to wander forever with a shepherd's staff in the desert. Many were they who wandered with a staff in the desert. Worse – it would lead me to see that the desert too is alive and has moistness, and to see that everything is alive and made of the same. (70)

Adam and Eve, after taking a bite from the forbidden fruit, were banned from paradise forever. The roach for G.H. embodies the forbidden fruit that, after she has taken a bite, will cause her to be banned from life. Becoming nothuman means becoming unclean, and it is through the root, the unclean, that this becoming is initiated. Yet as Eve took the apple because she was seduced by a snake, G.H. *sees no other option* than to taste the roach; it is the roach of all roaches. The eater becomes the eaten, both literally since there is no fundamental difference between the roach's substance and G.H.'s substance, and metaphorically, in that G.H. as a person, individual, human, is devoured by her encounter with the roach. The literal references to the Biblical, and the overall mystical undertone of *The Passion*, and moreover, the eating of a body that has sacrificed itself (which, in this case, is the roach) brings back the notion of the Eucharist. Whereas the Eucharist is a form of 'cannibalism' of the transcendental, the divine, and consequently, is a 'transcendental act of consumption', G.H.'s eating of the roach is one of immanence, and the more G.H. is encompassed by the substance of immanence the more the quotation marks around her name and person evaporate. "The world had reclaimed its own reality, and, as after a catastrophe, my civilization had ended: I was nothing more than a historical fact" (65).

Catherine Caufield, who reads Lispector's *Passion* in relation to the Jewish paradigm and Lispector's own Jewishness, articulates that it the cockroach may take the place of incorporating the wafer. Caufield points out that for the Jewish, the unclean is that which separates God and men, leading to a divided community. Even more, the Eucharist, on the other hand, divides the Christians and the Jewish (the Eucharist is a Christian sacrament). The unclean and the Wafer come together in a 'Jewish body' (a dangerous reading since Caufield is considering G.H. and Lispector as being one and the same person), uniting three different systems of faith in one body. Therefore, Caufield points out, "the text subverts the traditional idea of the impure as something which distances the Jew from God and converts the impure into that which facilitates communion with the ineffable" (505). De Andrade's modernist cannibalism exposes itself in the sense that the primitive, the unclean, or in general the

cannibal is employed to subvert the previous presumption or tradition, whether this original value or presumption is imposed via colonialism, religion or culture.

This ‘community’ that is established through the unclean Eucharist of the cockroach is described later in G.H.’s meditation, when she articulates that “the great neutral punishment of general life is that it can suddenly undermine a single life” (66); the roach and the narrator, in the ‘Eucharist’ reading of *The Passion*, merge, a merging triggered the small opening in the scale of the roach. “The cockroach that was filling the room with finally open vibration. The vibrations of its rattlesnake tails in the desert. Through a painstaking route, I had reached the deep incision in the wall that was that room – and the crevice created a vast, natural hollow hall as in a cave” (53-54). However, G.H. only needs to take one small nibble of the roach to, instead of the yearly (as is the case with the Jewish tradition) or weekly (as is the case with the Catholic Eucharist) to become nonhuman. Moreover, as opposed to the Eucharist, G.H. and the roach successfully, or perhaps endlessly, merge. Matthias Kärrlholm, in “The Animistic Moment” describes this merging as a melting of the mediator and the intermediary. He explains that

As intermediaries become mediators, their transformative powers increase and the process becomes undecided. Indecisiveness can be seen as coupled with a kind of grace, in the sense that you in some way make yourself a spokesperson for something else, while, at the same time, also let that something else be a spokesperson for you. (75)

The roach as the unclean Eucharist mediates, and consequently, opens up the world of Life and forces G.H. to let behind her human life. It is also in this sense that she speaks of ‘depersonalisation’ and consequently, that she compares her depersonalisation to the sacrifice made by Christ. *The Passion* as referring to ‘the Passion’ is also articulated in that G.H. literally compares the human condition to the Passion of Jesus Christ, and the sacrifice that all humankind has to make resembles the sacrifice made by Christ.

It is exactly through the failure of the voice that one comes to hear for the first time one’s own muteness and that of others and of things, and accepts it as a possible language. Only then is my nature accepted, accepted with its frightened torture, where pain is not something that happens to us, but what we are. And our condition is accepted as the only one possible, since it is what exists, and not another. And since living it is our passion. The human condition is the passion of Christ. (185)

Sacrificing our human condition, then, is what makes *The Passion* ‘the Passion.’ As the upper quote also articulates, is a tension between silence and the spoken word, a tension that shall be



the focus of the next part, and consequently, a tension that is a tension framed in the figure of cannibalistic language.

But before exploring the narrative structure and its implications, I would like to make a few last remarks on the cockroach as an opening up/mediator of becomings-, particularly because this section focusses almost exclusively on religious paradigms while there are so many other becomings- at stake. Hélène Cixous, reads *The Passion* in terms of a becoming-woman through the notion of the uncleanness and unwantedness of the roach. For Cixous, the cockroach and the disorganization it brings are all feminine, and it is the becoming of these aspects, these joyful transformations, that the white, ordered and male dominated neatness is rejected. Through the primordial fluids and uncleanness, Lispector animates those at the periphery. Cixous, in her “Clarice: The Approach,” writes that

All things still without a name, she attracts them, the flower, the fruit, all the anonymous, whole, not-yet-called things, each thing in its time, she makes them be there, before us, and we verify, in the same instant, how they exist how they became there, and how henceforth they are still there. (69)

Through the opening in the roach’s scale, and consequently, through the incorporation of the roach, an act of eating not done out of nutrition but out of pure ontological necessity, the lives of the marginalized, the oppressed and the (unclean) nothuman others are given space to flourish and free themselves from the oppression. Levilson Reis criticizes Cixous’s analysis for overlooking and neglecting the role played by the maid, who is a Mulata. For Reis, then, the eating of the roach does not so much embody G.H.’s ‘becoming-unclean/improper/feminine’, but rather a ‘becoming-black’. Reis writes that “the modern Brazilian universe of *The Passion*, the mulatto maid Janair represents the socio-cultural stereotype of the poor black Brazilian, whom G. H., as the rich, white southerner, overshadows” (134). The roach and Janair, then, are the feminine Black other(s)<sup>11</sup> and the “true inhabitants of the room” (Lispector 41), and it takes a literal incorporation of this otherness and plasma for G.H. to see their marginalized, vibrant world as home too.

Let us now return to the cannibalistic theme of *The Passion*, and more specifically, how G.H. (and as we shall see Lispector as well) considers the cannibalizing of the roach as an inevitable outcome of her encounter with – and becoming-roach. This inevitability is worked out throughout the plot; G.H. keeps moving her mouth closer to the roach without intentionality; it is rather an act of resignation, of “giving up” (186). Lispector herself, in

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<sup>11</sup> Janair, in this regard, takes in the same role as Little Flower; the feminine, black other, gazed upon by the wealthy/curious/fascinated onlooker.

articulating how she was transformed and frightened by her own writings, also indicates that, as the story progressed, she articulates the fear she experienced when realizing that G.H. simply *had* to eat the cockroach. However, and this brings in Derrida's ethics of alterity and successful mourning, namely, that one simply *has* to cannibalize the other (and eat the parts you like about the other, yum). Derrida's inevitable cannibalism concerns the recognition of alterity, but G.H. seems to be concerned with a notion of trusting the world, and letting oneself be taken by its vitality and vibrancy, particularly at the end of the novel, when she 'finally' commits "the tiniest act," taking a little piece of the roach in her mouth.

I was approaching something I think I was – trust. Perhaps that is the name [...] I was trusting [...]. Timidly I let myself be pierced by a sweetness that humbled me without restraining me. Oh God, I was feeling baptized by the world. I had put a roach's matter in my mouth, and finally performed the tiniest act. (188)

Either way, G.H.'s relation with—or consuming of—opened the way for her to be absorbed in immanence and vitality, and for us the way to approach it with many different angles. *The Passion* serves as plenty of food for thought to think how consumption, eating and so forth can be imagined as being frames through which an immanent and ethical path is formulated, and moreover, how it can be imagined outside strictly abstract and (practical) philosophical terms.

### 3.3 Self-Devouring Language

*The Passion* is the first book written by Lispector in the first-person. G.H., then, is both the narrator, the narrated (since she frequently, throughout the story, puts her own personality in between quotation marks, alienating herself from herself) and the actor. The 'historical fact' that once was G.H. is narrated whilst the narrator too is G.H. It is almost a fabulation, a time-loop, in which the reader finds itself: "the instant, this instant – the present – that isn't imaginable, between the present and I there is no interval: it is now, in me" (75). As Adria Frizzi points out, in *The Passion*, and G.H.'s meditation, there emerges a "parallel between expression and experience" (26). The decision of G.H. to write it down, then, becomes double layered; on the one hand, writing is a transcendental device with which 'human' creates and imagines organization within a chaotic and disorganized world and thus blocking Nature to encompass us, but on the other hand it is also the means through which experience are expressed, and expressions are experienced (see also Frizzi 76). G.H., as both the narrator as the actor, thus builds up a specific relation with the reader, the latter also implied in the story when it is addressed by the frequent referring to a 'you' in *The Passion*. How did G.H. write

down something that cannot be captured in hindsight, but is instead always experienced and is an event? At the end of *The Passion*, G.H. expresses this ambiguous place of language; as a means to fail to obtain, a means to fail to describe, and in doing so, ending up with a silence that says it all.

I have to the extent I designate, and this is the splendor of having a language. But I have much more to the extent that I cannot designate. Reality is raw material, language is the way I go in search of it, and the way I do not find it. But it is from searching and not finding that what I did not know was born, and which I instantly recognize.

Language is my human effort. My destiny is to search and my destiny is to return empty-handed. But – I return with the unsayable. The unsayable can only be given to me through the failure of my language. Only when the construction fails, can I obtain what it could not achieve. (186)

The role of language and the written word thus seems to be one that is inevitable yet eventually useless. The ‘you’ that is addressed, then, can be read as an invitation for the reader to achieve what cannot be achieved, *to experience the unsayable*. Language cannot be employed to directly touch the raw material; it is only after ‘giving up’ that the raw material connects to us. The form of language, and how it tries to form the un-formable, is what also brings us back to the biblical and the fleshy; for G.H., Frizzi points out, ‘form’ and order is embodied by flesh, an infinite piece of flesh, alluding not only to the infinite body of Christ transubstantiated to the wafer and the wine, but also to the actual rawness of the chaos that form tries to shape.

A form shapes the chaos, a form gives construction to the amorphous substance – the vision of an infinite piece of meat is the vision of the mad, but if I cut that meat into pieces and parcel them out over days and hungers – then it would no longer be perdition and madness: it would once again be humanized life. (6)

Frizzi argues that infinite flesh, a symbol and image of the Enlightenment (see also Cottom ch. 1 and 2), where the finitude of the body and the infinitude of the mind were images widely deployed is “at odds with the order we impose on society and the world at large, and consequently containing the seeds of chaos” (27). The infinity of the flesh is distributed over time and stomachs is how, for G.H. the world is ordered, by language. The Eucharist too is infinite, in that the Body of Christ never seems to be ‘finished’; time and time again, it is consumed, indicating the infinity of his body. G.H. too, by letting her mouth touch the unclean roach, yet this ‘Eucharist’ does not seem to be in need in repetition. When nearing the

end of the book, G.H. is still human in that she is planning her life later that evening. She writes that

I am avid for the world, I have strong and defined desires, tonight I'll go dance and eat, I won't wear the blue dress, but the black and white one. But at the same time I need nothing. I don't even need for a tree to exist. I now know of a way that relinquishes everything – and including love, nature, objects. A way that does without me. Though, as for my desires, my passions, my contact with a tree – they are still for me like a mouth eating. (183)

At the end of the tour de force of the universe where G.H. gradually sinks into, the realisation comes that this dehumanising and depersonalisation of actually a joyful thing; in the universe where she sank into is moved through joy, passions and desires; a joy that is experienced when realizing that the world does not need G.H., but is instead moving through G.H and vice versa. Whereas G.H. repeatedly emphasized that she has become nothuman, the above quote seems to indicate that she can move back and forth between being human and being nothuman. It is also through this quote that the discussion between becoming-/mimicry is brought to the fore. G.H. digested the roach, temporarily became nothuman through the roach, and consequently, temporarily occupied the immanent realm of the roach. It is through this experience of perspectivism, or cannibalistic mimicry, that the properties and compositions that make G.H. have changed, altered. The position of the reader, the one who supposedly holds G.H's hand, is an transcendent addressee; one that still is a 'you' and can receive the messages-(and make sense of ) G.H.'s experience. The role played by the reader, interestingly, is temporary too.

While writing and speaking I will have to pretend that someone is holding my hand. Oh, at least at the beginning, just at the beginning. As soon as I can let go, I will go alone. In the meantime, I must hold this hand of yours – though I can't invent your face and your eyes and your mouth. (Lispector 10).

The reader here is a guiding figure, whose presence for G.H. is nothing more than a hand without a body. Here too we can see the cannibalist mimicry, but more in the sense that the temporality of the role played by the reader is brought to the fore; the reader is only allowed to temporarily hold G.H's hand, otherwise it will digest her in her entirety. It must let go once G.H.'s properties are fully evaporated, and thus, once she is ready to descend into a muteness, into an immanent state of existing.

Lispector's and G.H's 'ordering' or the story is one of contradictions, circularity and movement. Every chapter begins with the same sentence the previous chapter ended with, a

sentence which usually expresses a moment of crisis, contemplation, leaving it to be resolved or subverted in the chapter that follows. In constant flux, the unsettling movement of acts, events and syntax brings forth a story that is always moving away from the unsayable, indicating some consistency, but also rejecting it in that the sentence, usually containing an exclamation of a troubling realization or sensation, is never really resolved. This knitting together of never resolved realisations and infinite detours conjures up the *assemblage* articulation of Deleuze quoted at the beginning of this chapter in that it constantly shifts and that language (and syntax) is “the set of necessary detours that are created in each case to reveal the life in things” (227). Cixous, who, in her “Writing and the Law” compares Lispector’s *The Passion* with Maurice Blanchot, argues that “[i]n Clarice Lispector, the positions are always in movement. The most striking example is in *The Passion according to G.H.*, where she advances from what could be called an acute note of contradiction to the next acute note of the next contradiction, up to a moment of ecstasy and revelation” (83). Eventually, in the end, G.H. runs out of words leading to the silence (and the end of the book), “since how could I speak without the word lying for me? how could I speak except timidly like this: life is just for me. Life is just for me, and I don’t understand what I’m saying. And so I adore it” (Lispector 189). However, as indicated earlier, experience and expression exist in tandem; reflecting Spinoza’s parallelism between the body and the mind (i.e. what happens in the body happens in the mind to). G.H., before inscribing her encounter with the roach, writes that

I shall create whatever happened to me. Only because life cannot be retold. Life is not livable. I shall have to create atop life. And without lying. Create yes, lie no. Creating isn’t imagination, its taking the great risk of grasping reality. Understanding is a creation, my only way. I’ll have to make effort to translate telegraph signals—to translate the unknown into a language I don’t speak, and without even understanding what the signals mean. I shall speak that sleepwalker’s language that would not be a language if I were awake. (12-13)

It is thus at the end, when the only thing left to be said is silence that G.H. seems to have lost her urge to understand what has happened to her, *The Passion* being a result of this urge, and lets go, gives up thinking, and, who knew, she adores it.

What we have seen in this analysis is that the cannibal and acts of consumption are configured in multiple ways, and on several layers of the narrative. The cannibal in Lispector’s *The Passion* appears in multiple ways; the first being a cannibal via consumption. The cannibalism performed by G.H. is auto cannibalism; she eats the white pus of the roach

out of which she too is made. “I was eating myself, I who am also the living matter of Sabbath” (133). It is debatable as to whether the self-consuming of G.H. is auto cannibalism (autosarcophagy) or autophagy, the latter referring to the natural processes of cell renewal. For both autosarcophagy as autophagy a case can be argued, but in case of *The Passion*, autophagy seems to be the most accurate; the merging-through-incorporation seems to occur naturally, and moreover, inevitably. This inevitability emerges out of G.H.’s entrance into Nature/Life, desires and passions. If she wanted to fully enter, she must take the roach’s yellow slime that is the gateway to this immanent vitality into herself, in her mouth. Lispector, as quoted in Moser, in reflecting back on writing *The Passion*, also experienced a shudder of terror. “The thing escaped my control when I, for example, realized that the woman was going to have to eat the insides of the roach. I trembled in fright” (qtd in Moser 269). The other cannibal in *The Passion* is a self-devouring language; a language that is on a quest to devour its own substance to come to the raw material, to come to a silence. “Reality is raw material, language is the way I go in search of it, and the way I do not find it. But it is from searching and not finding that what I did not know was born, and which I instantly recognize” (186). Fully aware of the artificiality of yet need for a language, the language G.H. and Lispector employ is infinitely self-referential, an outside medium which, in circles, refers back to itself. It cannot describe ‘the inside’ that G.H. and the room and the roach are made of, but it is the only means through which G.H. is enabled to search, to fail, and consequently, to end up with an all-saying silence. And so I adore it.

#### 4. Eating One/Feeding One: On *The Road*, Cannibals and Consumers

Humans left alive are both consumers and the potentially consumed.

Jordan Dominy

But you don't need to go to an academic to hear that.

Robert Appelbaum

Whereas Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* and Lispector's *The Passion* were written a good forty years apart and share, plot-wise, little to nothing (at some parts they almost literally contradict one another), what does bind them is their focus on a Godlike figure, a prophecy, and cannibalism. The cannibal in *The Road*, as I will discuss at length below, is the embodiment of 'evil,' but also of (capitalist) consumerism, one that outlived the apocalypse that wiped out almost all (organic) life. The postapocalyptic novel, particularly in contemporary Western culture, is a popular genre; it critiques contemporary hyper-capitalized society, and consequently, the effects that economy (and humanity) has on the environment by imagining the apocalyptic end of the current Western society.

McCarthy was born in 1933 in Rhode Island as Charles McCarthy (changing his name to Cormac later on). McCarthy, even though his novels are always set in the American South, is Irish-American; his parents emigrated to America before McCarthy was born. McCarthy's specific relation to the marginalized agrarian farmers inhabiting the Appalachian mountain area is a common theme running through his oeuvre. Christopher Walsh reads McCarthy's novels through a "Southern lens," arguing that, even though McCarthy believes in "humanistic potential of the novel" (2) and thus the novel's ability to capture the ever differing tenets of humanity, the form of his novels seem to reject any such belief. The characters in his novels are never heroic figures, nor do they have extraordinary characteristics. This is particularly due to the fact that the characters, especially in *The Road*, are inferior to the landscape. The landscape is relentless, unpredictable, and in the case of *The Road*, even in its deadness, still decides the fate of the father and the son. Consequently, since the Appalachia is not a clearly delineated area on the map, but is rather blurred by the borders of what is to be considered the "real South," McCarthy employs his specific relation to his natural habitat to deconstruct relations within cultures and geographies in America. Walsh notes that "Southern Appalachia and East Tennessee provide the geographic setting for his imaginative deconstruction of the gnostic idea of a hegemonic, settled, and stable South" (7).

McCarthy's characters are often seen as the marginalized inhabitants of the Appalachians: poor, white agrarian workers. Consequently, these characters are what McCarthy considers as "the other Americans," who cannot afford the American dream, the American capitalist market but who only 'suffer' under it (Welsh 8-9, 20). "McCarthy's work," Welsh notes, "is part of a broader Appalachian discourse which implores us to reconsider the region's relationship to America as a whole, especially those narratives about the disempowered and marginalized" (21). However, as shall be discussed below, McCarthy's emphasis on the poor white farmer, whose chances of living the American dream are small, seems to ignore those whose chances of this "dream" have been taken by force: the Cherokee, the real native Americans of Appalachia who "were the first to suffer overt hostility" (20). As Walsh notes, McCarthy's writing is considered emancipatory for the excluded, white farmers, who do not have access to the American dream, let alone in the American national identity. Yet when reading the cannibal both as a figure of colonial Otherness, as well as an embodiment of a consumerism gone haywire, *The Road* proves to be a strong critique of both the (current Western) relation between self and O/other (a relation all too important in colonial and postcolonial discourses), and of an environment-and-animal-destroying capitalist consumerism.

The postapocalyptic as a cinematic or literary genre depicts a world that has been wiped out, "the cause of this destruction [is] root[ed] in the current environmental, political, and economic practices of modern Western civilization" (Lawrence, "Because we carry the fire" 162). Like many postapocalyptic stories, *The Road* is a narration about a select group of people that have survived an apocalyptic/cataclysmic event. The cause or the nature of the catastrophe in *The Road* remains obscure. The only description of what caused the apocalypse is that it was "a long shear of light followed by a series of low concussions" (52). *The Road* tells the story of a father (papa or father) and a boy (the boy) trying to survive in this postapocalyptic world. The father and the boy are on a quest towards the coast, where the two hope to find better weather, more food, and perhaps also more humans. "In following the road down south to the coast, they stroll upon a grey, ashy and bleak world. The city was mostly burned. No sign of life. Cars in the street caked with ash, everything covered in ash and dust" (12). The world that has lost all its colour and has lost all its life, and almost all food supplies and stores are ransacked. The boy and the father fear being eaten by packs of cannibals. Whereas many human survivors have turned to cannibalism for survival and self-preservation, the father and the boy stick to eating whatever crosses their path and whatever is not human flesh. The reader is thrown into a postapocalyptic road story, grey, and with an even more



bleak ending; once arrived at the south coast, all they find is more dust, more grey, and a cannibal every once in a while.

#### 4.1 *The (Un)Ethical Cannibal: On Dietary Norms and the Profane*

In his article “Cannibalism, Capitalism, Profanation: Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* and the End of Capitalism,” John Dominy notes that

Connecting *The Road* more readily to critiques of consumerism, the novel evokes imagery of insatiable anthropophagy that scholars have identified in earlier literatures— colonial travel narratives and British abolitionist writings, for example— that sensationalize cannibalism, use it to define civilization, or critique imperialism and excessive consumption. (144)

As Dominy points out, the cannibals in *The Road* function both as the evil, savage Other (as they have been appropriated and constructed to justify colonialism by the West) but also, indeed, to critique the excessive consumption that the Western capitalist market desires. The cannibal as a capitalist critique is not a new phenomenon. In “The Joys of Consumption,” Robert Appelbaum points out that many social thinkers, including Jean Baudrillard, were drawn to cannibalistic tenets, particularly because for them “[c]annibalistic practices mirror the inner logic of capitalist economics, they argued: capitalism unleashes appetites that have no limits, and so in the end it eats its own” (par. 4). Appelbaum, however, argues that cannibalism as such is not an apt metaphor to describe and deconstruct capitalism because, as he states, “[i]f capitalism is to grow and capital to accumulate, the workers and consumers have to survive and thrive, if only to work and consume all the more. Capitalism’s minimum requirement is that it not devour its own” (par. 6). Indeed, capitalism must accumulate and not devour itself, nor its subjects. However, the subjects of capitalism, the consumers (women in particular, as we shall see in the next chapter), are eventually demanded to consume themselves, considering the vast pace in which the capitalist industry exhausts its nonhuman resources. Or, to put it differently; McCarthy’s *The Road* depicts how we are eventually forced to feed on our own once the capitalist consumer industry has exhausted its resources (nature, animals, humans) to such an extent that there is nothing left to consume but ourselves. Consequently, the cannibal in *The Road* as the embodiment of capitalist consumerism also emphasizes how capitalism turns not only nature and animals into (edible) resources, but human bodies too; it feeds on human bodies, sexualities and desires to nourish itself. As became clear through Wynter’s analysis of Man1 and Man2, as well as the biopolitical and biocentered nature of the contemporary Man2, the human body is considered,

by the market and the State as material and vulnerable foodstuffs possessed by the aforementioned (ideological) apparatuses. In *The Road* the cannibal is employed to “clearly mark the line between civilization and post-civilization, though *seemingly* without the trappings of racial difference” (Dominy 145-146, my italics), a line that, as the bleak and horrific world of *The Road* shows, will be crossed if Western capitalist consumerism continues in its course. Their symbolic cannibalism will inevitably turn into a *literal* cannibalism because all the substitutes (animals, for example) have been exhausted. However, as made clear in the earlier chapters, what this thesis is aiming at is an affirmative reading of cannibalism to come to a posthumanist and post-Man ethical relation between subjectivities, all matter included. In *The Road* the cannibal is still stuck in the colonial discourse that constructed it in the first place; as a figure that marks the ultimate line of the (un)ethical. In what follows, I consider the cannibal in *The Road* not only in relation to capitalism, but also in relation to dietary norms, and how the cannibal, even though a colonial construct, is employed for decolonial purposes (to free the human from the oppressive constraints of capitalism) by blurring the line between the West and the savage as upheld by a symbolic and a literal cannibalism.

The relation between the cannibal and capitalism in *The Road* is established through barely visible traces of capitalism, and through the father’s memories. In a sense, *The Road* tells the story of Wynter’s Man1 and Man2, and what happens when Man continues its course. Through cannibalism, McCarthy shows how these Manichean epistemai will eventually consume themselves, since there is nothing else left to consume. If, as Wynter argues, the planetary dominion of Man1 and Man2 as global epistemai is “made possible only on the basis of the dynamics of a colonizer/colonized relation” (264), *The Road* argues that these epistemai eventually only turn on themselves, and consequently, become the “physical referent” (266) that Man1 and Man2 have constructed as its complete Other. Man2, the modern biocentric labour and market driven episteme is the cannibal in *The Road*: the Western capitalist subject is now literally consuming itself. Interestingly, whereas Lispector undertook Man by making the cannibal, McCarthy turns Man into the (capitalist) cannibal, showing that the real cannibals are the Westerners.

The boy has not seen the world before the apocalypse; it is through the father’s memories and descriptions of the pre-apocalyptic world that the boy gets a sense of what is good, bad, what hope means, what it means to dream. The father, leading them to the south coast, has nothing but an old, worn off map of the preapocalyptic world. Laura Godfrey reads *The Road*, and particularly the quasi-visible traces of the pre-capitalist America, as

palimpsestuous memory, where “the father’s geographical memories are like those faint lines of text in a palimpsest that show through beneath the newer inscriptions” (163). The memories and the map of the preapocalyptic world are layered over one another, where the old is slowly but surely ingested and devoured by the new. The memories of the father, the map and the barely visible yet present traces of a capitalist world (Coca cans, faded advertisement billboards) are one of the few references to the old world. These remains of the capitalist consumer market are usually followed by accounts of cannibals, leading to a direct juxtaposition of consumerism and cannibalism.

By then all the stores of food had given out and murder was everywhere upon the land. The world soon to be largely populated by men who would eat your children in front of your eyes and the cities themselves held by cores of blackened looters who tunneled among the ruins and crawled from the rubble white of tooth and eye carrying charred and anonymous tins of food in nylon nets like shoppers in the commissaries of hell. (181)

The relation between the “shoppers in the commissaries of hell” and those who eat your children (and breed them to, as will become clear below) sets up a direct relation between consumerism, cannibalism and the apocalypse. The world, bleak and devoid of meaning, is now only inhabited by wanton consumers, turning to cannibalism because they must and shall consume. The boy was born in this postapocalyptic world, and as he travels along with his father, learns more and more about morality and ethics through his father’s recollections. The boy must incorporate the memories of the father. Numerous times, however, the boy must ask if he and his father are really the good guys. In a desperate attempt to give meaning to the world, and teach the boy what ‘meaning’ means, the father can draw upon his memories, experiences and past knowledge to teach the boy about ethical and moral behaviour in a world where these past modes no longer apply. Unlike Lispector, who uses the first person narrative to cannibalize the third person (narrative), Lydia Cooper notes that McCarthy employs the “first person narrative [...] to make sense what it means to be human in a posthuman world” (144). The first person narrative is where the old world remains, through which he teaches the boy morality and politics. However, as the father points out, “each memory recalled must do some violence to its origins. As in a party game. Say the word and pass it on. So be sparing. What you alter in the remembering has yet a reality, known or not” (131). In recalling, the inside gets ‘tainted’ by the contemporary, postapocalyptic reality; the world is too unfit for the ‘old’ morals, the circumstances are too brutal, too much relying on self-preservation, hopeless.

*The Road* calls for a reclaiming of the territory of “human” and “the good.” Capitalism has created a world inhabited must make way for a new, untainted ethics of which the boy is the embodiment. “What it means to be human in a posthuman world” (Cooper 144) a world where the cannibals, as argued throughout this thesis in general, are the posthumans in that they move beyond a human form of capitalist consumerism towards a *literal form of human consumerism*, rejecting symbols substituting human flesh. The cannibals in *The Road*, however, do incorporate their victims wholly, violating the integrity and alterity of the other. However, McCarthy’s depiction of the cannibal remains relevant in the context of this thesis in that it once again foregrounds that the real cannibals are not the New World savages but rather the Westerners themselves. Laura Wright, who makes an interesting case for the role of the cannibals in McCarthy’s *The Road*, also observes this ambiguity. For Wright, *The Road* is all about dietary norms, and more particularly, about the binary opposition proposed by McCarthy, namely that one is either a vegan or a zombie cannibal:

Therefore, in the context of *The Road*, goodness is entirely dependent on what one eats; all other forms and acts of goodness that existed prior to the apocalypse are reduced to a singular ethical imperative about food: to be good is not to eat certain things, humans and food that belong to other people. (512)

In this sense, *The Road* seems to be more *apocalyptic* than post-apocalyptic in that many of the traits of Modern America continue to persist, even when almost all humans have been basically blown off the earth. Wright notes out that “they [the cannibals] remain voracious consumers, even in the face of the seeming absence of consumable items: they keep slaves and impregnate women in order to eat their newly born infants” (512). Wright thus reads the cannibals and their consumer behaviour as a moral imperative, and is thus arguing that *The Road* indeed warns contemporary Western society for its own destructive behaviour. For Arielle Zibrak, in her “Intolerance: A Survival Guide,” however, the washed out capitalist signs and cannibals are simply depicting America as it is, but this time naked and unadorned. Zibrak writes that “[t]he landscape through which the characters move is a dangerous terrain of binary oppositions and desperate survivalism—the terms of contemporary American culture stripped down to their nuts and bolts” (123). Zibrak here, referring not only to the wanton cannibalism but also to the general traces of capitalism argues that McCarthy’s ash covered landscape is the naked truth. It does not take an actual apocalypse for these structures to reveal themselves. Whereas Wright and Zibrak are right in pointing out that cannibalism is the embodiment of the unethical, and that cannibalizing means the eventual, ‘no-return’ decay of the few morals that are left, the boy seems uncertain about this. Time after time he has to

verify that they are not going to cannibalize. When it comes to cannibalizing for survival, however, the boy remains uncertain.

The novel, taking on the role of both a narration of the interiority of the father and the exteriority of survival, serves as a sort of heroic scripture, a journal of a heroic quest. Lydia Cooper notes that “McCarthy’s postapocalyptic novel is in many ways itself a classical hero story. The world of *The Road* is constructed out of symbols, and the quest narrative structure evokes all the parameters of the mythological hero’s journey” (136). The heroicness, the notion of an ‘Old’ and ‘New’ America connotes a colonial travelogue, but this time in reverse; moving towards the shore, clinging on to the old ideas of the world. However, the ‘old morals’ do not correspond with the current state of the earth. The boy takes the role of the little beacon of hope in the grey dusty darkness; a boy that is still trying to see the good, the light and the ethical. For Cooper, “[t]he son therefore plays the ‘messiah’ figure, but narrative revelations of the father’s mental life shift the focus of the hero journey from the son to the father” (136). Not cannibalizing is being a hero.

We wouldnt ever eat anybody, would we?

No. Of course not.

Even if we were starving.

We’re starving now.

You said we werent.

I said we werent dying. I didnt say we werent starving.

But we wouldnt.

No. We wouldnt.

No matter what.

No. No matter what.

Because we’re the good guys.

Yes.

And we’re carrying the fire.

And we’re carrying the fire. Yes.

Okay. (McCarthy 128-9)

They are carrying the fire, the little light still shines on in them. This carrying of the flame is, throughout the book, particularly attached to crucial encounters with cannibals; the son constantly has to ask for confirmation that they do not belong to those who eat people, those “bad guys,” and it is through this rejecting of human flesh that they keep on carrying the light. Particularly through the narrations of the father the messiah cloth is draped over the boy. “The

boy's shadow crossed over him. Carrying an armload of wood. He watched him stoke the flames. God's own fire-drake. The stars rushed upwards and died in the starless dark. Not all dying words are true and this blessing is no less real for being shorn of its ground" (31). The boy, who literally carries the fire here, is seen by the father as a blessing, as God's dragon carrying the fire.

Dominy also considers the boy as the messiah/saviour. Interestingly, he brings this prophetic tone back to McCarthy's critique on capitalism by reading it alongside Agamben's notion of profanation and consecration within religion and capitalism. Agamben, in his *Profanations* argues that religion is "that which removes things, places, animals, or people from common use and transfers them to a separate sphere" (74). Animals or places become sacralised, elevated to the sphere of the sacred and the divine, and consequently, separated from "the free use and commerce of men" (73). To profane is to desacralize these things that have been made the property of the sacred sphere (of the Gods, of an institution, or a select group of (powerful) people). Agamben explains that "[t]he thing that is returned to the common use of men is pure, profane, free of sacred names. But use does not appear here as something natural: rather, one arrives at it only by means of profanation" (74). Profanation, for Agamben, must be performed. Agamben uses children's play as an explanatory process of profanation. He writes that

The use to which the sacred is returned is a special one that does not coincide with utilitarian consumption. In fact, the "profanation" of play does not solely concern the religious sphere. Children, who play with whatever old thing falls into their hands, make toys out of things that also belong to the spheres of economics, war, law, and other activities that we are used to thinking of as serious. All of a sudden, a car, a firearm, or a legal contract becomes a toy. (75)

To profane means to add another layer to an object or a concept, "a new dimension of use" (75). Consequently, as Agamben explains, religion as such is not about the uniting of people, but rather about separating the sacred from the profane. It is up to the profane to retrieve the consecrated object. Capitalism, both for Agamben and Dominy, works in the same fashion as religion in that it "divides the sacred—what belongs to the gods—and the profane—what humans can use in common" (Dominy 149). Agamben, in considering capitalism as a religion, concludes that "If to profane means to return to common use that which has been removed to the sphere of the sacred, the capitalist religion in its extreme phase aims at creating something absolutely unprofanable" (82). It is also for this reason that Agamben considers *The Road*, for Dominy, narrates the realization that capitalism is indeed a religion,

but has commodified and consecrated, and thus elevated it to the sphere of the sacred (and thus has turned everything into a commodity, a resource and/or a consumable good), that it cannot be profaned anymore. Dominy points out, the cannibals in *The Road* proof “that absolutely everything has crossed over to Agamben’s sphere of separation, even the human body, by being consumed or becoming a spectacle” (149-150). Profanation can, so it seems, only happen through the boy, who embodies the prophecy and the Messiah.

The boy in the story, Dominy suggests, *is* the Eucharist. However, as becomes clear through the constant threat to be eaten, the boy is “in danger of becoming both the literal and metaphorical host of the Eucharist” (150). As we have seen in Wolfe’s analysis of *Hannibal Lecter*, the cannibals reject symbolism by feeding directly on the body. However, unlike *Lecter*, the cannibals in *The Road* do not really have a choice, because all the replacing symbols (nonhuman consumable goods and vegetables) have been wiped out. *The Road* is full of references to religion and Christianity. Capitalism as a religion that has created the unprofaneable, then, inevitably results in the consuming of the human body. It is up to the boy to profane the body back to common use. Agamben explicitly considers ‘use’ and ‘consumption’ as different, if not opposing, concepts. Agamben writes that “consumption, which necessarily destroys the thing, is nothing but the impossibility or the negation of use, which presupposes that the substance of the thing remains intact” (*Profanations* 82), and he defines use as always being in “a relationship with something that cannot be appropriated; it refers to things insofar as they cannot become objects of possession” (83). Agamben’s definition and dividing of use and consumption is thus not wholly compatible with ‘consumption’ as defined in this thesis, that is, consumption as being an ethical acknowledgement of the other’s alterity, becoming-edible and the other as a nutritious source that can enable greater compositions. What Agamben’s notion of profanation, use, and consumption in relation with this thesis does enable, is a more thorough and literal account of “Eating Well.”

Whereas Dominy focusses on the boy’s attempt to play with items that he finds in the postapocalyptic world, he does not so much focus on the specific way the boy and the father consume, and moreover, how the products that they consume are considered as waste, left behind, deemed un-usable or simply left unnoticed by the cannibals. Their specific dietary norm is a form of profaning that which capitalism has excreted. Agamben notes that “use is always a relationship with something that cannot be appropriated; it refers to things insofar as they cannot become objects of possession” (83). The boy and the father eat berries, canned foods. When they eat, the father conjures up memories of the past, and the relation he had

with the food they are consuming in the future. Those cans and berries somehow outlived the apocalypse, and the boy and the father consume them not as a wanton consumerism, but rather conjure up memories, stay warm and together. Sure, they *must* eat to survive, but the specific way in which they eat, share food, make it into an *event* is so radically different from their cannibalistic peers. In a sense, the world that is presented in *The Road* essentially is waste; it is that which capitalism has left behind and excreted after it consumed all and made all consume. The way the boy and the father eat, together, exchanging memories, and see the world both as it is and as it was, is a way of profanation. They turn waste into something that is to be inhabited and to be cherished. The father's memories too are turned into waste, but are however incorporated and used by the boy to understand the difference between good and bad (I will explore the father's memories below). The boy as the messiah, then, is not the messiah in that it once again separate objects from the profane to the sacred, but rather, profane the seemingly useless (that which capitalism has excreted). Consequently, it is through cannibalizing the otherness of the father that this profanation is in motion. The father's memories are to be digested by the boy, and this must be done in a "successful failure" in that it must be *used* and not, as Agamben warns, seen as a wholly consumable object of inquiry.

As the first chapter of this thesis has shown, the actual vulnerable body and sexualized and racialized bodies are the locus of sovereign power, and, as Agamben and Dominy proof, also of capitalist consumerism. Indeed, once the bodies are irretrievably taken up in the sacred sphere of capitalism, profanation is impossible. However, the boy and the father's constant refusal of eating the most obvious thing, human flesh, shows that their denial of the 'consumable status' of the actual body is what needs to be done to stop capitalism from creating the unprofaneable. Bringing this back to Derrida and Wood's criticism, the postapocalyptic ramification of vegetarianism certainly *is* deconstruction, and thus a form of pure cannibalism in that they reject the carnophallogocentric order embodied by the cannibals. Their dietary norms, along with the juxtaposition of the cannibal, thus serves to proof how the alterity and integrity of the material body must be reclaimed, and must be profaned out of the sacred sphere of capitalism. And it is through a rejection of the material body as a commodity, and consequently, as a material substance that can be owned and used by capitalism, that profanation will happen, and the body will be brought back to the sphere of *human*.

#### 4.2 *How Man Eventually Turns on Itself*

The cannibal as a product of colonial discourse, and as the disavowed other of the humanistic world then reappears within a posthuman and post-Man world, and consequently, as both



Zibrak and Wright argue, in the form of something close to the *inhuman*. Whereas the cannibal was previously used to secure the noble and civilized status of the humanistic Western Man, in *The Road* it is employed to criticize precisely what this Western attitude has brought forth (and consequently, the cannibals embodies the capitalist, profit driven and consumerist attitude). McCarthy's *The Road* appropriates the tropes of colonial discourse to critique. The cannibal, who is included through exclusion in the formulation of a Western individualistic (humanistic) identity has broken out of the restrictive strains, and has consequently outrun the (hu)Man(istic); it has become, for McCarthy, today's embodiment of the Western consumer. Whereas the figure of the zombie has been employed to critique the brain-dead consumerism (for example *Dawn of the Dead*<sup>12</sup>), this is on the one hand at odds with Spinoza's figuration of the appetite, hunger and cannibalism. On the other hand, however, Spinoza's 'self-preservation' corresponds neatly with the "survivalism through cannibalism" in McCarthy. Survivalism and self-preservation seem to be what underlines the cannibalism portrayed in *The Road* is one showing the climax as well as the eventual apocalyptic end of excessive consumption. In a way, as Wright points out, the cannibal in McCarthy's *The Road* concerns "[a]n ethics with regard to the consumption of food, then, along with a re-evaluation of what constitutes food, emerg[ing] in the wake of the apocalypse, during which food becomes redefined, for most of the surviving humans, as other surviving—or farmed—humans" (512). As cited earlier in this chapter, both the father as the boy refrain from cannibalism, even when they are facing death; not cannibalizing becomes the most important thing for the boy and the father, because if they go down that road, so it seems, his entire notion of the ethical and morality will collapse. Whereas the boy and the father's vegetarianism is rejecting carnophallogocentrism, their clinging on to symbols substituting the human body proofs that they are not yet ready to let go of symbolism and metaphors just yet.

It is consequently through these cannibals that McCarthy exposes and uncovers American capitalism and consumerism. This nakedness world resonates in McCarthy's language: minimalistic and little to no punctuation. The postapocalyptic world of *The Road* reappropriates the cannibal as a colonial figure that is to secure the line between noble/savage in that it portrays the two protagonists as the good guys, and keep them there. However, as was done in colonial discourses, in *The Road* the cannibal is not unleashed to affirm Western

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<sup>12</sup> See for example Shawn McIntosh and Marc Leverette's *Zombie Culture: Autopsies of the Living Dead*, where the role of the zombie in film, literature and art is analysed, deconstructed and placed in the larger framework of American (consumer) culture.

superiority, but quite the opposite: it is unleashed to consume Western superiority. McCarthy does seem to indicate that, even though the world is washed out, there is still someone carrying the light; this someone is defined by its untainted vegetarianism who sees the preapocalyptic world through memories and tales. There is still something profane, and consequently, things to be profaned. In a way, then, the boy is this white clean slate upon which the father tries to inscribe only what he considers as 'good.' Yet these norms, no matter how badly one yearns for them, do not apply in this postapocalyptic world. It is up to the boy to digest and incorporate the father's memories, and "give them a new dimension of use." The cannibal inevitably embodies both the end as the high tide of capitalism. Lispector's cannibal does not so much focus on the cannibal in relation to *consumerism* as it does on the consuming power of the substances that are all around us. Yet, in bringing these two tales in contact, it became evident how the cannibal takes on different yet significant roles when thinking the end of Man, the end of humanism, and the end of a Western capitalist market.

Whereas *The Road* is as bleak and devoid of hope as a postapocalyptic narrative might get, it is constructed as a quest; a quest for a better place, a better world. The cannibals, in this regard, take on the savagery as depicted in colonial tales; the bad people, those who need to be taken down, not to be trusted, and those who, through negation, define what is good and civilized. Whereas this discourse stems from the colonial period, the 'savage' in this destroyed earth reappears as a product of an over-capitalized consumer society, "like shoppers in the commissaries of hell" (181). They travel the vast and bleak landscapes in hope to find a new home, encountering the "left-overs" from the old world. It is they who "carry the fire," the hero and the messiah. Arguably, *The Road* can also be read in light of diasporic literature; their homelessness, their lack of nationality (and earth in general), and consequently, their nomadic existence on an earth that does not allow any 'liveable' human life. Following Cornell and Seely's reading of Wynter, *The Road* rejects human arrogance not simply by depicting a posthuman world, but rather, by showing how human arrogance is a hegemony of Man that has wiped out the human. Cornell and Seely write that, for Wynter, "Man is not merely a mode of thinking, but an epistemo-ontology that depends on brutal forms of colonialism and capitalism to reproduce itself [...] he can be only put to rest through decolonial struggle" (130-131). Cornell, Seely and Wynter are drawing upon Frantz Fanon's contributions within postcolonial studies and cultural critiques. Fanon, as interpreted by Cornell and Seely, argues that the decolonial revolution is to be found in the literary imagination and traditions of the liminalized Other, who articulate a new togetherness in their struggle against Man, and it is this type of being-togetherness, of a shared embodied struggle,

that Man can be unmade. Moreover, to bring this back to *The Road*, Cornell and Seely argue that “we have the ‘heretical’ power to charter our own embodied narratives of who and what we are, of how we relate to each other, and of our place in the universe—which, as [Wynter’s] critique of Man1 and Man2 make powerfully clear—we have done before” (131). McCarthy has indeed drawn upon a ceremony performed by the natives, the only complication (in regard to the posthumanist/post-Man frame of this thesis) is that he employed the cannibal as it was articulated within the episteme of Man, and consequently, a cannibalism that was superimposed upon the New World natives for the sake of colonial justification. However, McCarthy does demonstrate how a construct made by the West (and for a securing of Western superiority) it will eventually turn on themselves; the Western construct of the cannibal will eventually turn upon the Western capitalist market. The cannibal as an embodiment of a capitalism gone haywire thus proves to be a figuration with which a thorough deconstruction of the (Western) status quo is allowed. Unlike Lispector’s cannibalism, however, we must sometimes also do with a less affirmative, joyous and ecstatic cannibalism to come to terms with a decaying Man/Western privileged, and it is *The Road* that makes this painfully clear.

5. You Can Have Your Cake and Eat It Too: On *The Edible Woman*, the Anorexic Cannibal  
and the Grotesque

We live in a world which worships the unreal female body and despised real female power. In this culture, where women are commanded to always look available but never actually be so, where we are obliged to appear socially and sexually available whilst consuming as little as possible, our most drastic retaliation is to undertake our own consumption: to consume ourselves – and we do so, in ever increasing numbers.

Laurie Penny

She don't need you for shit but your dick and your veins  
and your guts and your (body and blood).  
Every man say she thick and they wish they could bang  
when she strut, she got (body and blood).  
Nails did, hair did, body right, teeth white  
knives sharp, gettin' (body and blood).  
If you a bad bitch, let 'em know you ain't out for the dough  
You want body and blood.

clipping.

The capitalist cannibal as figured in McCarthy may find solace in the idea that it is not alone. As it happens, capitalism is prone to turns a specific group of people into cannibals: women. In modern Western society, women are demanded to “look as consumable as possible whilst consuming as little as possible”. The Western heteronormative capitalism objectifies and commodifies women’s bodies and demands them to transform their bodies into an edible delicacy for the male gaze. The relation between women, food and their bodies is highly problematic and troubling; eating disorders, extremely thin fashion models, obesity, and the recent increase in women suffering from orthorexia; an obsession for eating “healthy.” Feminist literature dealing with the relation between women, food and the cultural and capitalist industry is vast; Susan Bordo’s pioneering work *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*, Laurie Penny’s *Meat Market*, Carol Adam’s *The Sexual Politics of Meat* are but one of the few examples addressing the problems inherit in how the capitalist market forces the female body to, yes again, “look as consumable as possible whilst consuming as little as possible.” Writers have picked up on this issue as well. Margaret Atwood in particular is known for her sharp critiques on the violence done to female bodies by patriarchy and capitalism, the latter two considering it normal that a woman always eats less, healthier, and most importantly, in small and cute portions. Atwood is most known for her postapocalyptic *Maddaddam* trilogy, consisting of *The Year of the Flood*, *Oryx and Crake*, and *Maddaddam*. Whereas, particularly in light of the previous chapter, it would seem

to be a more organic choice to opt for another postapocalyptic/posthuman novel, *The Edible Woman* allows for a more thorough feminist and emancipative analysis of the cannibal in a posthuman(ist) perspective. In what follows, I will argue that it is not necessarily the cannibalistic redemption scene in *The Edible Woman* that is the critique against the male dominated society. However, despite what some may aspect, I shall trace the cannibal not in the actual ‘cannibal scene’ in *The Edible Woman*, but rather in the anorexic body, a body devouring that devours itself precisely by refusing to eat anything. However, since the cannibalistic redemption scene is still an interesting and important event in *The Edible Woman*, it will be analysed and considered. Whereas it may seem too radical to advocate for an affirmative reading of anorexia in light of what I have written above, with the help of Deleuze and Branka Arsić, who consider the relation between the anorexic body and her (lacking) relation to the organic (food), and consequently, how the anorexic body may change how all bodies consider food. It is thus an attempt to free food and the female body from the restrictive strains of hierarchy and patriarchy. Moreover, the cannibal redemption scene is again about a symbolic cannibalism. The anorexic body is a literal cannibalism, a cannibalism that so far has only been explored in theory, but not so much in the literary imagination. Consequently, this chapter shall provide a more affirmative reading of literal cannibalism than the analysis of the cannibals in *The Road*. After having analysed and explored the cannibal and the anorexic, I will merge both readings in Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of the grotesque body. By embodying both the cannibalistic redemptive figure and the anorexic, the two readings of *The Edible Woman* will come together in one monstrous a grotesque body, which is precisely the body that I am advocating for.

Atwood’s work, besides being characterized by a speculative fiction/postapocalyptic theme, is also contributing to feminist scholarships. Emma Parker, in her elaborate analysis of the relation between men, women and foodstuffs in Atwood’s oeuvre, argues that in Atwood’s novels “eating is employed as a metaphor for power and is used as an extremely subtle means of examining the relationship between women and men [...] the domestic, the feminine, the inconsequential is, Atwood suggests, highly important” (349–50). Metaphors of incorporations and who has the right to incorporate is as a read thread running through her oeuvre. In *Lady Oracle*, for example, the power struggle between Joan, the lead, and the mother, is expressed through the mother putting her on a diet, making Joan shrink in form in order for the mother’s authority to expand (Parker 351). In *Surfacing*, another of Atwood’s novels, the politics of food are imagined by the female protagonist, Anna, as being prenatal. The reader is enveloped in Anna’s imagining how her oppressive father controlled what the

mother ate when pregnant (Parker 350). Either way, food is a recurring theme in Atwood's novel, or it is through food, "those large assemblages commonly called meals" (Arsić 37), that Atwood uncovers and rejects patriarchy and a male dominated culture. In what follows I will once again explore the role of the figure of the cannibal and the act of cannibalism. Atwood's novel shall add the emancipatory, feminist aspect of the cannibalistic subject and ethics.

### 5.1 *Cannibalicious Pie: On Sponge Cake and the Woman as Foodstuff.*

*The Edible Woman* is divided into three parts and tells the story of Marion McAlpin, who is also the first-person narrator in the first and in the third part. The second part still revolves around Marion but is narrated in the third person. Marion works for a survey research company, which mainly consists of doing door-to-door surveys. Marion realizes that her relation with Peter, a solid and slick guy who enjoys a successful career, is more serious than she realized, leading her to consider if she should perhaps marry him. It is also on the same day as this realization that Peter asks her to marry him, to which Marion answers yes. On one of her door-to-door surveys, however, Marion meets Duncan, who seems to be the very opposite of Peter; an English literature undergraduate student, whose unhealthy life-and eating choices are the opposite of Peter's clean and well-managed living style. As the wedding day approaches, Marion finds herself to be more and more alienated from her own body and starts identifying with foodstuffs and consumable goods, leading her to develop a case of anorexia nervosa where her body rejects food. Peter, however, as well as people around her, argues that her lack of appetite is either due to her bridal nerves or is simply her own mind playing tricks. As time progresses and Marion grows thinner, she realizes that her repulsion for food is her repulsion to be consumed *by Peter*. Throughout the narrative, Peter takes on the role of the hunter; he owns "two rifles, a pistol, and several wicked-looking knives" (67), hunts on a regular basis, and has a fascination for hunting related activities. Marion herself consequently feels like his prey and object of desire to be consumed after the hunt is over. At the end of the second part, and consequently, near the end of the book, Marion becomes aware that her role in their relationship is the role of the prey, of the object to be consumed by (Peter's) male dominance. She also realizes that this is the cause for her anorexia; her body refused to eat, and in doing so, her body became something inconsumable, not to be devoured by male dominance and oppression. This realization leads her defy her role as 'eaten' by baking a cake resembling her; her dress, her make-up, all mirroring how the fancy glossy magazines and the Western male would like to see their galls. She tries to make Peter eat the cake, but Peter, finding the situation utterly crazy, walks away. Marion decides

to eat the cake herself. Duncan, who stops by, joins Marion in her cannibalistic feast, and eats the Marion-shaped cake, finishing it till there are no crumbs left. It is with this scene, the cannibal scene, that the second part ends and the third part begins, the latter being narrated in the first person. The third part also re-inaugurates Marion's appetite. Consequently, Marion is ready to return to everyday life and society; she wants to find a job, eat, and plan her future endeavours.

The cannibal scene is the moment when Marion cannibalizes herself (the latter taking on the shape of a sponge cake). Parker notes that

In all the novels Atwood illustrates how symbolic cannibalism has become an institutionalized way of life and how the behaviour this generates is perceived and socially endorsed as normal human behaviour. The presentation of cannibalism as the social ethos exposes the disturbing underside of a violent relationship between the sexes that is only thinly disguised as civilization. (363)

The relation between man and woman is symbolized through the relation between the eater and the eaten, but also, as we shall see below, to be resolved by rejecting the traditional relation between these two consumers and consumables. Parker notes,

As Atwood illustrates how consumption embodies coded expressions of power which have served to subordinate women, she subtly urges women to reclaim the right to eat and to proudly re-inhabit their own bodies. Women have been driven away from their bodies as violently as they have been driven away from food. (367)

Food, as Parker explains, is a powerful assemblage through which power structures move, uncover themselves and cover themselves. Parker, at the end of her analysis of Atwood's oeuvre, states that although "Atwood offers no alternative to the repressive social system she exposes, by highlighting the devastating effects of such a system, she brings into focus the need and means to transcend it" (367). Indeed, if patriarchy could be overthrown by simply baking a you-shaped cake, I would have devoured four of those cakes already. However, in what follows, I shall explore how Atwood's configuration of the anorexic, the grotesque and the cannibal is already an alternative to the system she criticizes.

That the cannibal embodies the threatening and thus oppressed other is, hopefully, clear by now. What has not specifically been addressed in this thesis the revue, however, is how 'woman' is both cannibal and cannibalized. Interestingly, Marion is able to stop Peter's devouring presence only by devouring herself. In a way, cannibalism, however symbolic or metaphorical it may be, is used against itself, devouring itself. However, much attention has been paid to the 'redemption' scene in *The Edible Woman*: how Marion overcomes her being

consumed by symbolically consuming herself, and thus inhabiting her body once again safely. Before she realizes this, and before she bakes the cake, Marion is alienated from her body to such an extent that she does not notice she is crying until she feels tears on her hand. As Parker notes, a refusal to eat is also a refusal to fuel your body (366). Parker's reading, then, ends with the conclusion that eating, taking up more space, rejects the image society construct of the feminine being thin and glamorous. As stated above, however, Atwood does indeed not formulate an alternative. Yet, even though the readings of Atwood and the focus on food is an illuminative reading, focussing on another form of cannibalism; a more literal devouring of the (visible, tangible body) through *not-eating*. My reading may be somewhat controversial, and I do not intend to postulate myself as an apologist for anorexia... Deleuze's notion of anorexic elegance and becoming-woman, paired with André Pereira Feitosa's interpretation and employment of the grotesque allows for a more thorough analysis of Marion's auto-cannibalism.

Anorexia is also a form of cannibalism; when eating too little for a long time, the body will start to eat its own muscles and fat. The anorexic body eats itself literally and visually; the body shrinks, taking up less space, disappears slowly. Marion not only dissociates her mind from her body because she is being controlled and devoured by Peter, it even goes as far that her body identifies with foodstuffs, leading her to consider her own feminine body as something to be consumed. The act of not-eating, how self-destructive and self-denying it may be, resembles the Deleuzo-Guattarian Body without Organs (BwO). Arsić's analysis of the Deleuzo-Guattarian BwO in relation to the Deleuzian configuration of "the anorexic" may come in handy here. Important to note is that Deleuze and Arsić have removed the normally accompanying 'nervosa,' emptying their anorexic body of its clinical implications, and thus considering anorexia only as a specific event of an assemblage. Arsić notes that anorexia for Deleuze is an experimentation of living without answering to the body's demands (36). Moreover, it is a refusal of the organic body; it denies it organicness by not eating. Every organic substance and organ needs food, and by denying it, its organs, according to Deleuze and Arsić, are transformed from natural extension into affects. Arsić explains that

to transform extensions (of organs) into intensities (of affection) is also to negate the limitations formed by organs and to produce a body made of alterations. Such a body, Deleuze suggests, is a rhythm of affects, intervals and appearance of new affects. The anorexic thus experiments with the affects of 'void' and 'fullness.' (36)

Consequently, the body is now 'dis-organ-ized' and 'disorganized'. The organs have lost their traditional function as organs and instead are affects, playing sensations of emptiness and



fullness. Not eating, then, “means forcing the organs to live without expectations and thus to become ascetic. Anorexia is therefore a praxis of asceticism” (36). The BwO for Deleuze and Guattari is precisely this disorganized, experimental body, through which affects flow; it is a body that is always composing, and can never really be reached but instead is a *praxis*. In *A Thousand Plateaus* they write that “You never reach the Body without Organs, you can't reach it, you are forever attaining it, it is a limit” (150). The same goes for the anorexic body, which is infinitely becoming, pushing itself further and further. Consequently, Arsić argues, the anorexic betrays her own organs, hunger, but also betrays food. She notes that

she [the anorexic body] is experimenting with the possibility of eating that would be neither carnivorous nor involve eating ‘fresh’ life. She tries to find out whether it is possible to live on something without necessarily killing any ‘body.’ In so resisting the consumption of other bodies – and it is here that we see how anorexia becomes political – the anorexic resists the idea of being consumed by them. (37)

Arsić goes on to quote Deleuze, who states that “Anorexia is a political system, a micro-politics: to escape from the norm of consumption in order not to be an object of consumption oneself” (37). It is thus for Deleuze an ascetic praxis because it replaces (‘gives up’) materiality of the organs to make way for affects, “lightness and fastness” (36).

The anorexic body experiments with her own body, with the affects between other bodies (those of its friends and families), political and societal bodies, expectations, and so forth. It is thus a body constantly experimenting with its capacity to affect and be affected. Consequently, this is what for Deleuze roughly encompasses the notion of becoming-woman. In *The Edible Woman*, the ‘mature’ (rounded) feminine bodies are compared to ripened plants. “They were ripe, some rapidly becoming overripe, some already beginning to shrivel; she thought of them as attached by stems at the tops of their heads to an invisible vine, hanging there in various stages of growth and decay” (205). Marion, observing her co-workers during a small party at her work, is fascinated and disgusted by her ‘new’ insight on bodies. Before Marion develops a sense of alienation between her body and her ‘self,’ she never really sees bodies as they are. They equal other objects in the room: desks, telephones, chairs, in the space of the office; objects viewed as outline and surface only (205). However, Marion’s alienated anorexic existence leads her to see them as being interacting substances.

[T]heir fluidity sustained somewhere within by bones, without a carapace of clothing and makeup. What peculiar creatures they were, and the continual flux between outside and the inside, taking things in, giving them out, chewing, words, potato-chips, burps, grease, hair, babies, mils, excrement, cookies, vomit, coffee, tomato-juice,

blood, tea, sweat, liquor, tears and garbage. For an instant she felt them, their identities, almost their substance, pass over her like a wave. At some time she would be – or no, already she was like that too; she was one of them, her body the same, identical, merged with that other flesh that choked the air in the flowered room with its sweet organic scent. She felt suffocated by this thick sargasso-sea of femininity. (206)

Her anorexia, and the subsequent reconfigured relation with her body (she *becomes* her body, that which happens in her mind happens in her body and vice versa) is what leads Marion to consider other bodies in the same vein; as being materialities to which we turn once we are outside of the structured, order, and in this case, male dominated society.

A Deleuzian anorexic elegance then, proves to be fruitful, in that it emphasizes not the eventual ‘giving in’ to male society by consuming the self (this notion of ‘giving in’ will be explored below) but rather the praxis taking place before this ‘taking in;’ Marion’s diminishing personal identity, the objectification of her own body, and consequently, the identification with what is traditionally considered as inanimate (such as carrots and radishes). Marion’s body is briefly becoming a BwO; disorganized, and consequently, open to affects rather than dependent on the body’s organic needs. Arsić explains that consequently the anorexic body is a body consisting of “fluxes of food (crumbs, tiny substances); fluxes of liquids (the imbibing of fizzy drinks); fluxes of abstinence or consumption; fluxes of signifiers that disrupt genealogy” (41-42). Marion’s body, then, cannot be captured by the male gaze in a traditional way. True, Marion’s supposed personal identity intermingles with the materiality of bodies, thus making it a fit object for the male gaze to be observed, it cannot, however, be consumed or moulded anymore by this gaze.

Whereas Marion’s anorexia is normally interpreted as being the ultimate sign of alienation from her body, when reading it alongside Deleuze and Arsić’s anorexic “anticipated hospitality” (39) it is precisely this part of *The Edible Woman* where Marion practices the ultimate rejection of the male dominated society. She refuses the organization by developing a new set of signs and symbols of experimentation and disorganization, two characteristics that go against the usually centralized, organized and hierarchical patriarchal society. Arsić notes

[I]t [the anorexic body] wants to invent a different logic and different signifiers, to construe signs that would not be representative of something, but be bodies in themselves. The anorexic thus opposes symbolics to cartography, since her body is not the symbol of a lack of food, of psychic disorder, or of a disturbance of desire, but is instead, a chart of newly invented signs which are its very matter (41)

Reading the body as a rhizomatic assemblage where all these affects come together thus results in reading the anorexic body like an experimental text, a revolutionary text, a text that defies organization, classification, crystallization, but instead carries its inside out; the bodily substance is also the substance that ‘fuels it.’ Even more, it is a body that is not a symbol for something else. It is not the arena of biopolitics, nor of male oppression, but rather a plane through which affect flows. Reading the Deleuzian anorexic body means reading the second part of the book precisely as the defining cannibalistic act through which Marion refuses to be consumed by male society. Or, to put it more radically, it means reading the body that devours the self (Marion) as being the rebellious act with which Marion rejects Western ontology and patriarchy. By focussing on the role played by her fleshy body in relation to the cannibal, instead of the alienation between mind and body (and how cannibalism brought these back into a coherent, safe unity) is ‘solved’ by a symbolic cannibalism (but also initiated by one). *The Edible Woman* thus suggests two cannibalisms, with two perhaps opposing results: the symbolic cannibalism results in a descent back into the system, yet this time Marion transformed into an inedible woman, having already devoured her (cake) self, whereas the other, anorexic cannibalism results in the creation of the body that constantly feeds on itself and its affects.

Mária Huttová, in her article “Margaret Atwood – Changing Perspectives” suggests that this polysemic reading can be situated in the agenda of the second wave feminists who defied their stereotypical role embodied by the perfect-perky-housewife Jane Cleaver, outside of the domain of economy, work and so forth, by instead forcing herself into this male-dominated society. Huttová suggests that Marion’s anorexia was the initial protest, but in order to normally function, she must go ‘back’ to the male-dominated society, and the eating of the cake is the symbol of this descent back into this patriarchal society, yet this time Marion returns empowered, inedible, in a sense. Huttová notes that

To regain her personal balance she starts eating again and looking for a new job – she becomes a consumer, thus accepting male dominance. Her only hope for survival is in her merging with the social order she has raised her protest against. (73)

However, it was precisely in Marion’s anorexic period that she could exist outside out these normative restrains; it is the everyday patriarchal reality that forces her to cope differently, that is, if she wants to survive. Deleuze’s and Arsić’s anorexic elegance and Marion’s transformation from anorexic to symbolic auto-cannibal then prove to be mutually illuminative. Whereas the anorexic body for Deleuze is an unfolding, disorganized body, the anorexic must at some point *actually* consume in order to stay alive. However, the moment

Marion is alienated from her body (which is consequently also the moment when she develops anorexic eating habits) she feels most free: “once I was outside I felt considerably better. I had broken out; from what, or into what, I didn’t know. Though I wasn’t at all certain why I had been acting this way, I had at least acted” (93). As we have seen, through for example Parker’s reading of *The Edible Woman*, the ‘cake-scene’ is where most literary critics locate the emancipatory and feminist aspect of the book. However, when reading it through Deleuze and Arsić, Marion’s anorexic and alienated period is the emancipatory praxis; a liberation from organ(ization), from the fixity of identity.

It can be argued that Marion’s anorexic period was a period of suspension of hierarchy; she stepped outside of society by stepping outside of her body, which for her was the only place where she could go to contemplate ‘what to do next.’ The eating of the cake is the scene of redemption. The Deleuzo-Guattarian BwO, however, is a body of temporalities, of differentiating fluxes and becomings; the ‘redemption’ is thus a re-organizing of a disorganized body. Both the Deleuzian as the symbolic cannibalism thus do not seem to let themselves be reconciled. The redemption offered by the anorexic body is a space outside the traditional societal structure, whereas the act of symbolic cannibalism suggests that redemption is to be found in a return to the societal structure as an inedible woman. However, when configuring these two seemingly opposing interpretations in the body of the grotesque, they can exist in tandem (rather than, as suggested above, irreconcilable readings).

### 5.2 *The Anorexic Cannibalesque*

Drawing upon the grotesque and the carnivalesque as formulated by Mikhail Bakhtin, André Pereira Feitosa argues that it is through representations of the grotesque that Marion finds liberation from the male dominated society, and the edibility of her body (59). Bakhtin defines his notion of the grotesque through carnival theory, and the carnival as celebrated in the middle-ages. Carnival is a feast where people defy the norm; they dress up by exaggerating dis/mis-formed bodies. Consequently, carnival is a feast where all hierarchy is suspended. It is through this dressing up of both the human body as the town where the feast is taking place that hierarchical borders are temporarily broken. Consequently, Bakhtin in *Rabelais and his World* argues, during carnival “[a] form of free and familiar contact reigned among people who were usually divided by the barriers of caste, property, profession, and age” (10). This suspension of hierarchy through exaggerated bodily displays is what Bakhtin defines as the grotesque. Whereas many scholars argue that the grotesque in art and literature is hard to define, what they do agree upon is that it must figure “as something that defies a

prevailing norm; and that it is necessary to establish the contrasts between the elements that oppose each other in the narrative, and to frame the work in question within its time, space and culture” (Feitosa 56). Feitosa points out that representations of the grotesque, whether in art or in literature, are valuable; they are a means to deconstruct existing hierarchical structures, making the reader or beholder the medium that observes this deconstruction of hierarchies. The grotesque, however, can take on many forms, and it is also for this reason that it is difficult to recognize the grotesque. Much reliance is on the reader when considering the grotesque; it is through the reader’s disgust, surprise or astonishment when encountering such exaggerated, unfamiliar bodies, that the grotesque is asking for a suspension of hierarchy, and consequently, through the reader that the grotesque must be unravelled and made into something to be grasped. Feitosa argues that

The beholder extracts meaning from the grotesque, transforming it from something threatening into something acceptable to his/her concepts of normality. When facing the grotesque, the beholder has to act like Oedipus who solves the riddle and defeats the monster, bringing logic to the sphinx’s grotesque riddle. (56-57)

The grotesque thus is a sort of riddle of the body, and when this riddle cannot be solved, the grotesqueness will remain grotesque, in a sort of permanent state of deconstruction (or, what Deleuze would call, a constant flux of reterritorialization and deterritorialization). The grotesque has been a concept employed by feminist literature and art in particular; rebellious behaviour or not ‘acting feminine,’ for example, are “grotesque characteristics to demand citizenship in a society in which there is no room for those who do not accept the pre-established rules of male and female normality” (57). Feitosa thus reads Marion’s behaviour and bodily transformation as grotesque. Feitosa detects several characteristics of the grotesque; Marion’s description of her female co-workers through notions of (bodily) fluids, the woman-shaped cake, but also Marion’s anorexic consuming of her own body. Peter, who refuses to eat the cake, refuses the grotesque, and thus fails to solve the riddle. Duncan, however, also cannibalizes the cake in front of Marion, and in doing so, supposedly accepts Marion’s grotesqueness, and thus accepting that Marion’s anorexia was a way through which she was “annihilating her own identity” (61). The grotesque is thus present at several layers of the novel; Marion’s representation of other bodies, the woman-shaped cake. However, as became clear above, Marion’s anorexic body and its compulsion of food is also a manifestation of the grotesque, where her body regarded food as something abnormal, weird. The anorexic body solved the “riddle” through rejecting that which imposes tradition and organization upon its substance; the body, here considered as an agent (the agency

emphasized by the third-person narrator, seeing Marion and her body as separate entities) thus solves the riddles grotesqueness by giving itself over to experimentation and affects.

Bakhtin's and Feitosa's notion of the grotesque allows for both the anorexic and the cannibalistic to be read as affirmatively in that the suspension of hierarchy is emphasized; whether this is suspended through disorganization and experimentation of the body or through a cannibalizing of the self, the grotesque is a device through which demands are made for a more just and less oppressive space. Cannibalism as an act of grotesqueness, be it via a body cannibalizing itself or via an act of symbolic cannibalism, is an act of rebellion. Whereas many readings, as well as Atwood's 'intention' with the book, was to defy women's stereotypical role as a consumable good, making the consumption of the woman-shaped cake the ultimate metaphor expressing this defiance, when reading it from through the Deleuzo-Guattarian anorexic BwO and the Bakhtinian grotesque, other aspects of the book become the emancipatory ones; refusing not the ideology that women should be consumable, but rather refusing the traditional ideology of the body all together, turning it into a site of affects and intensities instead.

In light of this thesis, the anorexic cannibalism is the affirmative and productive one. What the eating of the cake suggests, on the other hand, is that the "other Marion of the past" (who lets herself be oppressed by patriarchy) is somehow wholly assimilable. The anorexic Marion, however, rejected any symbol that substituted her body, and instead let it exist as an agent in itself, resulting in an existence outside of male dominance and Western capitalism in general. The anorexic body rejects capitalism in particular in that it refrains from consuming in general. Capitalism runs on engines fuelled by 'female steam,' that is, women (and more specifically, mothers) are expected to buy more products and are typically thought of as the person who does the groceries for her family. The anorexic rejects any such belief, and instead makes the body the very texture of her being. Yet a paradox arises. Indeed, the anorexic body of Marion is the literal cannibalism that fits best in the cannibalist posthuman(ist) subjectivity and ethics explored throughout this thesis. The cannibalizing of the cake, however, even though it is a symbolic cannibalism, is also a symbolic cannibalism of the symbolic. If, as Parker notes, "[t]he presentation of cannibalism as the social ethos exposes the disturbing underside of a violent relationship between the sexes that is only thinly disguised as civilization" (363), and the cake is a symbol of the woman as foodstuff in general, Marion's eating the symbol *through* another symbol creates a complex and layered cannibalism. In short, symbolically eating that which symbolizes the results of patriarchy, is arguably a literal cannibalism. Marion indeed literally performs what society and the social

ethos literally does to women: it turns them into foodstuff, sweet, savoury and pretty. When regarded in this sense, Marion does not except the substitute of eating herself through anorexia nervosa and feeds on the desired body directly: her body as a symbol of edibility. Whereas I am aware that I am on dangerous territory by supposing that the mathematical 'negative + negative = positive' also applies to narratives and literary imagination (symbolic + symbolic = literal), what I want to point out is that the literal cannibalism works on different levels and planes. Indeed, when considered from a different perspective, both her anorexia (as demonstrated through Arsić and the Deleuzian anorexic) *and* her symbolically, and indeed, ceremonially eating of the symbol of patriarchal oppression are both literal cannibalisms in the sense that it is the refusal of a symbol, the first being a rejection of the symbol of organization imposed on the body by the State (the Deleuzian anorexic), the latter a symbolic rejection of the symbol in general. The literal cannibalism, *The Edible Woman* shows, does not necessarily mean that we all must become-Hannibal Lecter. Whether it is through a double negation of symbolism, or through a disorganized Deleuzian body, a cannibalistic relation between selves, others and fleshy textures is a manifestation of the grotesque, and is a productive figuration and praxis to explore and imagine the ends of Man and the future of the human. It postpones hierarchy through dramatizations of stereotypes, rejections of the norm and a celebration of the disorderly.

## Conclusion: From Vegetarianism to Inevitable Cannibalism

Are we not in awe of this piece of flesh called our “body:” of this aching meat called our “self” expressing the abject and simultaneously divine potency of life?

Rosi Braidotti

Throughout my thesis, I have explored the implications of adding the cannibal body and the praxis of cannibalism to the ever growing list of posthumanist subjectivities. The results expanded beyond what I imagined, particularly when considering that what I imagined was that this thesis would be a plea against the eating of animal flesh. Initially, the cannibalism that I had in mind was a cannibalism that inevitably emerged once humans and animals were on equal footing. I hoped to establish this “equality” through the writings of posthumanism and animal rights activists. I always was drawn to posthumanist scholarship, so why not make it the theoretical backdrop supporting my vegetarianism? Little did I know that I would end up pleading for an inevitable cannibalism, and actually seriously consider that, with Derrida by my side, pure vegetarianism does not exist. In the introduction it already became clear that this thesis was not going to be advocating for an extension of human rights by projecting these right on animals and nonhuman materialities, because that meant taking part in an anthropocentric and anthropomorphic debate I was trying to avoid and deconstruct.

Consequently, all the scholars, philosophers and posthumanists discussed in this thesis are all too cautious to not fall in the trap of anthropocentrism, that is, by simply including animals in the human(ist) realm. Instead, what this thesis has done, with the indispensable help of the writings of Braidotti, Deleuze, Derrida, Cornell, Seely and Wynter, is a thorough deconstruction of humanism, the -ism that formulated subjectivity and in doing so excluded the nonhuman by making it the VIP lounge for Man. In historically and philosophically situating humanism and the Manichean epistemai, the question thus shifted from “how can I employ cannibalism to advocate for an animal-free diet” to “how can the cannibal be the new praxis and figurations of what it means to collectively be human?” The limitations of the discourse I initially wanted to explore where limits that suffocated me, and consequently, limits I needed to transgress and deconstruct. Instead of taking the negative, imperative voice telling what one should not eat, my argument took a “qualitative shift of the relationship away from species-ism and towards an ethical appreciation of what bodies (human, animal, others) can do” (*The Posthuman* 71-72). I felt the urge and necessity to dwell upon the same question Braidotti urges us to ask, namely, “[c]an we learn to think differently about difference?



(*Nomadic Subjects* 77), and not, as Tom Regan and Peter Singer do in their anthology *Animal Rights and Human Obligations*, can we think of animals as the same as humans.

The vegetarianism-through-cannibalism-and-equality argument was thus soon replaced by an affirmative reading of the body and monstrosity and, in doing so, an attempt be reenchanting with what it means to be human. The cannibal remained a figure not only of my personal interest but also, as this thesis has repeatedly and thoroughly demonstrated, a productive figure to bring the project of the posthumanities further. The cannibal foregrounds the materiality and edibility of the body, in that it is defined by what it eats (and thus not necessarily how it looks, as became clear in the Hannibal Lecter analysis), and it enables to think of relations between bodies, things and beings not as static and fixed, but through incorporations, appetite and foodstuffs. Who gets to eat, what is eaten, and who eats is pushed to the monstrous extremes when figuring it through the discourse the cannibal embodies.

To rethink ethics and subjectivity through posthumanism and the cannibal meant in the first place to rethink the place of the material, vital body. Subjectivity, agency and ethics has been violently driven away from the body, and was located in the transcendental mind. Even more, the body, as we have seen in the Foucauldian and Agambian formulation of biopolitics, is figured through an exclusive inclusion; a presence that is only needed as the vulnerable antithesis of the sovereign power and the mind. The same role was played by the body of the cannibal and other colonized Others; placed on the “bad” side of the binary to secure the place for the European Western Man on the “right” side of the binary. Both the actual fleshy body as the bodies of Otherness of the colonized peoples were the disavowed, unwanted peripheries, the embodiments of the limit. Now then, if we want to think differently about difference and come to a more inclusive, affirmative and vital notion of subjectivity, we must start with a reconfiguring of the body and a body/mind *parallelism*, rather than a dualism as suggested by Descartes. Deconstructing and reterritorializing the place of the body in subject formations through the works of Deleuze, Guattari and Deleuze meant encountering a subjectivity formulated through a constant flux of affects, (de)composing assemblages and intraconnectedness fleshed in bodies of otherness, monstrosity and difference. The body thus became a site not of the fleshy envelope that was either blessed with a *res cogitans* or not (as is the case with animals and nonhuman materialities), but rather a site of change, affirmation and vitality. After this reenchantment and appraisal of the material body was established, the body of the cannibal could move freely, and consequently, became a body not stuck in the binary of self/other, but rather a body foregrounding appetites, hunger for encounters with other bodies. Or, to quote Kilgour again, it became a body “where self and

other, love and aggression meet, where the body becomes symbolic, and at the same time, the human is reduced to mere matter” (Foreword viii). The cannibal both feasts on the other’s alterity, making the other a symbolic body, but it also emphasizes that all, yes even humans, are edible. It is a fleshy arena where even more fleshy and edible matters meet, the encounters of these meaty foodstuffs, however, composing and decomposing in such a pace that the sovereign simply cannot make it its locus of power.

It may still be hard to grasp that cannibalism is an act through which affirmative ethics and subjectivities can be read, particularly when considering that it is still associated with the act of killing. However, when cannibalism is not so much about the actual killing and eating of a human, but rather about the critical structures it embodies; about how it forces us to rethink the relation between self/other, between human/nonhuman, between different bodies, foodstuffs and incorporations. As we have seen through the works of Derrida, in particular his work on the ethics of alterity and mourning, cannibalism is a praxis of acknowledging the other’s alterity, of incorporating small portions of the favourable, and sometimes less favourable, characteristics and follies of someone’s otherness, without incorporating it fully. Whereas the notion of a dis/mal-formed body to deconstruct and reconfigure is not revolutionary, think for example Haraway’s Cyborg or Braidotti’s monster, the cannibal in particular screams loud. It emerged in tandem with the Cartesian subject and the humanistic ideal of transcendentalism, and moreover, was constructed and sensationalized to help the Cartesian subject up the ladder of superiority and privilege. From the many screaming cosmic energies and bodies, the cannibal screams consumption, ethics (and an ethical acknowledgement the cannibal’s scream was heard most loudly by both me as the scholars discussed in this thesis, ranging from anthropologists (Kilgour, Viveiros de Castro), poststructuralists (Derrida), to modernists (de Andrade, Lispector), to capitalist critiques (Dominy, Agamben) to feminists (Arsić, Atwood). This thesis interpreted and reconfigured the cannibalist screaming body through a posthuman(ist) frame, which resulted in a figuration of nomadic and monstrous subjectivity through terms of food, Spinozist and Derridaen ethics and becoming-what is eaten. The relation between the eater and the eaten as figured in the posthuman(ist) cannibal is a relation of becoming-Other, of affects, of alterity, and moreover, it suggests that encounters with the o/Other are to be considered in terms of nourishment, joyous eating and desirous appetite.

The cannibal and the praxis of eating other bodies is now a critical construct foregrounding questions of how to eat the other well, and consequently, if one really wants to become *what* it eats, how it eats, and what it imagines eating. Because after all, is the cannibal

not about *becoming* what it eats? Becoming another human body, taking in others to compose greater or lesser constructs? However, whereas this thesis is framed by and advocates for a posthumanist ethics, it also expressed criticism, that is, a criticism on the notion of “mimicry” *as inherently opposed to* Deleuzian becomings-. Indeed, posthumanism is all about becomings-, and particularly Deleuze rejects “mimicry” because it presupposes some knowable entity that can be mimicked or aped. Mimicry, however, is an important concept in colonial and postcolonial theory, as my brief discussion of Bhabha has pointed out. The urge of the colonized to *become* the colonizer, to be “just like him.” However, as de Andrade’s *Cannibalist Manifesto* demonstrated, mimicry as simply “aping” is a narrow definition. De Andrade reappropriates the cannibal as a colonial figure by showing that it is an act and a figure that can digest the other (which, in his case, was the cultural intrusion of the West in Brazil), and take in only that which is nutritious, the rest can be excreted. This formulation of mimicry (as temporarily inhabiting the other to excrete it afterwards) does not necessarily have to be compatible with Deleuzian becomings-, but bring in notions of perspectivism and (post)colonial discourses.

The cannibal is not only a figuration embodying critical structures and specific discourses, it is also a specific act performed between bodies involving incorporation, digestion, appetite, sacrifice and processes of mourning. However, before these aforementioned performances or praxes could be read affirmatively, it needed to be broken free from the chokehold of the Manichean epistemai. Cornell and Seely showed that, after unleashing the other from the constraints of Man, the narratives and myths surrounding these monstrous and oppressed others evaporate. Particularly Spinoza, both in the context of my thesis and their argument, is vital. Spinoza’s *Ethics* argues that the world is made of one substance, which subsequently consist of a multiplicity of self-expressive assemblages capable to affect and be affected. Every encounter with another assemblage changes the composition of the current assemblage to a greater or lesser extent (there is thus no such thing as “good” or “bad”). Consequently, assemblages are moved by a desirous passion to constantly become greater and more open to affects. However, causality does not exist in a Spinozist ethics, since that would mean that there is a predetermined goal. Instead, Spinoza argues, one can only imagine what these encounters specifically made “greater” or “lesser”. These imaginations, Cornell and Seely point out, are circumscribed and inscribed with the planetary domination of the myths and narrations of the Manichean epistemai, hence making every encounter with a (colonial) Other difficult to imagine as “joyful” or “affective”. Freeing the liminalized other from the constraints of the epistemai of Man means opening up different

myths and opening up the possibility to “develop empowering and affirmative imaginaries with consolidated narratives of the ideas we imagine in our material encounters [with other bodies]” (137). Cornell and Seely’s reading of Spinoza did not appear in a literal sense in my thesis, but rather through my readings of Lispector’s *The Passion*, McCarthy’s *The Road* and Atwood’s *The Edible Woman*. That is, rather than exploring more dense vital materialist and posthumanist theory, I have explored these affirmative imaginaries of the praxis and figure of the cannibal throughout my readings of these various books. Consequently, by framing my literary analyses in a posthuman(ist) reconfiguration of subjectivity and ethics through the cannibal, it was freed from the normal narrative surrounding the cannibal, that is, as a savage colonial Other that must be repressed and oppressed. The posthuman(ist) critical structure set-up in this thesis and embodied by the cannibal resulted in imagining cannibal encounters as joyful and productive ones, Lispector’s *The Passion* being the most clear example, but Atwood’s cannibal redemption and anorexic elegance also showing the emancipatory aspects embodied by the cannibal. This thesis aimed to demonstrate, through the literary analyses, that cannibalism, when freed from the grand narrative of the Manichean episteme, is an empowering practice and lends itself for sharp critiques on the status quo of Man and the West.

All three novels are New World novels, and all three novels (re)appropriate the cannibal to criticize (the episteme of) Man. Lispector’s *The Passion* in particular articulated how acts of cannibalism, mimicry and becoming are practices through which the territory of the human(ist), the rational, the organized is deconstructed and reconfigured into an immanent bliss. All three novels imagined a future and critiqued a present reality through acts of incorporation, cannibalism and becoming-what you eat. Whether it is a warning to stop consuming the way we do, as done in *The Road*, a criticism on the unequal and patriarchal Western society, or a removal of the quotation marks that hinders one to sink into immanence; all are imagined through the cannibal and the act of cannibalism. This thesis, then, was not only an aim to fill the gap and lack of attention paid to the cannibal within posthumanist writing, it was also a demonstration of how the marriage of literary imagination and posthumanism is one that is bound to work. The literary imagination knows no boundaries; it can be as disorderly and unruly as one likes, and it can take those bodies pushed in obscurity and darkness out of the periphery. In a posthuman(ist) world, where all order, organization and fixity is replaced by disorder, disorganization and fluidity, a book imagines the stories moving these chaotic streams. As Deleuze and Guattari point out, “[t]he world has become chaos, but the book remains the image of the world: radical-chaosmos rather than root-

cosmos. A strange mystification: a book all the more total for being fragmented. At any rate, what a vapid idea, the book as the image of the world” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 6). The literary imagination as the territory where cannibalism as a collective praxis of human can be imagined, and where the figure of the cannibal is the poetical guide that leads us to insights within—or as an entrance to—posthuman(istic) subjectivity and ethics. What a vapid idea indeed.

However, as with all theses and scholarly arguments, the work is never actually really done, and it is therefore recommended to keep our pens, forks and knives within reach. In this thesis, not much attention has been paid to actual performances of cannibalism, in the literal sense. Cornell and Seely’s attempt to “undertake Man and make the human” by considering afro-Caribbean spiritual traditions and ceremonies. If speculations are true and ceremonial and sacrificial cannibalism was actually performed by the Caribs and the Tupi then an up-close reading of the content of these traditions could be fruitful. Not only will this provide a more thorough and extensive account of the (spiritual) relation between material bodies within these ceremonies, but it will also allow for a critical consideration of different conceptions of bodies and food between, let us say, Europe, Brazil and the Caribs. Moreover, a thorough deconstruction of different ceremonies and rituals containing the eating of a human will also show the differences *within* various ceremonial or ritualistic acts of cannibalism. Indeed, in this thesis I have spoken rather easily about “cannibals,” as many (and I have pleaded myself guilty to this as well) blindly lump all the thousands and thousands of different animals together in the word “animal.”<sup>13</sup> Another aspect that has not gotten the full attention it probably deserved is the gender aspect of cannibalism. Whereas Atwood’s *The Edible Woman* did give a tip of the iceberg of the range of scholarly works written on the woman as consumable good, the topic of “cannibalizing women/woman as cannibal of her own body” can in itself be another research thesis. The relation between sex and food, and the metaphors used to talk about sex are almost always related to food (“I am going to eat you out” is but one of the many example, but also the only one that seems appropriate to put in a master’s thesis). The food/sex metaphor also works the other way, for example when thinking about the notion of “foodporn” (food that is orgasmic good). Interestingly, to refer to sex in cannibalistic terms is euphemistic; cannibalism is thus not a big taboo when it comes to talking sex and women. Either way, whereas this thesis aimed at discussing as many aspects

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<sup>13</sup> Derrida called this “*animot*”, playfully contracting the French plural for animals, *animaux*, and the French word for “word”, *mot*, “recalling the extreme diversity of animals that “the animal” erases” (*The Animal* 11). What’s in a name, eh?

of cannibalism and posthuman(ist) theory, there are still things left unsaid, things that may bring the posthuman(ist) project further, and may cut loose all the restrictive chains with which Man is choking human.

In society that consumes the female body, runs on over-accelerated consumerism; where humans are constructs in between quotation marks, where the bliss of immanence is ascribed only to the inanimate and nonhuman, it is time we pick up our knives and forks, and start eating others, become the other. As Avramescu recommends, “[l]et us listen to this cannibal, for his voice comes from beyond, whence we too come and whither we shall perhaps never arrive again” (2). And so have we done, and what we heard were tales of becoming-, of organless bodies, of grotesque and anorexic bodies, of self-consuming-consumer bodies, of colonialism, and through these, of an ethics and subjectivity moving towards an inclusive, affirmative appraisal of mattering.

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