

Consumption from the Avant-Garde to the Silver Screen: Cannibalism, Fetish, and Profanation

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Abstract

*In Oswald de Andrade's 'Manifesto Antropófago' of 1928, he explicitly calls for Brazilian and Latin American artists to resist the vestiges of colonial cultural politics by appropriating the cannibal trope and unabashedly plundering and consuming the European cultural tradition to radically rewrite cultural discourse. While Andrade's Manifesto has been used as a critical lens to examine the Latin American avant-gardes, as well as other modes of post-colonial cultural production, it has not been as widely used as a theoretical apparatus for examining the question of commodity production and consumption. In this paper, I revisit the Manifesto by focusing on its critical dialogue with Marx's concept of the fetish of the commodity. Linking this fetish with Apparadurai's recent thinking on the fetishism of the consumer, I trace how cannibalism can be reworked as a mode of 'profanation,' to use Agamben's terms, of the power apparatuses of consumption itself. Then I test the concept of the profanation of consumption with two film case studies - Nelson Perreira dos Santos' *Como era gostoso o meu francês* (dos Santos, 1971) and Ruggero Deodato's *Cannibal Holocausto* (Deodato, 1980). My readings situate these films in their cultural and political contexts and read them as texts which profane the apparatuses of the construction of historical and spectacular images for global consumption.*

Keywords: cannibal; consumer; fetish; commodity; violence; history; profanation

Introduction

Oswald de Andrade's 1928 'Manifesto Antropófago' ('Anthropophagist Manifesto,' henceforth the *MA*) is a text which continues to both animate and confound contemporary theoretical debates over the critical valence of the figure of the cannibal. In C. Richard King's survey of the field, almost twenty years ago, he cites the *MA* as one of the first radical attempts to invoke the figure of the cannibal 'to challenge Western cultural practices' and to 'outline a complex critique of global modernity and national development' (2000: 110). Yet King also suggests much of current critical thought on the cannibal hinges on unmasking Western cultural practices as cannibalistic. This inversion simply reifies old binaries of civilised and savage and decouples the cannibal's 'moral and social significance from its empirical and embodied attributes' at the expense of analysing cannibalistic practices 'in specific sociohistorical contexts' (*Ibid*: 121, 122).

More recent work on the cannibal seems indicative of greater emphasis on these 'embodied attributes' and 'sociohistorical contexts' of cannibalistic practices. In her book *Cannibal Writes: Eating Others in Caribbean and Indian Ocean Women's Writing*, Njeri Githire explores the metaphorical trope of cannibalism as it has been evoked in 'ongoing instances of encounter Caribbean/Indian Ocean peoples and global consumer cultures' (2014: 7). Githire posits that 'cannibalistic consumption' can be viewed as a 'transformative act of eating' situated in a specific context to problematise 'questions of power, incorporation, and counter tactics' (*Ibid*). From a different vantage point, Jennifer Brown sees the expression of Western political anxieties in the shifting use of the figure of the cannibal over the 20th century. Unlike King, however, Brown argues that historicizing the particular use of the cannibal trope at different moments can indeed unmask the West's intellectual and economic systems as inherently cannibalistic, not by reifying the dividing lines between civilized and savage, but by demonstrating 'the permeability of those boundaries' (Brown, 2013: 9).

In light of this ongoing contemporary debate over the use of the cannibal trope as a reproduction of hierarchy or an invaluable subversive critical practice, a re-examination of these questions within de Andrade's manifesto itself is in order. While de Andrade undoubtedly criticises the power dynamics shaping European and Brazilian relations, the question of whether his critique is levelled at modernity as such remains up for debate, particularly when, as Arjun Appadurai argues, the idea of the modern rupture with tradition is a myth, and 'modernity is decisively at large' (1996: 4). By invoking the historical figure of the Tupinambá Indian and the Caraíba revolution, a revolution which, for Stephen Berg, 'must be regarded as the central image of the cannibalist proposition,' de Andrade

appears to invert this hierarchy and tip the scales in favour of a re-privileged tradition (1999: 90). On the other hand, Fernando Rosenberg contends that de Andrade and his Latin American avant-garde contemporaries conceived of modernity 'spatially, not temporally' (2006: 7). For Rosenberg, the overall emphasis of the critique of modernity in *MA*, lies more in how de Andrade 'engages consumption and production on a global scale,' and less in the question of relative autonomy from Western cultural colonization (*Ibid*: 80).

In what follows, I revisit the *MA* to unpack the relationship between de Andrade's perspective on commodities and the figure of the cannibal as an avatar of political anxieties surrounding consumption. I will then explore the affinities between de Andrade's critique of commodities and consumption and Marx's analysis of commodity fetishism in *Capital*. Placing Marx and de Andrade's ideas into dialogue leads to a discussion of Giorgio Agamben's concept of profanation as a way of troubling what Appadurai calls the fetishism of the consumer. Finally, I will test this rereading of the manifesto as a critique of commodity and consumer fetishism by analysing two films with a central theme of cannibalism: *Como era gostoso o meu francês* (1971), directed by Nelson Pereira dos Santos, and *Cannibal Holocaust* (1981), directed by Ruggero Deodato. The choice of these two films may seem odd, as the former was directed by a Brazilian, the latter by an Italian, and each film involves starkly different aesthetic and ideological choices. However, it is precisely *because* they were produced in such different contexts, that their juxtaposed analysis demonstrates how cultural anthropophagy is an effective critical lens for thinking about consumption patterns in very different places and across artistic genres.

Rereading the Manifesto

Many critics read de Andrade's *MA* as a call to arms for Brazilian artists to recover their cultural autonomy which had been destroyed by colonization. According to Jean-Louis Olive, the aggressive posture cultural cannibalism takes toward European power combats the mere re-subordination of the Other. This inversion involves a concomitant 'pesquisa do outro, do estrangeiro, do exótico, das raças indígenas e africanas' ('*investigation of the other, of the stranger, of the exotic, of the indigenous and African races*') (Olive, 2013: 34). Rather than offering a vision in which the historically subjected 'savage' comes to dominate the 'civilised' oppressor, de Andrade's cannibalism urges Brazilian intellectuals to consume and incorporate the work of their European counterparts without simply repeating in reverse the ideology of domination.

At the beginning of the *MA*, de Andrade describes a past in which consciousness of the maternal deity 'the Great Snake' united the 'the immigrants,' the 'slaves,' and the '*touristes*' within a heterogeneous Brazilian society (de Andrade & Bary, 1991: 38). In her translation into English, Leslie Bary uses the word 'slaves' for what is rendered in de Andrade's Brazilian source text as '*traficados*' (1928: 3). This is a curious choice, even when one acknowledges the clunky nature of the need to render '*traficados*' as 'trafficked ones' due to the linguistic conventions of English, simply because the word '*escravo*' for 'slave' exists in Portuguese. But moreover, the subtle differences between 'slave' and 'trafficked one' is telling in this context. 'Slave' alludes to exploitation, of course, but especially in the context of exploitation of a labour force. 'Trafficked ones,' on the other hand, places emphasis on the commercial aspect of the circulation of commodified human flesh for profit. This distinction takes on a greater impact when one follows the trail of commodities littered throughout the *MA*. It is 'clothing' which 'clashed with the truth'; it is a 'raincoat' which separates 'the inner and outer worlds'; 'canned consciousness,' imported from abroad, sealed for circulation, sale, and consumption in metal, testifies to the capacity of commodification to penetrate the human mind, to standardise and homogenise thought, such that progress is measured 'by catalogues and television sets' (1991: 38, 38, 39, 41).

The logic of the commodity, imposed as a result of colonial economic trauma, is counterposed to what Sara Castro-Klarén calls '[t]he force of the discourse of Tupi anthropophagy, a subalternized knowledge,' which she claims de Andrade idealises in his manifesto (2000: 313). Western economic and philosophical systems are contrasted with the idealised structures of Tupi 'subalternized knowledge' to form the manifesto's central tension. Western networks of commodity production, distribution, and financial 'speculation' replaced the '[m]agic and life' of the Tupi 'social system in harmony with the planet' (1991: 42, 41, 42). Here the fundamental difference in the imposition of a Western economic model which de Andrade alludes to is the replacement of traditional and sacred ritualistic structures of life with networks of commodity circulation.

As Marx reminds us in volume 1 of *Capital*, under capitalism, the value of the commodity is not determined by its use value, but rather by its exchange value once brought to the marketplace and sold for money. This process results in the obfuscation of the social relations under which the commodity itself was produced, a curious phenomenon Marx calls the 'fetishism of the commodity' and describes in the following terms:

The mysterious character of the commodity-form consists therefore simply in the fact that the commodity reflects the social characteristics of men's own labour as objective characteristics of the products of labour themselves, as the socio-natural properties of these things. Hence it also reflects the social relation of the producers to the sum total of labour as a social relation between objects, a relation which exists apart from and outside the producers. Through this substitution, the products of labour become commodities, sensuous things which are at the same time supra-sensible or social (Marx, 1990: 164-165).

In other words, for Marx, the exploitative social relations of production between employee and employer which define capitalism are masked through the process of commodification. Once a commodity such as a pair of pants is taken to the marketplace, the monetary value they garner appears to be an inherent characteristic of the pants, rather than a social product of the labour that went into them. Yet in this same section Marx makes a telling analogy. Noting that to properly understand his use of the term fetishism 'we must take flight into the misty realm of religion,' he invokes the totemic figurines of certain non-western religions, created by humans, but which 'appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race' (1990: 165). This passage suggests that alongside the partition of use value and exchange value inherent in the logic of the commodity, there is a simultaneous restructuring of the realms of the sacred and the profane.

Taking Marx's words as more than mere metaphorical appropriation of so-called primitive religions, Giorgio Agamben notes how capitalism mimics religion in dividing the world into realms of the sacred and the profane, and defines profanation as 'open[ing] the possibility of a special form of negligence, which ignores separation, or, rather, puts it to a particular use' which 'deactivates the apparatuses of power and returns to common use the spaces that power had seized' (2007: 75, 77). The religious divisions of sacred and profane are paralleled in an endless partitioning under capitalism, which find its original form in the commodity. Here it is worth quoting Agamben at length:

there is now a single, multiform, ceaseless process of separation that assails every thing, every place, every human activity in order to divide it from itself. This process is entirely indifferent to the caesura between sacred and profane, between divine and human. In its extreme form, the capitalist religion realizes the pure form of separation, to the point that

there is nothing left to separate. An absolute profanation without remainder now coincides with an equally vacuous and total consecration. In the commodity, separation inheres in the very form of the object, which splits into use-value and exchange-value and is transformed into an ungraspable fetish. The same is true for everything that is done, produced, or experienced – even the human body, even sexuality, even language. They are now divided from themselves and placed in a separate sphere that no longer defines any substantial division and where all use becomes and remains impossible. This sphere is consumption (Agamben, 2007: 81).

Here Agamben argues that consumption has become a sacrosanct sphere in which nothing – from the language we use to communicate to our bodily needs – can be allowed to have any meaning or use beyond its value in the marketplace. In this passage, Agamben gestures toward Appadurai's concept of the 'fetishism of the consumer,' which gives the consumer the illusion that 'he or she is an actor, where in fact he or she is at best a chooser' (1996: 42). Both of these thinkers suggest the ever-increasing production of commodities has led to a pure sphere of sacred consumption which alienates human beings from their potential and political agency. As such, they update Marx's belief that political struggle must be waged over the means of production. For their part, Agamben and Appadurai locate the sphere of consumption as a key site of future political struggle. Agamben goes a bit further in arguing that profanation – or the playful use of objects and spaces outside their supposed functions designated by the demands of the market – is a political strategy that can inform struggles against the contemporary imperatives of consumer culture. As a result of these insights, we can continue to read de Andrade's concept of cannibalism as a trope which can be deployed to playfully profane the apparatuses of consumption, thus undermining the power relations which inhere in global commodity flows.

While he would hardly disagree that the production of commodities entails a great deal of social exploitation, de Andrade's work flags another dialectic that Marx neglects to discuss in his elucidation of the commodity fetish. The organization of social life around the commodity production also forces human beings to satisfy their needs and desires through the consumption of such exploitation. Moreover, de Andrade argues that humans are also deeply motivated by their desire to consume, and as such consumption must be a site of political struggle against exploitation as well. It is for this reason that de Andrade writes in a text entitled 'Os erros de Marx' – 'The Mistakes of Marx' – that 'O que interessa ao homem não é a produção e sim o consumo' ('*what interests man is not production but rather consumption*') (2009: 81). Thus, he invokes anthropophagy as a

mode of consumption which disrupts our forced complicity in global networks of commodities. Contrary to the process of division inherent in the commodity, the cannibal practices the '[a]bsorption of the sacred enemy' so as 'to transform him into a totem' (1991: 43). Such integration is a microcosm of the struggle between '[e]veryday love and the capitalist way of life' (Ibid: 43). The twin fetishes of the commodity and consumer elevate consumption of commodities into a realm of utterly banal worship, relegating any non-utilitarian uses of objects and acts of consumption outside the church of the marketplace to the realm of the profane. We can read de Andrade's anthropophagy as imagining acts of consumption which break this process of division through a profanation of consumption itself.

Yet the question remains, if we approach the concept of cannibalism from this perspective, does it provide a framework capable of escaping the racist legacies attached to the cannibal, which, according to Robert Stam, has long been 'the very 'name of the other,' the ultimate marker of difference in a coded opposition of light and dark, rational and irrational, civilized and savage,' (1997: 238)? According to Bary, rather than leaving the orbit of colonial ideology, anthropophagy reproduces the 'dualities of self and other, nature and culture, mother and father – archetypal oppositions which at a deep level structure the *MA* even as it attempts to dismantle the more squarely socio-political dualities of native and foreign, civilization and barbarism' (1991: 15). This same contradictory nature leads Castro-Klarén to describe how the *MA* 'expresses the anxieties posed by the break with European reason that the embrace of Tupi (subalternized) logic implied' (2000: 302).

This anxiety in part stems from the impossibility of resurrecting an idealised past. But if we recall Rosenberg's insights about the Brazilian avant-garde's preoccupation with its marginal position within global flows of goods, we can also detect de Andrade's ambivalence about the status of indigenous and other marginalized peoples within Brazil. Bary problematizes this ambivalence as de Andrade's practice of 'fetishizing heterogeneity,' in which a vision of 'Brazil as a kaleidoscopic but nevertheless unified nation state [...] works to elide the question of marginality within its borders' (1991: 13, 17). The reification of cannibalism as a specifically indigenous mechanism of accessing forgotten ancient knowledge is complicit in the elision of the discourse of the legacy of slavery, especially when conceived as the perverse extension of commodification to human beings. By avoiding this tendency to reify the aspects of cannibalism which relate to the recuperation of indigenous culture, we can reincorporate a vision of anthropophagy which properly accounts for the fetishes of the commodity and the consumer in discursive constructions of modernity. In turn, this lens helps interrogate and

decentre Western origin stories of modernity which Richard Appignanesi demystifies when he claims:

Europe is a 'myth', to be sure, but with innumerable graveyards to commemorate the blood spilled on its mythic behalf. Its most crucial myth is that of giving birth to itself by gestating modernity. Europe's modernity was in fact made, or I should perhaps say secured, at its peripheries. Empire confirmed Europe's absolutely central modernity. Europe is not itself but a manifold colonial reproduction of itself (Appignanesi, 2007: 482).

This mythologization of European modernity even holds in its intellectual histories. The peripheral trace of African culture is even present in the supposedly Western concepts of the commodity and the commodity fetish, despite Marx's focus on the developed capitalist world when he elucidated these ideas. Wyatt MacGaffey has demonstrated how European explorers and colonists, after encountering African religious practices and interpreting them as 'fetishistic,'

were challenged to rethink the capacity of the material object to embody religious, commercial, aesthetic, and sexual values. What was originally a problem in understanding African culture became, in the work of such thinkers as Marx and Freud, a perspective, or a group of perspectives, on European culture (MacGaey, 1994: 123).

It is clear how Europe's encounters with other cultures through colonial practices simultaneously resulted in the circulation of new goods and ideas, but under unequal relations of exchange. If the European emphasis on the temporal aspect of modernity led their avant-garde intellectuals to look toward so-called 'primitive' knowledges and futuristic machines to reconceptualise their worlds, this perspective often obscured the geographic relations underpinning the circulation of these ideas.

While de Andrade's manifesto does wrestle with some of the same temporal issues in his idealisation of the Tupi past, his foregrounding of the problems of commodification and consumption in the construction of racial and cultural inequities works to offer a corrective to Eurocentric conceptions and critiques of modernity. On the one hand, de Andrade's concept of cannibalism functions, according to Rosenberg, 'as a particular stance in a global symbolic economy that keeps reproducing a colonial dynamic of modernity,' a geopolitical dynamic which will not be resolved through the embrace of a far-flung culture or the latest technology (2006: 80). On the other hand, the emphasis de Andrade places on acts of consumption by his cannibal figure respond to Marx by suggesting that

alongside the political struggle to overcome the commodity fetish which alienates workers from their labour, we must contemplate the need to reconfigure the relations of consumer society to imbue consumption with 'magic' and 'everyday love.' Agamben's concept of profanation suggests a strategy of exposing the mechanisms by which consumer culture is rendered inviolable. One of these mechanisms is the construction of histories wherein trajectories toward capitalist consumer society are construed as the natural course of progress. A second is the circulation of spectacles of consumption which propagate the sacred aura surrounding acts of consumption. Accordingly, I would like to argue the critical purchase of de Andrade's concept of anthropophagy resides in demystifying the conditions which bestow a sacrosanct status upon the consumption of commodities. By reading the *MA* through the films *Como era gostoso o meu francês* and *Cannibal Holocaust*, we can test this vision of anthropophagy through two films which deploy the cannibal trope to critique different relations of consumption.

How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman

Como era gostoso o meu francês (*How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman*, 1971) by Nelson Perreira dos Santos premiered at the height of the rebirth of the avant-garde trope of anthropophagy with the advent of what Robert Stam identifies as the tropicalist second wave of Brazilian Cinema Novo (1997: 233). This film movement, characterised by 'self-referentiality and anti-illusionism,' formed a response to the 1964 coup d'état which ousted Brazil's democratically-elected leftist government and installed a military junta provoked deep introspection among the country's young, creative filmmakers such as dos Santos (*ibid*). The film takes place in the 16th century and centres around an episode of contact between the Tupinambá indigenous people and European conquistadors. The narrative story about this encounter is periodically interrupted by ironic sequences which comment on overtly Eurocentric narratives of the history of the contact between Europeans and indigenous Americans. During the film's fictional encounter between the Europeans and the Tupinambá, the indigenous people capture a French explorer. They incorrectly identify him as Portuguese, one of their enemies, and decide to sacrifice and eat him. The erroneous identification of the European by the indigenous tribe is a dialectical inversion of the long tradition of imposing alterity on other cultures through a case of mistaken identity, a tradition famously inaugurated in the Americas with Christopher Columbus' assertion upon arrival in the Caribbean that he had encountered 'Indians.'

Before eating the captured Frenchman, the Tupinambá pair him up with a woman named Seboipepe. He begins to live with her among the other members of the tribe in the interregnum before he is to be sacrificed.

When the tribal leader wants gunpowder and demands that the Frenchman living in their midst acquire it, the latter kills another European who has regular trade relations with the tribe to steal his goods. Even though he brings the tribe leader the gunpowder he seeks, and later uses this same gunpowder in battle alongside the Tupinambá to kill members of a rival tribe, none of this is enough for him to sufficiently integrate himself into their social structures. He cannot stave off his fate. Shifting the traditional vectors of oppression from the colonizing European to the colonised peoples of the Americas, the film's final scene of cannibalism subverts, according to Stam:

the conventional identification with the European protagonist of the captivity narrative [...] – the 'hero' does not escape alone, nor does he escape with his wife, nor does he become a happy 'white Indian' – all the while maintaining an ironically neutral attitude toward the protagonist's deglutition (Stam, 1997: 249).

Stam also argues the plot 'superimposes (at least) two versions of history. The first consists in a historical reconstruction of the life and times of a Tupinambá village. The other version of history is relayed by the intertitles that offer the Eurocentric impression of various Europeans' (1997: 250). Through these two 'versions' of history, the film comments on the perspectival nature of historical interpretation. Moreover, by staging a fictionalized scene of anti-colonial violence amid ironic sequences which undermine the historical authority of the powerful, dos Santos' film can be read as an allegorical imagining of an act of rebellion against the repressive dictatorship under which he was living. Yet our reading of de Andrade's critique of consumption should make us wary of reading anthropophagy at the film's denouement *only* as an act of decolonial retribution or allegorical rebellion. Tracing the broader relationship between the Tupinambá, the French explorer, and the networks of commodity consumption in which they are intertwined, demonstrates the way in which the film deliberately repurposes – that is, cannibalizes – historical discourse itself.

When the Frenchman realises that his only chance to save himself might lie in obtaining gunpowder for the tribal leader, he first asks for help from the other European to procure him this item. The merchant responds to him that he cannot help, and asks him 'Don't you understand you can't own anything for yourself? Everything you have is the property of Cunhambebe' – the leader of the Tupinambá (dos Santos: 1971). Tension in the contrast between depictions of the Tupinambá people as maintaining the sacred, pre-modern rituals, and their increasing incorporation into an uneven modern network of commodity

consumption peaks in a later scene in which the tribal leader becomes furious at the sight of the local women adorned with jewellery purchased from the merchant. 'Why do you need so many necklaces?' he screams at them. He condemns what he deems superfluous consumption of commodities, taking place as it does in the realm of frivolity, and not what could be construed as the productive sphere of intertribal war, fetishizing their mutual benefit from trade with the Europeans and the social conditions in which those commodities were produced. Thus, the film depicts the dynamics of political repression – in the narrative present of the 16th century and in the allegorically alluded to present of the Brazilian dictatorship – as situated within a broader struggle to control the consumption of commodities, and the purpose of commodity consumption.

The film's final scene which stages the anthropophagic act occurs just after the battle in which the gunpowder the Frenchman obtained is critical in the Tupinambá victory. If, due to the film's many anachronisms and ironic use of intercalated historical sequences and textual references, dos Santos seems to acknowledge that he is not capable of redeeming history outside of his filmic world, the film nonetheless posits the human body of the Frenchman, who is repeatedly termed a slave, as an absurd example of the commodification of flesh. Contra Kenneth David Jackson's claim that the film represents a 'didactic lesson in cultural relativism,' the insistence that the Frenchman is a slave works against the concept of relativism, considering he has been labelled as property, and the consumption of one's property would hardly be a relativistic practice (1994: 95). Put differently, rather than merely imagining an act of vengeance against the colonizing power, or provocative recreation of a taboo, dos Santos' film depicts the ambivalent incorporation of an indigenous tribe into a burgeoning modernity at large through their consumption of commodities. The acquisition of gunpowder, a commodity of warfare, and of foreign jewellery, are presented as disruptive acts of consumption which modernize the tribe. Even as the tribe's attempts to maintain their sacroprofane traditions of ritual anthropophagy as a bulwark against modernity are undermined by the ritual enemy's status as a modern, chattel slave who cannot own property. Thus the film's focus on the characters' relationship to the commodities they consume cannibalizes the truth claims of historical discourse to question *both* the legacies of colonialism, *and* fetishistic exaltations of supposedly anti-modern, anti-capitalist, and alternative modes of life. At a moment of historical defeat for the forces of democracy in Brazil, dos Santos' film reminds spectators that idealizing the past is a less useful political strategy than attempting to return historical discourse to the common use for contemporary struggles over the relations and purposes of consumption.

Cannibal Holocaust

Cannibal Holocaust (1981) by Ruggero Deodato offers a different frame for reading de Andrade's anthropophagy. Deodato's film retools the cannibal trope within the conventions of the Italian *mondo* film, a genre which, in broad strokes, plays with cinema verité aesthetics, found footage, and the cinematic effects of low-budget documentary filmmaking. According to Mikita Brottman, Deodato innovated on these artistic characteristics by combining them with the supposedly low-brow genre of horror and cannibal films, executing the first "cannibal mondo' movie' (1997: 127). Jennifer Brown argues that these generic innovations of the cannibal mondo film had a particular political resonance in Italy. She notes that the exploitation of violence with a documentary aesthetic was Deodato's way of commenting on the exploitative coverage of violence perpetrated by Italy's left wing militants by a sensationalist press (2013: 73). Moreover, Brown contends the film's problematic exoticization of foreign jungle locations and indigenous people were also a provocation for Western audiences to rethink their 'appetite for the world's resources, and tendency to exploit others' during 'times of post-colonial turmoil' (2013: 81).

Its commentaries on the geopolitical milieu notwithstanding, *Cannibal Holocaust's* profoundly graphic portrayal of violence, coupled with its *verité* grittiness, embroiled the film in censorship scandals in Italy and the United Kingdom (Hobbs, 2015: 129). Despite the public opprobrium and suppression by censors, Julian Petley describes how the film found an audience through its 'samizdat existence,' while Simon Hobbs observes that the lifting on the film's ban and its more recent reappraisal by academic critics has bestowed upon the film a strange combination of 'the traditional capital of critical validation and the subcultural kudos of excess and extremity' (Petley, 2005: 174; Hobbs, 2015: 130).

The question of why this has attracted both cult and academic audiences over the years has been a central concern of its critics. This focus in no small part due to the ways *Cannibal Holocaust* openly criticizes the spectatorship of the same displays extreme violence contained within the film text. It is for this reason that much of the criticism written about this film homes in on its self-referentiality. Brottman describes how *Cannibal Holocaust*:

progressively but deliberately breaks down the boundaries between spectator and camera, between spectacle and violence, between shock and freedom, thereby questioning the nature of cinema, of voyeurism, and of the rights of the filmmaker to fictionalize reality and to realize fiction (1997: 128).

For Hobbs, Deodato's film simultaneously represents 'one of the most extreme exploitation narratives ever released,' and a cultural product whose self-referential 'filmic paraphernalia' styled the text as a work of highbrow cinema, turning *Cannibal Holocaust* into 'a hybrid from which slips between art and exploitation' (2015: 128; 145). Neil Jackson, for his part, focuses on the blurred lines separating reality from fiction through the usage of documentary tropes and found footages. He concludes that the film's 'dual strategy of distancing from, and immersion in, its horrors' has the effect of 'implicating the audience in a conspiracy of prurience' (2002: 40; 43). Ultimately, this complicity in the spectacle offers audiences the chance to contemplate how 'the film does "exploit" extreme imagery but simultaneously provides commentary on processes of production and dissemination' (*Ibid*: 34). Julian Petley broadly agrees with Jackson's analysis, arguing *Cannibal Holocaust's* documentary aesthetics and conceits 'operate self-reflexively' to 'blur the boundary between the representation of fictional and actual death' (2005: 179; 181). Yet Petley also argues the film's true subversive nature stems precisely from how its filmic strategies transgress 'carefully erected and culturally sanctioned distinctions between fictional and factual modes of representing death' (*Ibid*: 184).

While these critics are persuasive in cataloguing the diverse ways Deodato's film questions its audience's appetite for on-screen bodily horror through self-reference and provocation, they overlook *Cannibal Holocaust's* pointed critique not just of the consumption of images of violence, but of *commodified* images of violence. Our analysis of the *MA* underscores the need to consider the ways in which commodity production both obscures exploitative social relations and forces consumers to conceive of and satisfy their needs within such global networks of exploitation. Because the critical potential of anthropophagic discourse lies in profaning the sacred assumptions which surround a given cultural practice, our reading of *Cannibal Holocaust* will focus on how the film traffics in exploitative imagery of violence and death which confront the spectator vis à vis their consumption of media footage which commodifies death.

Cannibal Holocaust begins on what is ostensibly the principal narrative plane with Professor Monroe, an anthropologist, who travels to the Amazon jungle to find a quartet of guerrilla filmmakers who disappeared while making a documentary. With help from his guide, Professor Monroe locates the Yanomomo people, the so-called People of the Tree, and he discovers to his horror that they killed the documentary crew. The professor nonetheless decides to try and recover the reels of footage from the documentary which the tribe maintains in their possession. He gains the tribe's trust by offering them his voice recorder and they return the

film footage to him. To consummate this pact between Western civilization and the Amazon people, a ceremonial feast is served of human flesh. The reels recovered by the professor contain the schizophrenic footage of the journey into the jungle of four young filmmakers whose *modus operandi* is transgression. During their search for the legendary Yanamomo people, they have several chilling adventures, culminating in the burning of the Yanamomo village to simulate a tribal massacre for their 'documentary.' When the Yanamomo exact their revenge on the filmmakers, the crew's cameras continue to roll up until the very last moment. After watching these recordings with a group of television executives interested in broadcasting this documentary, Professor Monroe convinces them to destroy the footage, so nobody sees it. It is then revealed that the version the spectator has just viewed had been smuggled out of the executive's office.

However, the narrative levels of the found 'documentary' footage from the jungle and the professor's journey to recover and then prevent the broadcast of this footage are not the only planes of narration in *Cannibal Holocaust*. After revealing that the supposed documentary on the barbarism of this indigenous tribe was, in actuality, a pre-edited version of staged and manipulated acts of violence perpetrated by the four young filmmakers, Professor Monroe tells the television executives that the film is a fake and should not be broadcast. However, the executives seem unbothered by the fact that the film contains outright lies. One executive proceeds to show Monroe another documentary that the now-deceased filmmakers had previously recorded. This one involved an African army who graphically executes several captives by firing squad. The executive tells Monroe that this documentary is also a fake in which the African soldiers were paid to summarily execute several prisoners on camera. This documentary film was a commercial success, despite its complicity in crimes and its staged nature.

In many senses, this fake documentary filmed in Africa represents the logic of commodification at its purest. It is unadulterated artifice which commits grievous ethical violations even as it knowingly and falsely presents itself as making historical truth claims. This fake documentary does so for one purpose – to generate profit. Yet if we step outside of the universe of the film, the footage of violence shot in Africa was indeed genuine, a newsreel shot for mass consumption. This not only blurs the line between artifice and actuality, as many critics have argued, but it also blurs the separation between use value and exchange value which is the essence of commodification. This first reel of footage, I argue, must frame our reading of the second attempt to create a 'documentary' which purports to depict Amazonian barbarism. If we accept that the first documentary is an articulation of the logic of commodification carried out to a radical

extreme, a logic which is only exposed to the spectator through the meta-commentary by the television executive, then it is possible to think of the raw, unedited footage of the second, jungle documentary as containing not just the raw materials of a commodity, but footage of the film's commodification process separating use value from exchange value. In other words, the deceased film crew who went to the Amazon and recorded their own exploitative and misleading practices in an attempt to create a 'documentary' commodity accidentally provide the spectators with 'raw footage' which offers a glimpse of the process by which a film object becomes a commodity.

The unfinished jungle film was to be called *The Green Inferno*, while the finished film taking place in Africa was called *The Last Road to Hell*. Yet if in the former the spectator, at the level of diegesis, sees supposedly staged acts of murder that were passed off as organic events of history (which, in fact, they were), these acts of violence are only as valuable as the cash they command from audiences looking to be entertained. Yet this slippage between truth and fiction chafes against the disturbing portrayal of the completely real, gratuitous violence against animals which forms part of the second, fake documentary in the Amazon. In light of our hermeneutic framework of the logic of commodification, scenes such as the decapitation and dismemberment of a turtle, whose legs and viscera quiver as the filmmaker characters break the shell and remove the animal's flesh, gruesomely display the social relations of process of producing meat for consumption. It is precisely this process, which triangulates issues of capital, labour, and natural resources, which commodification obscures. Erik van Ooijen is thinking along these lines when he writes:

Meat, it may be suggested, could be considered as a form of reification of violence. In reification, the industrial product achieves a kind of 'phantom objectivity' making it appear as a pure thing, a commodity disconnected from the processes of production and the (often exploitative) relations making industrial production possible in the first place (Van Ooijen 2011: 11).

Taking this idea even further, the aesthetic of exploitation, the relentless focus on the killing of the turtle (and a pig, a monkey, etc.), seems to insist that as spectators we recognise that commodification *is* exploitation. Moreover, the exploitation inherent to commodity production ensnares us and contaminates us as consumers, as our only real agency involves choosing between which forms of exploitation we require to satisfy a present need, including hunger. In this sense, the primordial transgression of *Cannibal Holocaust* is to profane death itself, by forcing us to become

consumers of commodified images of genuine violence against animals, rather than mere consumers of commodified animal flesh. Likewise, the film makes consume images of violence against human beings which is in the process of becoming a commodity (in the case of the actor/filmmakers), and images of violence against humans which is presented as non-commodified (in the case of the tribe's acts of anthropophagy). That the films both presents these images for critique *and* traffics in these images through its own status as a film commodity is a critical act of anthropophagy itself in the spirit of de Andrade's manifesto. *Cannibal Holocaust* obliges us to recognize ourselves as individuals already implicated in the consumption of both images and products of commodified death, and profanes the sacred sphere of consumption by turning the camera's eye on the social relations underpinning such arrangements.

Conclusions

Rereading Oswald de Andrade's 'Manifesto Antropófago' through the lens of the fetish of the commodity helps us tease out de Andrade's critique of the processes of commodification and the consumption of these commodities. Giorgio Agamben's concept of profanation provides a hermeneutic tool which facilitates analysis of instances of cultural production which attempt to return the apparatuses and sites of cultural power to a common, distinct usage. In Nelson Perreira dos Santos' *Como era gostoso o meu francês*, this framework lends itself to a reading of the encroachment of capitalist commodity production and consumption on the idealised depictions of pre-modern pasts, defetishizing our relationship to the apparatuses of history and the construction of historical truth through self-referential distortions of historical truth claims. Ultimately the film invokes the trope of cannibalism to destabilise the very impulse to idealise an imagined past, demanding we focus on power relations which inhere in acts of producing and consuming commodities in the present. Ruggero Deodato's *Cannibal Holocaust* deliberately unmask the inherently exploitative nature of the *verité* cinematic pretensions, in which regardless of the blurred boundaries between truth and fiction in documentary, commodify images and products for consumption. In doing so, the film also forces the spectator to confront genuinely grotesque depictions of the violence of commodification in a haze of gore which profanes the very apparatus of the camera as a fetishistic mode of reproducing images to obscure social power. Taken together, both films point to a potential avenue for further examination within cannibal studies which focuses on the profanation of different apparatuses of power in myriad global contexts.

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